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IRELAND

Physical Education Teacher Education in Ireland

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Background on Ireland

While the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland occupy the same island, they are two different jurisdictions. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom (UK) and as such is governed by the UK government that resides in Westminster, London. The Republic of Ireland (referred to in this chapter as "Ireland") has its own government structure.

Area (2016 census)	70,273 sq. km. (27,133 sq. mi.)
Population (2016 census)	4,761,865
GDP ¹ (nominal)	Total (\$344 billion)/per capita (\$72,529)
Official languages	Irish and English
PISA 2015 average scores	Science (503), reading (521), mathematics (504)

Table 9.1. Irish demographics (¹International Monetary Fund, April 2017) (*index mundi*, 2018)

Department of Education and Skills (DES)	Department of the Government of Ireland responsible for education in Ireland. Headed by the Minister for Education and Skills.
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	The curriculum for Ireland's primary and post-primary schools is determined by the minister for education and skills who is advised by the NCCA. The NCCA leads developments in curriculum and assessment and supports the implementation of changes resulting from this work.
The Teaching Council	The professional standards body for teaching in Ireland.
Teaching unions	Represent teachers and lecturers in Ireland engaged in primary or post-primary/higher and further education.

Table 9.2. Educational stakeholders in Ireland

Number of primary schools	3,250
Number of post-primary schools	711
Number of primary students	558,314
Number of post-primary students	384,226
Number of primary teachers	35,669
Number of post-primary teachers	27,966
Types of primary schools	Mainstream and special
Types of post-primary schools	Secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive

Table 9.3. 2016/17 demographics on primary and post-primary schools in Ireland (DES, 2018)

Primary-School Physical Education

The purpose of Irish primary-school physical education is to provide children with learning opportunities through the medium of movement, prepare them to lead active and healthy lifestyles and engage in lifelong physical activity (DES, 1999). The provision of physical education is overseen by the DES through inspection visits. The time allocation for physical education is sixty minutes per week that is to be delivered by qualified primary-school teachers.

The primary-school physical education curriculum (DES, 1999) caters for junior infants to sixth class, that is, ages 4–12 years. The curriculum constitutes six strands – athletics, games, dance, aquatics, outdoor and adventure and gymnastics. While each strand contains a number of strand units there is a strand unit within each strand with a focus on understanding and appreciation of physical activities, where elements of the children's skills such as that relating to tactics or knowledge of rules are developed.

Post-Primary-School Physical Education

The purpose of Irish post-primary-school physical education is to prepare students for a life of autonomous well-being/confident, enjoyable and informed participation in physical activity (DES/NCCA, 2003). The provision of physical education is overseen by the DES through inspection visits. The time allocation for physical education is 120 minutes per week/double period a week that is to be delivered by qualified post-primary physical education teachers.

The post-primary-school physical education curriculum caters for two age groups. Junior cycle physical education (DES/NCCA, 2003) caters for years 1 to 3 (ages 11/12 to 13/14) and constitutes eight strands: adventure, athletics, aquatics, dance, invasion games, net games, gymnastics and health related activity. A new reconfiguration of the junior certificate across Irish post-primary schools (DES, 2015) has more recently introduced the opportunity for junior cycle students to undertake a "short course" in physical education, which is a more formalized programme of physical education study accumulating to hundred hours over two years. Senior cycle physical education (NCCA, 2011a) caters for years 5 to 6 (ages 14/15 to 17/18) and is delivered through six curriculum and instructional models – Health Related Physical Fitness, Sport Education, Contemporary Issues in Physical Activity, Adventure Education, Personal and Social Responsibility and Teaching Games for Understanding. An examinable physical education option at

senior cycle has recently been approved (NCCA, 2011b), and we await the roll-out of a programme of support for teachers who wish to offer this opportunity in their school.

Primary Initial Teacher Education

Four initial teacher education providers (across colleges, institutions and universities) prepare primary teachers in a four-year undergraduate programme across all curricular areas (face to face). The programmes are delivered by different departments involved in teacher education and focus on the three strands of subject knowledge pedagogies, professional studies and school placement. One two-year Professional Master's in Education programme is an alternative pathway to the four-year undergraduate programme. Provision of this two-year Professional Master's in Education is facilitated by the four providers of initial teacher education programmes and by a private college that offers a blended approach of online and face to face. Primary PETEducators are not necessarily expected to hold a PhD initially but are usually expected to enter into doctoral studies over time.

