

Developing embodied competence while becoming a PE teacher: PETE students' embodied experiences and reflections after micro-teaching

Tonje Fjogstad Langnes & Judith Helene Bratten

To cite this article: Tonje Fjogstad Langnes & Judith Helene Bratten (2023): Developing embodied competence while becoming a PE teacher: PETE students' embodied experiences and reflections after micro-teaching, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, DOI: [10.1080/17408989.2023.2256757](https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2023.2256757)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2023.2256757>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 11 Sep 2023.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 55





[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

Developing embodied competence while becoming a PE teacher: PETE students' embodied experiences and reflections after micro-teaching

Tonje Fjogstad Langnes  and Judith Helene Bratten 

Faculty of Education and International Studies, Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT

Background: Becoming a PE teacher is a multifaceted process that involves many complexities and contextual specificities. Entering their physical education teacher education (PETE) programme, student teachers are in a vulnerable position as they are uncertain of their professional subjectivities. During their PETE programme, students are introduced to different understandings and practises regarding the body. However, the importance of the body in the development of leadership and relational competence has not yet played a prominent role in PETE or its research.

Purpose: Drawing on the concept of embodied professional competence developed by Winther [(2012). *Det Professionspersonlige – om kroppen som klangbund i professionel kommunikation*. Værløse: Billesø & Baltzer], this paper aims to provide insight into the importance of unpacking embodiment with PETE students to develop their understanding of how their body influences their leadership [embodied professional competence]. More specifically, the question guiding this article is: How can a focus on bodily experiences contribute to developing PETE students' embodied professional competence? Our overall goal has been to create a more embodied approach to working with PETE students to develop their (embodied) understanding of their professional development and (practice of) embodied pedagogies in physical education.

Methods: This is a combined teaching and research project focusing on PETE students' professional competence. All PETE students participated in two teaching series involving them in micro-teaching and reflections upon their bodily experiences and communication while teaching. Hence, the data consists of the PETE students' subsequent written reflections.

Findings: Analysis of the material revealed that reflecting upon their bodily experiences with micro-teaching requires the PETE students to be involved in a process of developing their embodied professional competence. Through the teaching series, they were given the opportunity to explore and *learn* how to teach. In a safe community, the PETE students could be vulnerable and make mistakes while developing their embodied professional competence.

Conclusions: We argue for the importance of integrating PETE students' bodily experiences into the PETE programme. The study highlights that *learning how to reflect upon bodily experiences and share them in a safe community* provides an excellent starting point for further development of the PETE students' professional teaching identities.


ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 25 February 2022

Accepted 25 July 2023

KEYWORDS

PETE students; embodiment; dance; embodied competence; professional development; micro-teaching

CONTACT Tonje Fjogstad Langnes  tofla@oslomet.no

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Introduction

In some situations, I felt I was losing self-contact and [] felt very out of the dance. It was unpleasant when it happened when I was teaching. I [] shook it off. —PETE students' reflection

This article focuses on physical education teacher education (PETE) students' embodied experiences while teaching. The reflection above underlines how losing a sense of contact with the body influences the PETE student's engagement in teaching. Østern and Engelsrud (2021) argue that every teaching situation is embodied. Within any pedagogical situation, the students and teachers influence each other as they both embody the space and act on each other as bodies. Despite the growing interest in embodied approaches in PE and PETE (Aartun et al. 2022; Lambert et al. 2022), the importance of the body in the development of leadership and relational competence has not yet played a prominent role in PE, PETE or its research.

Embodiment and corresponding terms such as 'embodied pedagogy' have become central concepts in PE and PETE literature as the body takes centre stage in the subject (Aartun et al. 2022). Without analysing the complexity of the term (Lambert et al. 2022), we draw on Standal's (2020) conceptualisation of embodiment as emphasising how the body and world are intertwined in humans experiences, reflecting the idea that we experience the world through our bodies. Hence, when we learn to move, we also learn about ourselves (Standal and Bratten 2021). Body, space and time are then intertwined in our experiences. As such, the ability to acknowledge bodily experiences is important if the PE teacher and PETE students are to understand the fullness of the teaching moment and act in and with that moment (e.g. Østern and Engelsrud 2021). Research has found that being aware of one's bodily experiences has the potential to enhance contact, communication and leadership while teaching (e.g. Winther 2012). Therefore, in order to develop the PETE students' ability to communicate and respond, they must be aware of their own bodily experiences.

Drawing on Winther's (2012; 2013) concept of embodied professional competence, this article contributes to the importance of *unpacking embodiment with* PETE students to develop their understanding of how their leadership is influenced by the body [embodied professional competence]. By encouraging the PETE students to focus on their embodied experiences, we have developed a combined teaching and research project demonstrating how the students use their bodies while teaching. Involving the PETE students in micro-teaching and reflecting upon their teaching experiences, our overall goal has been to create a more embodied approach to working with PETE students to develop their (embodied) understanding of their professional development and (practice of) embodied pedagogies in physical education. The question guiding this article is: How can a focus on bodily experiences contribute to developing PETE students' embodied professional competence?

The article begins with an elaboration on the concept of embodied professional competence developed by Winther (2012; 2013). Next, we describe how we have used micro-teaching as a pedagogical arrangement and how we have worked with PETE students in (a) activities with low pulse and little exertion (LpLe) and (b) dance. We then describe our methods and present the results of our analyses. Finally, we draw attention to the importance embodied knowledge has for PETE students' professional development.

