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Suggested Reference

Powell, D. (2015). Assembling the privatisation of physical education and the 'inexpert' teacher. *Sport, Education and Society*, 20(1), 73-88.
doi: [10.1080/13573322.2014.941796](https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.941796)

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<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13573322.2014.941796>

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Assembling the privatisation of PE and the ‘inexpert’ teacher

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In this article, I examine the practice of outsourcing Physical Education (PE) lessons to external sports organisations. I draw from ethnographic research conducted with two primary schools in New Zealand to illuminate how outsourcing interconnects with the privatisation of education. Using Foucault’s notion of government, I demonstrate how schools’ employment of four outside providers worked to govern teachers towards certain ends. In addition, I drew on the analytical framework of the assemblage to examine how the dual notions of the inexpert classroom teacher and the expert outside provider converged with the discourse of ‘PE as sport’, neoliberalism, Kiwisport, National Standards, professional development and multi-sector partnerships to form a privatisation assemblage. I argue that the privatisation assemblage worked to restrict and constrain teachers’ possible thoughts and actions, making teachers’ ‘choice’ to outsource PE one that they understood as both pragmatic, in terms of time investment, and educationally valuable, insofar as they perceived themselves as lacking the requisite expertise. I also argue that outsourcing and the privatisation of PE is problematic as it did not necessarily work in the best interests of teachers or students. I suggest further research is necessary to interrogate and make visible how the disparate elements of the privatisation assemblage are made to hold together, as well as how the fragile connections between these elements may be placed under pressure. The notion that outside providers are expert PE teachers and classroom teachers are inexpert is a critical aspect of the assemblage that should be challenged and resisted.

Key words: *Physical education; Privatisation; Assemblage; Government; Ethnography; Corporations; Outsourcing; Experts; Professional development; Neoliberalism*

Introduction

In this article I seek to throw light on the practice of outsourcing through a critical examination of the use of ‘outside providers’ to teach Physical Education (PE) in primary schools. By drawing from a range of evidence gathered during a critical ethnographic research project in two New Zealand primary schools, I aim to demonstrate how outsourcing interconnects with privatisation in and of education. Furthermore, I argue that privatisation is not simply an end in itself, a governmental intervention based on a singular, explicit rationality to transfer public education services to the private sector. Rather, privatisation is created and maintained through a messy assemblage of rationalities, politics, institutions, relationships, discourses, individuals and subjectivities. Outsourcing is an integral aspect of the ‘creeping privatisation’ of education (Socket, 1984), one of a number of elements that has gradually and stealthily opened up the provision of education services, including teaching PE,

‘to non-public sector organisations, with privatisation as a longer term, rather than the immediate, objective’ (O’Neill, 2011, p. 18).

Ball and Youdell (2007, p. 13) argue that there are two distinct (yet often overlapping) types of ‘hidden privatisation’ in public education: endogenous and exogenous privatisation. *Endogenous* privatisation refers to privatisation *in* public education, where various practices, rationales and techniques of the private sector are imported into the public sphere (i.e. New Public Management, school league tables, performance-related pay). *Exogenous* privatisation is the privatisation *of* public education. According to Ball and Youdell (2007, p. 13) this involves ‘the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education’ (for example, charter schools and Public-Private Partnerships). Outsourcing can therefore be understood as a practice that blurs the boundaries between privatisation in education and of education. When schools outsource services (i.e. teaching PE) to external organisations, they not only employ a business strategy of the private sector (based on neoliberal notions of choice and efficiency), but allow public education to be used as a tool for non-public organisations (voluntary, private, and philanthropic organisations) to strategically and financially ‘profit’ (see Powell, 2013; Powell & Gard, 2014; Williams & Macdonald, 2014).

O’Neill (2011) states there is a scarcity of research on the ‘actual privatisation’ (p. 27) in and of education in New Zealand, ‘the concrete effects of privatisation practices as they are occurring’ (p. 30). Williams, Hay, and Macdonald (2011, p. 401) also note that the outsourcing of health and physical education ‘has been the focus of little empirical research and only occasional commentary’. There have been few studies which have examined the outsourcing of health and physical education in the New Zealand context. Macdonald, Hay, and Williams (2008) analysed a selection of outsourced Health and Physical Education (HPE)

programmes from New Zealand and Australia. More recently, Petrie, Penny and Fallow (2014, p. 19) mapped the external provision of HPE in New Zealand, revealing ‘an abundance of players in the “HPE market”’. There has, however, been little research on the outsourcing and privatisation of PE in the New Zealand context that has examined in-depth “the lived sites of educational places and spaces” (Leahy, 2012, p. 75).