Entry and Selection

Entrance requirements for the four-year undergraduate programme is through a central application system based on points (i.e., if candidates achieve the required points on graduating from school they gain automatic selection). There are three compulsory minimum grades for maths, English and Irish. A separate selection process (i.e., interviews) is in place for mature students over 23. The entrance requirement for the Professional Master's in Education programme is gaining a particular level of achievement in Irish language in the post-primary education state exam. Potential candidates are selected after an interview and Irish oral language competency interview.

Programme Content

The programme content is determined by the Teaching Council with a four-year undergraduate programme being required to accumulate 240 ECTS (5 ECTS for physical education) and the Professional Master's in Education programme being required to accumulate 120 ECTS (2.5 ECTS for physical education). Some programmes also include options for pre-service teachers to study a physical education specialism throughout their four-year undergraduate course.

Within the four-year undergraduate programme, pre-service teachers receive two physical education modules. One exemplar of an approach to implementation of the physical education component is where pre-service teachers complete one module in first year (2.5 ECTS) and one in the second year (2.5 ECTS). The focus within the first module is development of pedagogy through practical engagement with content within each strand of the primary physical education curriculum (DES, 1999). Pre-service teachers learn how to organize children, resources and activities and experience effective approaches to interacting and implementing content through instructional models. This module requires the pre-service teachers to teach small components of lessons where they receive post-lesson peer feedback. A movement education model enables the pre-service teachers to understand basic movement concepts that will assist them in teaching students basic movement patterns. The second module, while maintaining the instructional model, develops pre-service teacher knowledge of pedagogy within junior classes (4–8 year olds) and advances their knowledge of curriculum models, for example, movement model. Pre-service teachers begin their role as researchers where they use existing research to engage in presentations to their pre-service peers. Throughout both modules there is an emphasis on formative assessment and, in particular, assessment for learning, where alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is demonstrated in all lessons.

The professional master's in education adopts a similar approach to the four-year undergraduate programme but with a greater emphasis on critical reflection and engagement and a requirement to support all assessment components within the module with relevant research. Pre-service teachers complete one single module (2.5 ECTS) within one semester of the two-year programme.

EXAMPLE OF A PARTICULAR PETE PHILOSOPHY RUNNING THROUGHOUT A PROGRAMME

While a variety of approaches are adopted within each individual primary PETE provider, theory and pedagogy are generally explored through the delivery of, and engagement with, practical physical education activities. One exemplar of a particular PETE philosophy that runs through a primary initial teacher education programme is the use of assessment for learning strategies. The aim is to provide pre-service teachers with the theoretical and practical knowledge of assessment for learning strategies where assessment is embedded within their teaching as opposed to an additional requirement within their teaching of physical education. Pre-service teachers engage in and practice approaches modelled by the lecturer on (i) providing children with the learning intention and success criteria, (ii) eliciting evidence from students through questioning and observation, (iii) the use of

feedback, (iv) how to engage children in self-assessment and (v) preparing children to begin peer assessment. Through the use of an assessment for learning philosophy, pre-service teachers explore a range of assessment tools that could be employed within a particular strand of the curriculum.

Graduating Opportunities

There remains high demand in Ireland for primary teachers, so career opportunities in primary schools are high. International opportunities are also available for those who wish to teach in other countries. A small number of graduates (in comparison to other subject discipline programmes) choose to undertake further study at a research master's or PhD level.

Post-Primary Initial PETE

Three universities prepare physical education teachers with a second subject (i.e., they qualify in being able to teach physical education and one other subject in post-primary schools) on four-year undergraduate programmes. One two-year professional master's programme is an alternative pathway to the four-year undergraduate programme. Physical education teacher educators are expected to hold a PhD.

Entry and Selection

Entry into the four-year undergraduate programme is through a central application system based on points (i.e., if candidates achieve the required points on graduating from school, they gain automatic selection). A separate selection process (i.e., interviews) is in place for mature students over 23. Entrance requirements for the Professional Master's in Education (physical education) programme include completion of an undergraduate programme that is deemed to have provided sufficient content knowledge in the physical activity areas that are taught in school physical education.

Programme Content

The programme content is determined by the Teaching Council with a four-year undergraduate programme being required to accumulate 240 ECTS (90 ECTS for physical education, 60 ECTS for elective subject, 25% school placement, remainder for educational studies) and the Professional Master's in Education programme being

required to accumulate 120 ECTS across physical education, educational studies and school placement (Teaching Council, 2016a).

The 90 ECTS allocated to the study of the physical education component are split between the study of particular physical activities (60 ECTS) and more theoretically grounded content areas (30 ECTS) (Teaching Council, 2013). The particular physical activities and theoretical areas are noted in table 9.4. Interestingly, physical education is one of a small number of subjects (e.g., music and home economics) where the Teaching Council registration is expected to demonstrate they achieved more than 60 ECTS in the subject content.