Embodied professional competence

Though teaching practices involve embodiment, bodily experiences have often been overlooked in educational research and as part of student teachers' professional development (Hegna and Ørbæk 2021). However, there is a growing interest in educational research recognising the valued embodied nature of teaching and learning (González-Calvo, Varea, and Martínez-Álvarez 2020; Hegna and Ørbæk 2021; Timoštšuk and Ugaste 2012; Winther 2013). Lambert et al. (2022) highlight that a focus on embodiment in physical education requires the teachers to develop an

understanding of embodied experiences if they are to involve the learner in experiencing a connection to and awareness of their own body and to improve attention and attendance (e.g. sensing and feeling).

The connection between embodiment and leadership has been well documented (e.g. Leighton 2017; Winther 2012; 2013), and Østern and Engelsrud (2021) underline that listening to and recognising the body is part of teachers' professional knowledge. Winther (2012; 2013) emphasises the body as a 'sounding board in leadership and professional communication' and has developed embodied professional competence as a concept, which comprises three connected qualities:

Self-contact refers to the teacher's ability to remain connected to their body and personal emotions. It is the ability to be focused and present, to have a heart and, at the same time, preserve a professional focus and a private demarcation.

Communication, reading and contact ability concern relational competence, including the ability to see, listen, sense and notice within the teaching situation. It involves the ability to read both verbal and bodily communication, which is a prerequisite for creating trusting and empathetic contact with others.

Leadership in groups or situations relates to the teacher's professional overview, radiance and centring. It is about the ability of 'being on' (Winther 2013, 229), an energy concept relating to role awareness, presence, timing, feelings and familiarity with one's bodily communication. Clear leadership of a group or situation includes the ability to create, enter, and hold space with embodied authority.

The three concepts express qualities of being that are simultaneously at play in every teaching situation. Notably, embodied professional competence is not something a teacher just 'has' (Winther 2013) but concerns qualities that continually needs to be developed, made conscious and matured. Furthermore, the concept focuses on leadership (and not management) in the classroom and highlights that leadership involves balancing the personal, bodily and professional.

Thus, drawing on the work of Winther (2013) provides the opportunity to investigate how to develop PETE students' embodied professional competence. Earlier research has documented that PE teachers' embodied presence in the classroom influences their teaching practices (e.g. González-Calvo, Varea, and Martínez-Álvarez 2020). However, there is limited research focusing on the 'embodied self-in-action' (Pithouse, Mitchell, and Weber 2009) in the development of leadership competencies in PE. Hence, to develop PETE students' embodied professional competence, we designed a teaching series involving them in micro-teaching.

Micro-teaching in PETE

To increase PETE students' teaching confidence – especially in LpLe and dance – we used the pedagogical arrangement of micro-teaching, a method in which students take turns developing and testing small teaching sequences and teaching each other. The sequences are followed by a reflection and feedback sequence in which the students, fellow peers and teacher educators engage in dialogue about the teaching. In this way, students acquire competencies concerning planning, teaching peers and being taught by fellow students. By giving students the responsibility for their own and others' learning, teacher educators qualitatively engage students in the learning process and guide them towards deeper reflection (Jørgensen et al. 2018; Pithouse, Mitchell, and Weber 2009). Micro-teaching is designed to develop students' confidence in practical teaching and enhance their classroom practices through feedback (Jørgensen et al. 2018). Several researchers have argued that PE teachers not only feel insecure and unfamiliar with teaching activities like LpLe and dance but also frequently avoid teaching them (e.g. Mattsson and Larsson 2021; Rustad 2017; Standal and Bratten 2021). As a result, the objective of our teaching series was to develop PETE students' teaching confidence in LpLe and dance. Inspired by MacLean's (2007) research, we argue for the importance of developing PETE students' self-esteem in LpLe and dance during their PETE programme if they are to teach these activities in school. As both teaching series were a compulsory part of the PETE

programme, all PETE students have planned and performed campus-based micro-teaching in LpLe and dance.

LpLe

LpLe is based on traditionally Eastern forms of activities (e.g. yoga, qigong, indigenous dances) combined with visualisation techniques and modernised massage methods that have been inspired by Māori culture. In LpLe classes, PETE students are asked to move with their attention directed inwardly and towards their own breathing. The LpLe teachings are founded on the goal of teaching PETE students to connect with their own bodies and reflect upon their embodied experiences. The LpLe teaching series was taught by Bratten, who has provided this programme to her students for over 30 years, both as a PE teacher in school and as a PETE educator.

Dance

Dance is an important part of the PETE programme. However, even though dance has been a compulsory part of the Norwegian national PE curriculum for decades, dance holds a very weak position in PE, and many PETE students have little or no previous experience with dance (Rustad 2017). The PETE programme at OsloMet is founded on a wide definition of dance and focuses on teaching students *to* dance (rather than learning a dance). During dance classes, PETE students are introduced to a variety of dances while being encouraged to explore bodily movement. Hence, the dance classes focus on expanding students' bodily knowledge and experiences. Both Langnes and Bratten have been involved in the dance teaching series.

Methods and research material

This research project emerged from our discussions as PETE educators and our shared belief of bodily experiences as an important part of PETE students' learning and professional development. Hence, a combined teaching and qualitative research project was developed focusing on PETE students' embodied professional competence and drawing on PETE students' written reflections during the LpLe and dance teaching series.