In this article, I examine the ‘actual privatisation’ of PE in New Zealand primary schools through an interrogation of how different authorities (the state, corporations, national sports organisations) and actors (CEO’s, politicians, sports coaches) attempted to ‘improve’ the teaching of PE in schools by shaping teacher’s thoughts, actions and beliefs about PE – and themselves. Central to my argument is how the dual notions of the *inexpert classroom teacher* and the *expert outside provider* interconnect with an array of elements to form a privatisation assemblage that has made the outsourcing of PE ‘natural and inevitable’ (Macdonald, 2011 p. 36).

Assembling a research approach

In order to conceptualise and critically examine practices of outsourcing and privatisation, I have drawn on Foucault’s and post-Foucauldian scholars’ thoughts on government and governmentality. Foucault (1991) argued that in modern societies it was not feasible to govern the population by forcing or coercing each and every individual to think and act in a particular way. Rather, he defined modern government as ‘the conduct of conduct ... a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons’ (Gordon, 1991, p. 2). This ‘art of government’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 89) involves a ‘thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 194) of elements - knowledges, tactics, technologies, discourses, practices, rationalities, regulations, moral propositions and

institutions – used in the *attempt* to guide the conduct of a population towards certain (albeit unpredictable) ends (see also Dean, 2010; Miller & Rose, 2008).

I found the notion of the *ensemble* an useful starting point for my analytics of the government of schools, teachers and children (see also Leahy, 2012; Weidner, 2010). A number of social theorists, including Foucault, employed a variety of terms - *agencement*, regime of practices, apparatus, *dispositif* - to describe the ways in which these disparate elements form together to respond ‘to an urgent need’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 195). I use the term ‘assemblage’ as a key analytical tool through which to explore the ‘need’ for teachers to outsource PE teaching to external sports organisations. The term ‘assemblage’ needs to be thought of as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, the privatisation assemblage may be conceptualised as an ‘already formed’ cluster of practices, organisations, discourses, rationalities, practices, regulations, individuals and moralities that has linkages to other assemblages. Viewing the privatisation assemblage as a verb - ‘to assemble’ - encourages a richer, more in-depth examination of *how* these various elements of privatisation are brought together and work to ‘act upon human conduct to direct it to certain ends’ (Rose, 2000, p. 323).

A common criticism of governmentality studies is their overarching focus on the ‘blueprints’ to govern – what governors *wanted to happen* (see Brady, 2011; Li, 2007a; McKee, 2009). Although these ‘official’ plans form an important part of my analysis, I have combined this ‘discursive governmentality’ approach (Stenson, 2005, p. 266) with an examination of what ‘actually happens’ when programmes of government (such as outsourced PE programmes) meet their intended targets. It was therefore crucial to collect evidence of not only what authorities wanted to happen, but the micro-level ‘specific, located and embodied practices’ (Ball, 2012, p. 66) of outsourcing and privatisation as they occurred in ‘actually existing’ schools. To do this I employed a *critical ethnographic approach*,

combining Foucauldian theoretical ‘tools’ with ethnographic methods - spending time in schools, conversing with teachers, children, principals and outside providers, observing participants ‘in action’, and collecting documentary evidence. This allowed me to conduct a ‘bottom-up’ (Brady, 2011, p. 267) analysis of privatisation that focused on understanding the ‘social realities’ of schools and the ‘subjugated knowledges’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 82) of those who acted as both governors and the governed.

The evidence I draw on in this article comes from my time conducting research in two ‘full’ primary schools with students from Year One to Year Eight (5-13 years of age): St Luke’s School and Dudley School.¹ St Luke’s School was a Catholic co-educational primary school located in suburban area of West Auckland. Dudley School was a co-educational state primary school located in a small rural community south of Auckland.

There were four programmes that these two schools ‘brought in’ to teach their students that were used by the teachers - and promoted by the outside providers - as *curricula physical education* (i.e. they were taught to students during curriculum time, as opposed to before school or after school). They were also programmes that were developed and/or implemented by ‘not-for-profit’ National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) rather than for-profit companies. ASB Football in Schools was an initiative developed by the national football body, Football New Zealand. It was promoted as a ‘football literacy programme ... delivered in school time as part of a typical physical education class’ (Football New Zealand, n.d.). In the case of St Luke’s School, all students (Year One to Eight) received coaching from two coaches employed by the Auckland Football Federation.

moveMprove® was a ‘fundamental movement pattern’ programme devised by GymSports New Zealand, the national body for ‘gym sports’ (i.e. gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, trampolining). It was implemented at both St Luke’s and Dudley School over six

sessions by coaches from a local gymnastic club - coaches who had received training and accreditation from GymSports New Zealand (see GymSports New Zealand, 2006).