Physical activity	Theoretical areas
Adventure activities	(i) Anatomical, physiological and biomechanical aspects of movement
Aquatics	(ii) Factors which inhibit and promote (personal, biological, psychological, sociological, environmental) participation in physical activity and sport
Athletics	(iii) Disability and movement
Dance	(iv) Historical, sociological and philosophical aspects of physical education
Games	(v) Growth, motor-skill learning and development of the child and adolescent
Gymnastics	(vi) Physical activity/sport promotion and health across the lifespan and
Health-related activity	(vii) Artistic and creative studies

Table 9.4. Requirements of post-primary PETE four-year undergraduate programmes

EXAMPLE OF A PARTICULAR PETE PHILOSOPHY RUNNING THROUGHOUT A PROGRAMME

Both PETE programmes at the University of Limerick invest a significant amount of time in exposing pre-service teachers to a range of curriculum models. This is enhanced by the track record of a number of PETE faculty teaching on the programme having considerable practical and research experience in a number of curriculum models as well as the Irish senior cycle physical education curriculum being framed around curriculum (and instructional) models and not physical activity strands. The aim is to prepare pre-service teachers who can (i) articulate the principles of curriculum models in physical

education and (ii) differentiate between the best use of particular curriculum models in relation to the curriculum focus, the interests and values of the students and the values of the teacher.

Faculty are careful to qualify the working definition of the terms *curriculum model* and *instructional model*. Curriculum models are focused, theme based and reflect a specific philosophy. They define a clear focus around the content, and aim towards specific, relevant and challenging outcomes. Once a curriculum model is selected to develop the type of learning students are to experience, the teacher needs to determine which instructional models most appropriately guide instruction and student learning. Instructional models organize instruction and how students will interact with and practice content. An instructional model includes a number of strategies, methods, styles and skills that are used to plan, design and implement a unit of instruction. Given these definitions, models such as Sport Education and Teaching Games for Understanding can be considered as curriculum *and* instructional models, as they provide both a philosophy on the delivery of content as well as how to most effectively deliver that content through particular instructional strategies.

On the four-year undergraduate programme, pre-service teachers undertake pedagogy modules that entail them experiencing and learning about how to teach particular physical activity strands through particular curriculum models. For example, they experience and learn invasion games through Teaching Games for Understanding, dance and gymnastics through Contemporary Issues in Physical Activity and athletics/ track and field through Sport Education. They also study each of the models included in the senior cycle curriculum in curriculum classes, focusing on the theoretical stance, research evidence and pedagogical principles for each model. As part of this curriculum module they attend curriculum workshops where pre-service teachers on the professional master's programme deliver a workshop on how they would approach teaching particular curriculum models in a physical education context.

In preparing unit designs/schemes of work as prerequisites for school placement, pre-service teachers are to identify a curriculum model (after noting the school/ student context, goal for the unit, a culminating assessment and learning outcomes) that is best suited to teaching towards the student achievement goals they have identified for the unit of work. This further encourages the pre-service teachers to avoid an over-reliance on considering only the content of physical activity and rather consider the most effective framework through which it can be experienced.

Graduating Opportunities

Most graduates tend to secure some hours teaching physical education and their elective subject in Irish schools. Those who would rather have a full-time complement of teaching on graduating tend to choose to teach in other countries, particularly the UK and the EUA. On graduation, some universities stipulate that it is anticipated that graduates would display the following attributes: knowledgeable, proactive, creative, responsible, collaborative and articulate (University of Limerick, 2012). In such instances, programmes are encouraged to map the attributes across the duration of their programmes. A small number of graduates (in comparison to other programmes) choose to undertake further study at a research master's or PhD level.

Primary and Post-Primary-School Placement Component of Initial Teacher Education Programmes

The Teaching Council publication *Guidelines on School Placement* (2013) advocates for a partnership approach, whereby higher education institutions and schools actively collaborate in the organization of the school placement. The Teaching Council has determined that 25 per cent of pre-service teacher time over the four years of undergraduate programmes and 40 per cent of student time over the two years of post-graduate/professional master's programmes should be allocated to school placement. School placement is to encompass a school-based element (direct teaching and other school-based activities in a recognized school) and a range of higher education institutions-directed activities.