Sample and recruitment

The project was conducted in Norway from 2018 to 2020 among PETE students at OsloMet. All students were in the initial stages of their PETE programme and had chosen PE as their specialisation. The students were involved in two different PETE routes: (1) PE as a supplementary course with a one-year (60 credits) practical and didactical education and (2) PE as part of the five-year teacher education programme (MGLU). Table 1 provides an overview of the participants:

During the analysing process, no differences were distinguished between the students who were following different PETE routes; we have, therefore, chosen to use the term 'PETE students' to refer to all students involved in this project.

Table 1. Overview of the PETE routes, students and teaching series.

Education programme	Teaching series	Number of students	Data
PE one-year study, 2019–2020	Dance	13	Reflections
	LpLe	10	Reflections
MGLU, 2019	Dance	13	Reflections
	LpLe	13	Reflections

Teaching series

The teaching series focusing on embodied leadership in LpLe and dance is a compulsory part of PETE students' educational programme. Both teaching series involved the PETE students teaching their peers, as demonstrated in [Tables 2](#) and [3](#):

Both teaching series encouraged the students to be aware of their bodily experiences while teaching, which was followed by written reflections at the end of each series. Earlier research ([Attard and Armour 2006](#)) underlines that through reflection, teachers can develop greater reflexivity, solidarity and sensitivity towards their professional development as well as that of the learners involved. Both [Aartun et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Lambert et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasise that pedagogies of embodiment place focus on reflection. Hence, inspired by [Herskind and Winther \(2015, 63\)](#), all PETE students were assigned to reflect upon the following questions:

- (1) Reflect upon your experience with the dance workshop and LpLe.
- (2) Self-contact: Did you feel connected with yourself during your teaching sequence? Did you 'lose yourself'? If so, what happened?
- (3) Empathy and relational competence: How did you read and sense the group? How did you communicate?
- (4) Your leadership: How did you experience your leadership? Were you able to 'hold' the room? Did you experience losing your leadership?

Volunteering was an important aspect of the project. Before the teaching series, all PETE students were informed about the research project's purpose and the voluntary nature of participation, and they provided their informed consent. Voluntary participation is complicated in studies where the researchers intervene and influence the teaching process. The teaching series was a compulsory part of the students' PETE programme. However, the students could choose not to be a part of the data collection without any consequences. In total, the data material consisted of 49 written reflections, which were all anonymised to comply with ethical considerations and the Norwegian Centre for Research Data's (NSD) guidelines.

Data materials and analysis

The data material for this article consists of individually written reflections from the PETE students who volunteered to be a part of the research project. Even though the written reflections are not identical to the experiences themselves, they provide important insight into the PETE students' embodied experiences. As all lived experiences are embodied, they are the foundation for how individuals meet the world and their reflections on their lived experiences ([van Manen 2007](#)).

The PETE students digitally submitted their written reflections, which were then printed and analysed. Through a process of reading and re-reading the reflections, we analysed the interpretation of meaning ([Kvale et al. 2009](#)). Inspired by an abductive approach ([Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman 2017](#)), the initial reading was inductive, and the coding was data-driven. We started

Table 2. Overview of the dance teaching series.

Teaching series: Dance		
Requirements	Theme	Task given
Plenary introduction (2 h)	Introduction to embodied leadership (a theoretical session followed by a practical session)	The random pairing of students: choose a dance style (first come, first served). Prepare and plan micro-teaching for your peers.
Dance workshop (approx. 6 h)	Dance workshop	In pairs: micro-teaching for 20 min followed by approx. 5 min of discussion and feedback from the peer group.
Written individual reflections	Embodied experience	See questions below.

Table 3. Overview of the LpLe teaching series.

Teaching series: LpLe		
Requirements	Theme	Task given
Plenary lecture 1 (2 h)	Introduction to different LpLe activities (e.g. yoga, qigong, massage, relaxation, dance)	Select <i>one exercise</i> that involves LpLe activity from the course (or one of your own choice); prepare and plan micro-teaching for your peers.
Plenary lecture 2 (2 h)	Introduction to different LpLe activities	Prepare and plan micro-teaching for your peers. Introduce your exercise and your reason for choosing it. Submit a written plan for your teaching.
Plenary lecture 3 (2 h)	Embodied leadership	Individual: micro-teaching for 5 min followed by discussion and feedback from the peer group.
Written individual reflections	Embodied experience	See questions below.

by individually reading the students' written reflections. We then discussed our individual understandings and interpretations of the reflections and started to code the material using terms such as '*instructive*', '*helpful when little experience*', '*body experiences*', '*emotions/feelings*', '*self-contact*', '*sensing*', '*energy*' and '*leadership*'. We continued to re-read and discuss the data both individually and together. This process of continuously comparing differences and similarities contributed to developing a shared understanding of our interpretation of the empirical material.

Results

Experiences with micro-teaching

Research has documented that PE teachers often feel insecure and unfamiliar with teaching activities like LpLe and dance and frequently avoid teaching them. Hence, to increase the PETE students' teaching confidence, we used micro-teaching as a pedagogical arrangement, giving the students opportunities to develop, test and reflect upon small teaching sequences and engaging them in dialogue about their teaching. The analysis process revealed that the PETE students' experiences with micro-teaching in LpLe and dance are overall regarded as positive:

Being taught by peer-students was a fun experience, as it seemed like everyone enjoyed [themselves] while teaching. I thought the day would be long, but it was purely fun and educational.