Get Set Go was a 'fundamental movement skills' programme for 4-8 year olds (see Athletics New Zealand, 2014). At St Luke's School, only the Year One and Two children (5-7 years) participated. Although developed and run by Athletics New Zealand (the national body for athletics), the programme was implemented in schools by coaches from Regional Sports Trusts. At St Luke's School, Get Set Go was conducted by Jonie, a coach employed by Sport Auckland.

ActivePost Small Sticks In-School programme (hereinafter Small Sticks) was designed by the national hockey organisation, Hockey New Zealand (see Hockey New Zealand, n.d.). At St Luke's School, all students experienced four hockey sessions coached by Andrea, a representative hockey player from Auckland Hockey, whose training for the Small Sticks programme involved a 'very boring' 'two hour coaching seminar'.

What follows is an examination of the privatisation assemblage in which I have pulled apart and separated elements that are integral to the government of teachers and the privatisation of PE: discourses of sport, practices of outsourcing, corporate philanthropy, government policies, the neoliberal political rationality, the shaping of subjectivities and 'actually existing' PE programmes delivered by outside providers. Further to this, I also illuminate *how* these elements were made to converge and 'congeal' (Leahy, 2012), the 'hard work required to ... forge connections between them and sustain these connections in the face of tension' (Li, 2007a, p. 264).

'Much better than I could have done it': Assembling (in)experts

To be able to introduce a specific programme of government, a specific situation or moment in which government is conceived as a 'problem' must first be identified. It is through these

processes of *problematization* that government, including self-government, is questioned so that various authorities re-pose how we may (or may not) shape our own and others' conduct. A common theme that emerged in the research was that the classroom teachers' conduct was problematized by principals, outside providers and teachers themselves in terms of having an 'inexpert' level of knowledge and competence, one that prevented teachers from being willing or able to teach PE to their own students (see also Williams & Macdonald, 2014). As Ms Ellie (the classroom teacher for Year Six/Seven and the school-wide leader of PE at St Luke's School) informed me, teachers tended to outsource their PE programmes because 'a lot of the teachers don't have the skills nowadays'.

To the contrary, the outside providers of moveMprove®, ASB Football in Schools, Get Set Go, and Small Sticks were positioned and promoted as the 'experts'. Miss Black (Year One/Two teacher at St Luke's School) stated that a key benefit of using these outside providers was that 'there's definitely a level of expertise that comes with those teachers'. Small Sticks hockey coach Andrea agreed that the reason teachers used her and other outside providers was for 'that specialist and expert knowledge'. The construction of an expert/inexpert binary was achieved through the intimate connection between discourses of *teaching PE* and *coaching sports skills*.

The 'PE is the same as coaching sport skills' discourse

It was common for teachers, principals and outside providers to talk about PE in a way that privileged the technical elements of sport, especially being able to 'teach' children how to play a sport (e.g. football, gymnastics) and perform sports-related 'skills' (e.g. dribbling a hockey ball, doing a forward roll, kicking a ball). Mr Spurlock, the Year Seven/Eight classroom teacher at Dudley School with school-wide responsibilities for PE, stated:

I see PE in the end more about teaching skills. And you can teach the same skill in Year Seven and Eight to a kid in Year Two or Three. I mean, it just depends on how much they take it on board - dumb it down a bit more for Year Two and Three.

The ‘teaching PE is the same as coaching sports skills’ discourse so strongly underpinned teachers’ understanding of PE that the value of an outsourced programme and its expert coach was inextricably entwined with the ability of the coach to develop students’ sports-related skills. As experienced St Luke’s teacher Ms Ellie described the advantage of using outside providers for PE: ‘Well, we have an expert to teach. It’s a focus on that particular sport, and they can break down the skills probably better than [the teacher]’.

Through the conflation of coaching sport with PE, classroom teachers positioned themselves as *inexperts* because they did not think they had the necessary knowledge and skills to coach sports-skills *in comparison to* the expert football/gymnastic/Sport Auckland/hockey coaches. For instance, Mrs Donna (a Year Two teacher at Dudley School) stated the value of outsourcing her PE programme to the moveMprove® gymnastics coaches:

I think it was better for the children because they had someone actually promoting the warm-up side of it first - getting them to use their body parts and stretch before they went into the activity ... I often worry about teaching them the right move, whether they going to hurt themselves. And some of the equipment they have, we don’t have, so we can’t get them to do things like the ‘lift and holding themselves’ [horizontal bar activity] you know? I think that was really good. It was much better than us. (my emphasis)