With respect to primary, it is recommended by the Teaching Council (2013) that pre-service teachers should be exposed to teaching in a variety of school contexts and gain experience of teaching a range of class levels. Experience of working in special educational settings and in schools where the curriculum is taught through the Irish language is also recommended where possible. The structure and approach to engaging pre-service teachers in school placement varies between initial teacher education providers but still adheres to the guidelines set out by the Teaching Council (2013). Pre-service teachers complete assessed placements in every year of their undergraduate programme. An example of one approach used across a four-year undergraduate programme is (i) a three-week placement in year one with six one-day observations in advance of that, (ii) two week non-assessed mentored placement, (iii) two-week placement in a special

educational setting and a three-week assessed placement in year two, (iv) two blocks of three-week placement in year three and (v) a ten-week placement in year four. During the Professional Master's in Education programme, pre-service teachers complete (i) six individual days of observation and two three-week blocks of placement in year one and (ii) a ten-week placement in year two. All pre-service teachers are allocated a school placement tutor and complete their placement with a cooperating classroom teacher. All school placement blocks must be completed, and pre-service teachers must achieve a pass grade in all blocks in order to graduate from the respective programmes.

With respect to post-primary placement, pre-service teachers complete two formalized school placements regardless of being enrolled on the four-year undergraduate PETE programme or the two-year Professional Master's in Education (physical education) programme. For those on the undergraduate programme, they typically complete an eight-week placement in year two and a ten-week placement in year four. Those undertaking the professional master's programme complete an eight-week placement in year one and a ten-week placement in year two. Pre-service teachers undertaking undergraduate programme are to teach both physical education and their elective subject. Both placements are completed in different schools. Each pre-service teacher is allocated a university tutor and a cooperating teacher in the school with the intention that both will provide support to the pre-service teacher. School placement is a compulsory component of the programme, and if a pre-service teacher fails this component he or she does not graduate from the programme.

Primary and Post-Primary Induction

A compulsory registration requirement was implemented by the Teaching Council, requiring all pre-service teachers who completed their teacher education qualification in 2012 and subsequently, to engage in and complete an induction programme once they qualified as teachers (Teaching Council, 2015). A series of induction workshops aim to support newly qualified teachers both professionally and personally and encourage lifelong learning in teacher education. In 2014, a number of alternative pathways were introduced to provide flexibility in this process for newly qualified teachers. At present two pathways of induction are in place for newly qualified teachers (probation and Droichead), and the induction process is under constant review to determine the longevity of each framework.

Probation

The probationary process involves two elements that must be completed to fulfil the process to a satisfactory level. The first is the completion of a specific period of service within the school setting and the second, a demonstration of competency in the school setting. The duration of service must comprise one hundred consecutive school days in an individual setting or a minimum of two blocks of fifty consecutive days across two school settings. A member of the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills is employed to carry out inspections that evaluate the professional competency of the newly qualified teacher across all curricular subjects and in general pedagogical knowledge and application in the classroom environment. The inspector will consult with the school head teacher or nominated mentor-teacher following all visits, and the newly qualified teacher will receive a rating of satisfactory or unsatisfactory professional competence.

Droichead

Droichead was introduced by the Teaching Council in 2013 as an integrated professional induction framework where newly qualified teachers engage with and learn from more experienced teachers in the school setting (Teaching Council, 2016b). A requirement where newly qualified teachers attend cluster meetings once a month is offered as an alternative to the ten hours of workshops within the traditional probation route. These cluster meetings provide additional professional learning opportunities and are facilitated by trained mentors from the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT). In addition to this, newly qualified teachers must also engage in one other professional learning activity that is selected in consultation with their Professional Support Team and based on their own individual learning needs. The Droichead route of induction must be completed within a block of sixty consecutive school days and in the same school setting. While some exceptions exist for those teachers employed in a shared capacity within a cluster of schools, the NIPT will be contacted to sanction whether this option is viable. The pathway using Droichead is not available to all schools but rather schools must fulfil specific criteria in relation to teacher numbers to avail of this pathway. At present, schools with a teaching staff of 24 can engage in the Droichead pathway of induction. However, further growth phases that include a wider range of schools are under review at present. In contrast to the probation pathway, the Droichead framework is non-evaluative and involves newly qualified teachers having greater autonomy over their professional learning journey. They engage in professional conversations with their school-based mentors and professional mentors from the NIPT to ascertain their own level of professional growth and determine subsequent learning for the next phase of their careers (Teaching Council, 2016b). Upon completion of the Droichead induction

process, a recommendation is made to the Teaching Council that the newly qualified teacher is ready to formally enter the teaching profession and, upon confirmation, will be deemed fully registered by the Teaching Council.