I experienced micro-teaching in dance as positive.

Such statements were similar among most of the PETE students, and some underlined these "work requirements" as a breath of fresh air' and highlighted that '[they] experienced that it can be nice to have classes where it is completely quiet'. Many PETE students were unfamiliar with LpLe: 'My experience with LpLe is [only] from the university'. The LpLe activities combine often-stagnant physical postures and breathing techniques, and as a result, the students initially experienced the activities as unusual and difficult:

Before these classes, I had limited experience with LpLe activities. I have done some relaxing before and some yoga here and there, but not very much. [During] the first class we had [at the university], I was surprised [by] how hard yoga was. I remember how I struggled to follow the teacher while focusing on my movements and breathing. I remember feeling overwhelmed and out of it. However, the next time, I was able to follow more; I felt more relaxed and felt the effect in a different way.

Surprised by how demanding the unfamiliar LpLe activities could be, the student underlined the struggle between following the teacher and giving attention to one's own body. However, through practice, the student became more comfortable with the activity, which allowed for deeper bodily experiences.

Regarding dance, the PETE students' previous experiences varied. Many (especially male) students communicated a strained relationship with dance by saying, 'I am not comfortable with

dance' or, 'I have never been a very good dancer'. Two important premises were implemented in organising the micro-teaching of dance. First, the PETE students were randomly paired. Second, the PETE students could freely choose dance styles and were encouraged to challenge themselves. After using the principle of 'first come, first served', the PETE educators approved the students' choices to ensure a wide range of dance styles was being taught throughout the dance workshop. When reflecting upon the micro-teaching for this workshop, several of the students emphasized the importance of these premises:

The freedom to choose the type of dance made it more comfortable. I am uncomfortable with dance, and it was useful for me to work with a fellow student.

[During] the preparation phase, we were free to choose the dance ourselves, and we were encouraged to choose something we had not encountered on a previous occasion. I really liked this; you had the opportunity to start with blank sheets, and previous dance skills were not expected. This provided the opportunity to [explore] a variety of dance styles [that are] appropriate [for] a teaching situation. The arrangement [allowed] for different approaches and a diversity of dance styles, [which is] something you can even use in your own teaching.

The variety of approaches and dance styles was surprising for many of the students, as expressed by one student:

When I saw the timetable with dance for two whole hours, I thought it would be a dreadful process. But it was exclusively fun and instructive. Overall, I thought the dance workshop was a nice experience, and it was fun with all the different dance styles.

Furthermore, most of the students emphasised the importance of being able to teach according to their own levels:

I think it was very funny – both to be taught by and to teach my fellow peer-students. The threshold is lower. As we are all in this together, [it] makes the task easier. I am not very fond of dancing, but during these classes, I experienced dancing as fun.

A recurring theme in the reflections concerned the gradual change in the students' experiences with dance:

My dance experience is low, and initially, the task of preparing your own dance teaching felt very demanding and extensive. However, gradually, [during] the process, it went well, and I experienced it as challenging and exciting.

By mastering a process experienced as challenging, the student was able to go beyond their comfort zone, which was regarded as exciting.

The students described micro-teaching projects for LpLe and dance as a positive experience. Inspired by a student-centred approach [e.g. designing the teaching series where the student could choose and teach according to their own level while being challenging], PETE educators helped the students develop their teaching methods according to their own levels. During the micro-teaching sequences, the students appreciated their fellow students' support and considered it rewarding. Most of the students also communicated that the micro-teaching setting felt safe:

I noticed that my fellow students were paying attention and that they wanted to "play-me-good." This made me feel safe in the role as a teacher, and I did not experience the situation as unpleasant. I noticed that the students who felt safest were closest to me, and I had most contact with them.

I can feel it in my body

While analysing the PETE students' reflections, we noted that emotions emerged as a central theme. Positive emotions were referred to using words such as 'nice', 'comfortable', 'safe', 'respect', 'fun', 'exciting', 'surprisingly fun', and 'freedom'. However, the students also expressed negative emotions through terms such as 'hard', 'challenging', 'uncomfortable', 'pressure', and 'demanding'. This wide

range of positive and negative emotions underlines the complexity of teaching as an exercise entailing emotional effort. As the students reflected upon their ability to maintain self-contact while teaching, they highlighted diverse emotions connected to different teaching stages:

I experienced good self-contact during my teaching. Before I started, of course, I felt nervous, but I quickly calmed down. I experienced a pleasant mood throughout the session.

Elaborating on their bodily experiences while teaching some students expressed a sense of freedom: 'I think it is lovely to feel how the body works in different ways. I think it is fun to let go and just do it without thinking about how it looks'.

Many students clearly expressed a strong connection with their own bodies while teaching: 'I felt connected with my body the whole time. The song led me, and my body followed the music'. Other students confessed how uncomfortable they felt and expressed a feeling of losing themselves and being disconnected from their bodies: 'I feel that I lose myself when dancing. I find it hard to let go and be comfortable. I don't know why, but I think it is because I have never been a good dancer'. The experience of losing self-contact while teaching was described by the PETE student as unpleasant:

Everything "locks." It is very hard to abandon the feeling and imagine that I can handle it. However, I always pull myself together when I recognise that it does not matter how I look or how good I am [at dancing]. The most important thing is that I try.