The Kiwisportification of primary school PE

One strategy that not only helped to reproduce the ‘PE is the same as coaching sport skills’ discourse, but made the outsourcing and privatisation of PE possible, was the development of *Kiwisport*. This \$82 million² state-funded initiative was launched in August 2009 by Prime Minister John Key (2009) as a programme ‘to get more young Kiwis involved in organised sport’. At St Luke’s School *Kiwisport*-funded organisations and their outsourced coaches/instructors dominated the provision of ‘PE’ learning experiences. A newsletter was even sent to the parents of students at St Luke’s School that read: ‘This year we are on the *Kiwisport* contract where expert coaches come and teach our children skills’. In fact, during my six months at St Luke’s *every PE lesson* was taken by a *Kiwisport* provider.

To achieve the *Kiwisport* aims, the National-led government developed a new policy and funding regime for schools to access a range of sport-related coaching programmes. *Kiwisport* was funded in two ways: direct funding and regional partnership funding. The government provided \$37 million to the ‘Regional Partnership Fund’. The 17 Regional Sports Trusts (such as Sport Auckland) were able to access funding based on the number of children in their region. Each Regional Sports Trust was then responsible for administering and allocating the contestable funds to projects that they believed would help attain the goals of *Kiwisport*.

Primary schools were able to apply for their share of \$24 million of ‘Direct Funding’ to a maximum of \$13.11 per student per year. According to Key (2009):

As outlined in pre-election commitments, direct funding means schools will have the flexibility and the freedom to apply the money to address their specific needs to help ensure more children play sport. The reporting requirements for this funding will not be onerous and bureaucratic, but will hold schools to account that they are using the funds to promote sport.

Within the privatisation assemblage, outsourcing to Kiwisport providers was strongly interconnected with key neoliberal tenets of neoliberalism: efficiency, ‘limited government’, autonomy, accountability, and freedom of choice. The Kiwisport funding regime claimed efficiency through its alleged lack of ‘onerous’ bureaucracy, yet stressed the importance of accountability for the self-governing school. Schools were given the ‘the flexibility and freedom’ to ‘choose’ how to spend their funding, belying the fact that their choices were constricted: they had to spend their money on the ‘right’ providers in the ‘correct’ way – those that achieved the specific aims of Kiwisport. These choices did not necessarily meet the *learning needs* of the students (see also Petrie et al., 2014).

Further to this, even though the outsourced PE programmes were not obviously commercial in nature (i.e. they were not ‘user pay’ PE programmes such as SPARK in the United States or Jump Jam in New Zealand, see Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2013), they were privatised through their connection to, and alignment with, for-profit companies and industries. All four programmes were devised and funded through partnerships formed between National Sporting Organisations and various private, public, and voluntary sector organisations (see Powell, 2013). ASB Football in Schools, for example, was supported by a number of ‘commercial partners’: ASB, Volkswagen, Persil, Nike and McDonald’s (see New Zealand Football, n.d.). Get Set Go was a partnership between Athletics New Zealand and ActivePost, a community health/social responsibility programme developed by state-owned corporation New Zealand Post. New Zealand Post also enlisted Mike Hall-Taylor, CEO of HTC Sportsworld, as an ‘expert’ to ‘help shape the programme’ (Thornton, 2011, p. B24).⁴ Another ActivePost programme - Small Sticks - was additionally sponsored by Ford and Fuji-Xerox (and more recently Kookaburra). moveMprove® was supported by the New Zealand Olympic Committee, Sport New Zealand (a government-funded organisation), as well as The Lion Foundation, a ‘pokies’ trust funded by (compulsory, legislated) proceeds

from its gaming/gambling machines. Kiwisport and its public, private, voluntary and ‘philanthropic’ funding acted as significant technologies of government inside the assemblage which ‘got government done’, actualized the neoliberal political rationality (see Inda, 2005) and supported the privatisation of PE.

‘Physed doesn’t matter’: National Standards and professional (under)development

Another crucial technology of government within the privatisation assemblage was the introduction of National Standards. Designed to ‘raise achievement’ by giving ‘teachers, children, parents, families and whānau a clear idea of where children are at in reading, writing and maths, and what they have to do next in their learning’ (Ministry of Education, 2010), the teachers and principals I spoke with regularly vented their concerns that National Standards were burdensome, unnecessary and restricted their ability to teach other curriculum areas. Dudley School principal Charles explained:

I mean if you listen to the government, the Ministry, [we] would only be doing reading, writing and maths. Nothing else matters. So physed doesn’t matter, art doesn’t matter, technology doesn’t matter. It’s just those three. If they’d left it as it was, and they concentrated on getting kids to school and eating properly and getting here ... instead of trying to change everything. National Standards – stupid, the crap [the Ministry of Education] are doing.