Specific to post-primary, all newly qualified teachers are registered with the requirement/condition of completion of a period of post-qualification employment (PQE) or through the Droichead process. This requires evidence that demonstrates that the newly qualified teacher has completed three hundred hours of teaching in a post-primary school. Two thirds of the time must highlight teaching of a curricular area to a designated class on the school timetable, and the remaining time can involve any teaching activity with a class in the school. The Teaching Council outlines that more than one school can be used for completing the required hours, but all hours must be completed within a three-year time frame.

Primary and Post-Primary In-Service Provision

The Cosán Framework for Teachers' Learning (Teaching Council, 2016c) is the national framework for teachers' learning. It acknowledges, encourages and promotes teachers' learning and fosters public recognition of their commitment to learning. It recognizes (i) the many different ways that teachers learn, (ii) teachers as autonomous and responsible learning professionals, and (iii) the importance of individual and school contexts. Cosán is a flexible framework that acknowledges the need for teachers to have access to rich and varied quality learning opportunities that best meet their learning needs and those of their students.

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) constitutes seconded primary and post-primary teachers with a subject specialism acting as facilitators who are responsible for up-skilling their colleagues working in schools on numerous areas and providing associated resources. Such areas include assessment and evaluation, literacy, numeracy, physical literacy, key skills, ICT and learning, official documents and physical education.

Physical Education Professional Bodies

The Irish Primary Physical Education Association (IPPEA) is a voluntary association with the aim of heightening teacher awareness of issues relating to physical education in the primary school. Provision of workshops and an annual conference promote physical education in the primary school and supports primary-school teachers in their delivery

of physical education. Through liaison with a range of organizations, the IPPEA aims to promote physical activity within the school setting. The annual conference enables professional conversations regarding pedagogy and a space where primary-school teachers can engage in professional development in physical education.

The Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) is a voluntary professional body of physical education teachers, physical education teacher educators and pre-service physical education teachers who advocate for post-primary physical education on behalf of the physical education profession. The PEA host events throughout the year that allow the profession to respond to current challenges for school physical education as well as contribute to consultations on proposed changes/extensions to the post-primary-school physical education curriculum. An annual conference attracts those interested in up-skilling in particular physical activity strands and learning about innovative pedagogical practices in physical education, and provides an opportunity to talk informally with physical education colleagues throughout the country.

Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) Ireland was established to provide a space where all involved in delivering and supporting PETE in Ireland (primary and post-primary) could come together to share practices, consider standardizing procedures across PETE programmes and identify current issues that require a response from the Irish PETE community.

Research on Irish PETE

Research on Irish initial post-primary PETE programmes, for those preparing post-primary physical education teachers, falls into a number of areas. This includes research on the enactment of curriculum and instruction models within Irish PETE programmes (Deenihan & MacPhail, 2013 & 2011; McMahon & MacPhail, 2007), practices that have been used in Irish PETE programmes in an attempt to heighten the experience of pre-service teachers including the teaching of instructional alignment (MacPhail, Tannehill & Goc Karp, 2013), promoting change agency (MacPhail & Tannehill, 2012), and the use of metaphors (Tannehill & MacPhail, 2014), and the experiences of physical education pre-service teacher cohorts (O'Sullivan, MacPhail & Tannehill, 2009; Ralph & MacPhail, 2014).

Research on the induction and subsequent pathways of Irish physical education post-primary teacher graduates is also available (Iannucci & MacPhail, 2017; MacPhail & Hartley, 2016; O'Sullivan, 2006), as well as that considering the experiences of those involved in the physical education school placement relationship/triad (Belton, Woods,

Dunning & Meegan, 2010; Chambers & Armour, 2011; Dunning, Meegan, Woods et al., 2011; Young & MacPhail, 2014a, 2014b, & 2016).

Research on Irish primary PETE similarly can be categorized into a number of areas: teachers' use of formative assessment and its implementation within their teaching (Ní Chróinín & Cosgrave, 2013; Macken & O'Leary, 2011; MacPhail & Murphy, 2017), using sport education within primary physical education (Kinchin, MacPhail, Chroinin, 2012 & 2009), the impact of cross-curricular integration on the teaching of physical education (Ní Chróinín, Ní Mhurchú, Ó Ceallaigh, 2016) and the use of technology in physical education (O'Loughlin, Ní Chróinín, & O'Grady, 2013). In addition, research activity has been carried out on primary physical education professional development programmes (Coulter & Woods, 2011; Parker, Patton, & Tannehill, 2017), physical activity in the primary school (Bowles, Murtagh, & Ní Chróinín, 2017), initial teacher education (Ní Chróinín & Coulter, 2012) and physical education provision for children with special educational needs (Marron, Murphy & O'Keeffe, 2013).

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