This reflection displays the inner conversation the student engages in while teaching. Entering the role as a teacher involves vulnerability, as the focus is on the students who are in the position of being judged according to how they look and their ability to dance. To combat the feeling that everything 'locks', the student's inner dialogue emphasizes the importance of 'trying' to regain self-contact. Other students had trouble staying connected with their own bodies while teaching:

I lost focus on my leadership when I focused on my body and breathing, and vice-versa. I [found it] hard to recognise my own body while teaching and focusing on others' learning. I think it will be difficult to implement these two elements at the same time.

The statement underlines that, at this point in their teacher education, the student experiences a disconnect between self-contact and the ability to sense, read and listen to others (e.g. Winther 2013). However, by encouraging students to focus on their bodily experiences when they were *not* teaching, PETE students can experience a connection to and awareness of their own body (e.g. Lambert et al. 2022): 'I think it was nice to experience how simple movements can increase focus, lower one's pulse and increase inner peace'.

The whole body teaches

Many PETE students experienced an improved ability to communicate and connect with their peers when the activity they taught was familiar: 'I felt safe about myself and the exercise; I think this spread to others'. However, as one PETE student stated, understanding the activity is one thing; teaching it is another:

Even though I felt safe with the [ballet] poses, I did not feel safe *teaching* them. The result was a focus on my own execution of the poses rather than [a focus] on those who did not master the poses.

The reflection underlines the distinction between feeling safe – knowing how to do the activity – and the ability to teach it. It also highlights that a focus on one's own's execution of the activity can influence students' communication, resulting in a lack of contact with their peers.

Many PETE students expressed how they used their whole bodies to communicate while teaching: 'I communicated by using my voice, eyes, smile and body language. I feel that I communicated with all my peer-students [by] walking through the classroom'. The students especially emphasised the importance of using their eyes as a communication tool to transmit positive body language:

[as a teacher] I consciously try to create eye contact with my peers so they feel seen. It is important to give a smile along the way, so you show the joy of movement. Communication is mainly body language.

Another aspect of communication that a few PETE students noted was the ability to adjust their voices according to the atmosphere:

The peer-students' calmness was very interesting from beginning to end. I played yoga music in the background throughout the class; [I did] not use a whistle or raise my voice. In addition to the calmness, this was very effective.

The large, open PE space requires different pedagogical skills from those used in teaching other subjects in a classroom. A traditional approach to PE focusing on 'physical education-as-sport-techniques' (Kirk 2010) amplifies the PE space as often chaotic, physically demanding, with specific organisational circumstances and high energy. However, in micro-teaching LpLe and dance, the PETE students discovered the need to adjust their bodily presence (they calmed down) within the space to amplify a focus on embodied experiences among their peers.

The ability to see, listen and sense a group is important, and one student pointed out that 'the difficulty level of our teaching made me sense that [my peer-students] were bored after a while'. As the fellow peers did not have the skill level required to follow the class, the PETE student highlighted that their bodily expressions (being bored) created a visible disconnect. Another PETE student reflected on a sense of being connected with her peers: 'I felt present with my fellow students. [I felt I had] self-contact while being connected with my peer-students'. And some expressed a joy for teaching as they recognised their fellow students' enjoyment:

I will especially acknowledge that towards the end of our micro-teaching—when everybody mastered the dance and you could hear the common stumping of the feet and everybody was focused or smiling—I felt the fun of teaching.

This underlines the interactive aspect of teaching by recognising the expressions of affection and presence – the teacher and the students are mutually influenced by and act on each other – as bodies.

Taking the position as a teacher

When asked about teaching their peers, the PETE students highlighted the need for spatial competence: 'We hold the room by placing ourselves in the centre and distributing the pupils accordingly'. Visible placement and the distribution of their peers throughout the room were essential as PETE students positioned themselves as *teachers*. The difference between being a learner and a teacher was mentioned by many:

There is a big difference between standing in front [of your peers] and standing at the back and being taught a couple of dance steps. You are in focus. I had to have a loud and strong voice and clear movements to make it easy for the rest of the group to follow. It was important that we broke down the steps and turned around regularly to face the group, so we did not just have our backs to them all the time. This helped to make contact.

To acquire leadership skills, PETE students emphasised the importance of where they, as teachers, positioned themselves in the room, how they used their voice and bodies and making eye contact with their peers. The micro-teaching in dance was, for many PETE students, their first experience teaching dance. As a result, many drew on dance teaching didactics from dance studios (i.e. teaching using mirrors and with their backs to their peers) and learned their dance steps and dances through digital platforms (e.g. YouTube). However, upon entering the position as a teacher in a room without mirrors, many PETE students discovered the drawbacks of this teaching method:

I want to highlight how abnormal it was for me to teach with my back to the "students." The fact that I had to blindly trust that they would do as we instructed was a new challenge for me. My experience with teaching PE is with ball games, where you are dependent on facing the students all the time. So, it's probably the whole situation of having my back to the students that was abnormal for me.

The PETE student shared how the teaching method made him ‘blind’. With no way to observe how his peers are doing, he expressed a lack of control over the situation.

Overall, many PETE students had positive leadership experiences while teaching:

I experienced my leadership as clear and safe from start to finish. My partner and I had a good collaboration where we did not step on each other’s toes. I think the group would perceive us as safe, both according to leadership and in our own dance. I never felt that I lost leadership. We positioned ourselves centrally in the room and distributed the students the way we wanted them. We caught their attention by speaking loudly and clearly and by giving them simple and concrete messages.

By positioning themselves in the room and adjusting their voices and bodies, the PETE students recognised that they were able to hold the room and get their peers attention. This again contributed to the PETE students’ self-esteem as teachers; they expressed a feeling of being safe and having leadership while teaching.

Discussion

In the following sections, we will discuss how a focus on PETE students’ bodily experiences can contribute to developing their embodied professional competence. As teacher educators, we argue for working closely with PETE students to develop their (embodied) understanding and teaching practices (in LpLe and dance) in a safe setting. Previous researchers have documented that PETE students are often in a vulnerable position as they are uncertain of their professional identities (Timoštšuk and Ugaste 2012) and that PE teachers often feel insecure and unfamiliar with teaching activities such as LpLe and dance (Mattsson and Larsson 2021; Standal and Bratten 2021). Furthermore, Lambert et al. (2022) argue that research needs to consider what embodied pedagogy looks like in the context of teacher education. Hence, we stress the importance of incorporating PETE students’ embodied experiences into their educational programme.

Teaching = an emotional experience

Our analysis reveals that PETE students experienced micro-teaching in LpLe and dance as a valuable contribution to developing their own teaching methods according to their own level. The pedagogical arrangement with micro-teaching included working in pairs, being able to choose their own dance style and being encouraged to challenge themselves. All these factors helped PETE students safely go beyond their comfort zones. This is supported by research (e.g. Jørgensen et al. 2018) which highlights that micro-teaching is designed to develop students’ confidence in practical teaching.

The analysis shows that PETE students reflected on their teaching experiences as very emotional. Since most of the PETE students had limited teaching experiences with LpLe and dance, they expressed both positive and negative emotions about micro-teaching. Mastering being present in the room and connected with their peers encapsulated the positive teaching experience. As emphasised by Winther (2012; 2013), self-contact involves the teacher being emotionally connected with themselves and enables them to be present and empathic towards others. However, in the same way that one teaching situation can fill the teacher with good energy and joy, another can activate discomfort and anxiety, thus disturbing self-contact. This is reflected among PETE students who observed how negative emotions, such as fear of not being good enough, nervousness or perceiving the learners as bored, affected their leadership and contact with the group. The PETE students regained their self-contact and concentration by paying attention to their own breathing and bodies. This is supported by Winther (2012) who argues that, just as loss of self-contact can be felt in the body, self-contact can be regained through planning and *through* the body.

Paying attention to one’s body (e.g. feeling the feet on the floor and breathing) can strengthen the feeling of self-connection. Attention to breathing can be experienced as an anchor, creating grounding and inner balance (Skovhus and Winther 2019). Hence, through body awareness, self-contact is

trained. As such, reflecting upon bodily experiences and making them conscious can make it easier to preserve self-contact, even in challenging teaching situations. Winther (2012) states that it is through self-contact that the teacher will be able to be personal without becoming private and thus avoid being too influenced by disturbances while teaching.

Experiencing the body while teaching

The analyses reveal that PETE students expressed a sense of feeling connected with their bodies. They were able to calm their anxiety and remain focused and present throughout their teaching sequences. Based on their experiences of body awareness, PETE students reflected on how they could read the group. This underlines the importance of self-contact as a foundation for professional relational competence and communication (Winther 2013). When the body senses and reacts emotionally, an individual's ability to communicate resonates with their surroundings.

However, some PETE students reported that they felt disconnected from their bodies. The feeling of 'losing self-contact' or 'everything "locks"' was presented as uncomfortable and unpleasant. To regain self-contact, several PETE students stated that they engaged in an inner conversation, though this process can be very distracting. As highlighted by Standal and Bratten (2021), relating to one's own embodied experiences can be disturbing while teaching. The process demands a significant amount of energy since a larger part of an individual's professional attention is used to fight their personal state of mind (Winther 2013).

The whole body communicates

Many PETE students expressed that they felt they were using their whole bodies while communicating. Space/spatial competence, eyes and voice were mentioned as crucial factors.

Spatial competence was emphasised by most students as an essential part of acting as a teacher. The use of space is a visual factor that centred the positioning of the PETE students *as teachers* and helped reinforce the visible change within the group's power structure and roles. This concept is supported by research that emphasises that space shapes social relations and practices (e.g. Leighton 2017). Winther (2013) asserts that a space is never empty; how a teacher enters and holds a professional space is not only important for their relationships but also their credibility and authority. However, researchers have demonstrated that teachers are seldom trained to understand the use of space for their pedagogical advantage, and their lack of spatial competency is often a barrier to utilising the physical learning environment (Leighton 2017). Among the PETE students, this reflected in their positioning of themselves in front of their peers – some even with their backs towards the group. By taking on traditional teaching methods based on instruction, control and monitoring, PETE students positioned themselves on the outside, as one that sees, observes and considers from a distance (Østern and Engelsrud 2021). However, as they are novices in teaching, especially LpLE and dance, this position is understandable, as being able to move around to approach the learners' learning situation takes considerable effort.

The PETE students highlighted the importance of using their eyes to encourage peer-students' involvement in activities. The idea that eye contact correlates positively with learning and engagement is supported by existing research (Haataja et al. 2021). For the PETE students, eye contact served as a motivation tool. This is in agreement with Haataja et al. (2021), who argue that a teacher's eye contact can create a positive atmosphere when they use it to encourage students to participate and interact. Eye contact creates a sense of communion and warmth. Being aware of this effect and its use is important; for example, a PE teacher can improve their teaching by asking, 'Are my eyes lively and open or dull with an unsteady gaze?'

For most PETE students, their voices were an important part of teaching. Many emphasised their ability to use a high and clear voice. However, one student reflected on their ability to adjust their voice according to the intensity of the class and the activity being taught (e.g. yoga). They note that

the atmosphere in the classroom was not only affected by their voice but also by how they used it. Østern and Engelsrud (2021) define the voice as a mood creator, a source of inspiration and a driving force in the classroom, thus, one of the most important aspects of a teacher's body. However, the enormous repertoire of the voice has been afforded little focus in the school setting (Østern and Engelsrud 2021). This is supported by Morton and Watson (2001), who demonstrated that despite teachers being 'professional voice user[s]' (53), voice use is often missing from teacher education programmes.

Along with these elements – spatial competence, eye contact and voice – comes the ability to 'be on'. The PETE students emphasised the importance of communicating interest and commitment to the group when teaching. They recognised how their own energy level, radiation and presence as teachers were nurtured and strengthened by the learner's enjoyment and motivation. Furthermore, the students reflected upon and registered how the group influenced them (as teachers), gave them energy and created a sense of happiness. This underlines the mutual relationship between teacher and learner. Østern and Engelsrud (2021, 55) argue that teachers and learners' 'body' the space together, that is, they influence each other's energy, charisma and movement in space and act on each other as bodies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to explore the relationship between PETE students' embodied experiences and their teaching. For that purpose, we have drawn on Winther's (2012; 2013) concept of embodied professional competence, which allowed us to understand teaching as an embodied experience balancing the personal, bodily and professional. However, this is not a new concept. Entering the position of teacher is an embodied experience. Nevertheless, PETE students have written insightfully and personally about their bodily experiences with micro-teaching in LpLe and dance, underscoring their ability to reflect upon their embodied experiences. In the following, we will therefore draw attention to the importance embodied knowledge has for PETE students' professional development.

Involving PETE students through reflections on their embodied experiences allowed us to provide them with an understanding of the complex nature of emotions, their sources and the consequences of positive and negative emotions. Emotions are always a part of teaching, and PETE and PE are emotionally embodied (e.g. González-Calvo, Varea, and Martínez-Álvarez 2020). Hence, it is important to be in emotional contact with one's own body while listening to others in a professional way (i.e. the ability to be personal without becoming private) (Winther 2013). Emotional insight is about being in contact with one's own emotions and, among other things, *understanding how they arise*. By being aware of their emotions, PETE students can develop strategies for modifying them and learn how to balance them while teaching (e.g. Timoštšuk and Ugaste 2012). As shown by Østern and Engelsrud (2021), the teacher's embodied experience becomes visible through body language, posture and movement. Training to maintain self-contact is then important to avoid losing contact with oneself and losing contact with the learners. By being able to connect with their emotional selves, PETE students can develop greater reflexivity, stronger solidarity and more sensitivity as future teachers (Attard and Armour 2006). Through micro-teaching and reflection, PETE students in our study practised developing such competence.

Involving PETE students in micro-teaching and reflections is one way to help them understand how teachers and learners are mutually influenced by each other as they embody the space. Winther's (2013) concept of embodied professional competence underlines how a teacher needs to be able to create, enter and hold a space by balancing the personal, bodily and professional. As this is easier said than done, both experienced and new teachers need to constantly train their leadership. Becoming a teacher is a multifaceted process, and the development of embodied competence and leadership starts with PETE students' first experiences with a course of study

and continues throughout their whole working lives (e.g. Skovhus and Winther 2019; Winther 2013).

Winther (2013) emphasises that leadership and teaching involve a presence, or the ability to ‘be on’. Our research highlights that ‘being on’ is an ability that can be taught. Involving PETE students in micro-teaching involved them in a process of developing their embodied leadership. We argue that learning how to reflect upon their bodily experiences and share them in a safe community is a good starting point for the PETE students’ further professional identity development (e.g. Attard and Armour 2006; Jørgensen et al. 2018; Pithouse, Mitchell, and Weber 2009). Through micro-teaching, we created an empathic and inclusive atmosphere in which PETE students could be vulnerable and make mistakes. Our research demonstrates that focusing on PETE students’ embodied experiences and involving them in reflections about these experiences is valuable as it can develop PETE students’ professional competencies. However, more research is required if we are to fully understand PETE students’ embodied experiences while teaching. We recommend that future researchers incorporate micro-teaching with a focus on embodied experiences at all levels of the PETE programme to argue for the impact that it has on students’ development of professional embodied competence.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Tonje Fjogstad Langnes  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1259-1309>

Judith Helene Bratten  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2446-4753>

References

- Aartun, Iselin, Kristin Walseth, Øyvind Førland Standal, and David Kirk. 2022. “Pedagogies of Embodiment in Physical Education – a Literature Review.” *Sport, Education and Society* 27 (1): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2020.1821182>.
- Attard, Karl, and Kathleen Armour. 2006. “Reflecting on Reflection: A Case Study of One Teacher’s Early-Career Professional Learning.” *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy* 11 (3): 209–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408980600986264>.
- González-Calvo, Gustavo, Valeria Varea, and Lucio Martínez-Álvarez. 2020. “‘I Feel, Therefore I Am’: Unpacking Preservice Physical Education Teachers’ Emotions.” *Sport, Education and Society* 25 (5): 543–555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1620202>.
- Graneheim, U. H., B. M. Lindgren, and B. Lundman. 2017. “Methodological Challenges in Qualitative Content Analysis: A Discussion Paper.” *Nurse Education Today* 56: 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002>.
- Haataja, Eeva, Visajaani Salonen, Anu Laine, Miika Toivanen, and Markku S. Hannula. 2021. “The Relation Between Teacher-Student Eye Contact and Teachers’ Interpersonal Behavior During Group Work: A Multiple-Person Gaze-Tracking Case Study in Secondary Mathematics Education.” *Educational Psychology Review* 33 (1): 51–67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-020-09538-w>.
- Hegna, Hilde Margrethe, and Trine Ørbæk. 2021. “Traces of Embodied Teaching and Learning: A Review of Empirical Studies in Higher Education.” *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1989582>.
- Herskind, Mia, and Helle Winther. 2015. “Det professionspersonlige i bevægelsesundervisning – egenkontakt, empati og lederskab.” In *Fodfæste og himmelkys: Undervinsingsbog i bevægelse, rytmisk gymnastik og dans*, edited by H. Winther, L. Engel, M. Nørgaard, and M. Herskind, 52–69. Værløse: Billesø & Baltzer.
- Jørgensen, Steen Ingemann, Helle Winther, Charlotte Svendler Nielsen, and Lars Nybo. 2018. ““Authentic Microteaching” som akademisk lærings- og undervisningsmodel.” *Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift* 13 (24): 55–68.
- Kirk, David. 2010. *Physical Education Futures*. London: Routledge.
- Kvale, Steinar, Svend Brinkmann, Tone Margaret Anderssen, and Johan Rygge. 2009. *Det Kvalitative Forskningsinterview*. Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.

- Lambert, Karen, Shirley Gray, Justen O'Connor, and Lisa Young. 2022. "How is Embodiment in Physical Education Theoretically Conceptualised? A Concept Analysis." *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2022.2153819>.
- Leighton, Vicky. 2017. "Teaching Space: Does a Teacher's Spatial Competency Affect Their Teaching and Effect the Different Types of Learning That Takes Place in a Classroom?" In *Transitions Australasia 2017*, 1–8. Melbourne University.
- Maclean, J. 2007. "A Longitudinal Study to Ascertain the Factors that Impact on the Confidence of Undergraduate Physical Education Student Teachers to Teach Dance in Scottish Schools." *European Physical Education Review* 13 (1): 99–116.
- Mattsson, Torun, and Håkan Larsson. 2021. "'There is no Right or Wrong Way': Exploring Expressive Dance Assignments in Physical Education." *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 26 (2): 123–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2020.1752649>.
- Morton, Valerie, and David R. Watson. 2001. "Voice in the Classroom. An Re-evaluation." In *Occupational Voice – Care and Cure*, edited by P. H. Dejonckere, 53–69. The Netherlands: Kugler Publications.
- Østern, Tone Pernille, and Gunn Engelsrud. 2021. "The Teacher-Body as a Dramaturgical Axis for Composing a Lesson." In *Teaching and Learning Through Dramaturgy: Education as an Artful Engagement*, edited by Anne Lena Østern, 55–66. New York: Routledge.
- Pithouse, Kathleen, Claudia Mitchell, and Sandra Weber. 2009. "Self-Study in Teaching and Teacher Development: A Call to Action." *Educational Action Research* 17 (1): 43–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790802667444>.
- Rustad, Hilde. 2017. "Dans og Kroppsøvfaget." *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education* 1 (0). <https://doi.org/10.23865/jased.v1.576>.
- Skovhus, Mette, and Helle Winther. 2019. "Udvikling af pædagogstuderendes lederskab gennem krop og bevægelse." *idrottsforum.org*, 1–16.
- Standal, Øyvind Førland. 2020. "Embodiment. Philosophical Considerations of the Body in Adaptive Physical Education." In *Routledge Handbook of Adapted Physical Education*, edited by Justin Haegele, S. R. Hodge, and D. R. Shapiro, 227–238. New York: Routledge.
- Standal, Øyvind F., and Judith H. Bratten. 2021. "'Feeling Better': Embodied Self-Knowledge as an Aspect of Movement Capability." *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 26 (3): 307–316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2021.1886268>.
- Timoštšuk, Inge, and Aino Ugaste. 2012. "The Role of Emotions in Student Teachers' Professional Identity." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 35 (4): 421–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2012.662637>.
- van Manen, Max. 2007. "Phenomenology of Practice." *Phenomenology & Practice* 1 (1): 11–30. <https://doi.org/10.29173/pandpr19803>.
- Winther, Helle. 2012. *Det Professionspersonlige – om kroppen som klangbund i professionel kommunikation*. Værløse: Billesø & Baltzer.
- Winther, Helle. 2013. "Professionals are Their Bodies the Language of the Body as Sounding Board in Leadership and Professional Communication." In *The Embodiment of Leadership: A Volume in the International Leadership Series, Building Leadership Bridge*, edited by L. R. Melina, G. J. Burgess, L. Lid-Falkman, and A. Marturano, 217–237. San Francisco: ProQuest Ebook Central.