As Evans and Davies (2014, p. 3) also note, ‘given scarce economic and funding resources ... subjects not considered “core” (i.e. transparently, economically productive) have tended to become vulnerable luxuries and their teachers insecure in their responses to such pressures’. In a conversation with Ms Ellie, she told me that teachers outsourced their PE teaching because they lacked the skill and ‘time to prepare what they should do, like in

the old days they used to ... because of the constraints of the curriculum and the National Standards'. Ms Ellie's and other teachers concerns about a lack of skill and time to PE also aligns with the neoliberal notion of efficiency – teachers' time was perceived to be spent more efficiently when invested in 'more important' curricula areas and goals.

I asked Ms Ellie to explain the link between National Standards and teachers' lack of skill. She responded that there was

definitely not enough training in health and PE and not a lot of experts that come in [for professional development]. I mean we have the e-learning person comes in for the digital classroom and we have definitely have a lot of Ministry [of Education] input in [reading, writing and maths]. I guess the money's been directed into other areas because of that. Yeah, it is a concern.

The teachers and principals agreed that the Ministry of Education focused their support, both in terms of professional development (PD) and funding of human and material resources, on raising student achievement in National Standards areas – reading, writing and maths. However, it was *more* than simply the introduction of National Standards and attached support that coerced teachers to focus on reading, writing and maths *and* outsource their PE teaching. A number of policies converged in ways that acted to de-prioritise PE and 'other' subjects to the status of 'doesn't matter'.

For example, prior to the introduction of National Standards, all state schools across New Zealand were able to access School Support Services (SSS), a Ministry of Education advisory service which provided specialist subject consultants in health and PE, other learning areas (i.e. technology, social sciences) and cross-curricular initiatives (for example, e-learning, assessment for learning). These advisors assisted schools and staff for short and long-term time frames, providing a variety of services, such as developing school-specific

planning, assessment, policies, mentoring, curriculum and appropriate pedagogies. In August 2009 (the same month that the Kiwisport initiative was announced) schools found out that this professional development support service was to be cut in all areas except Information Communication Technology (ICT), literacy and mathematics (A. McKay, personal communication, April 30, 2014).³ In short, the government's prioritisation of reading, writing and maths coincided with the *elimination* of PE professional development support *and* the implementation of a new funding regime that made it easy and free for schools to outsource PE teaching to sports 'experts'.

How much professional development teachers received and to what effect differed between each teacher. At Dudley School, for instance, Mrs Donna was certain that she had participated in 'heaps' of PD for PE over the past seven years, but could not recall who conducted these professional development sessions or what the content was. Mrs Constansa said she could not recollect having participated in *any* PE professional development since she had graduated from university ten years before. I asked her if this was a problem, to which she smiled and replied: 'Nothing's changed in the past ten years, has it?' For Mrs Constansa, the potential problem of professional underdevelopment was dismissed as not a problem at all. Mr Spurlock, a leader of PE, said he had participated in three professional development sessions, all of which were sport-specific coaching courses: one run by a private company (for tennis) and the other two (cricket and rugby) conducted by the local Regional Sports Trust.

Although teachers had diverse perspectives as to how much *formal* PE professional development opportunities that had participated in, if any, there was one intriguing commonality: the idea that outsourcing their PE teaching to the Kiwisport experts concomitantly served to 'teach the teachers'. In other words, teachers rationalised the outsourcing of PE lessons to moveMprove®, ASB Football in Schools, Get Set Go and Small

Sticks as not only being the ‘obvious’ way for their students to experience PE, but a means for teachers to develop their professional capacity to teach PE. The boundaries between privatised PE and privatised PD were increasingly blurred.

This is not surprising given that the various public, private, philanthropic and voluntary sector organisations and their agents promoted the idea that outsourced ‘PE teachers’ were also expert PD providers. For instance, the ASB Football in Schools programme joined together taken-for-granted notions of ‘PE as sport’, with the external ‘expert’ sports coach, the ‘inexpert’ classroom teacher, and practices of outsourcing and professional development:

The concept of the football literacy programme is to help teachers deliver football as part of physical education In simple terms it provides teachers with the tools to build competence and confidence to bring football, the world’s most popular game, alive during class time Schools are a natural breeding ground for unstructured play and New Zealand Football is aiming to capitalise on this by providing parents, teachers and players with the expertise and tools to get the ball rolling At the same time it presents volunteer parents and teachers with the tools to create and deliver simple programmes that will encourage their children to become more active. (my emphasis, New Zealand Football, n.d.)

Likewise, New Zealand Post promoted the benefits of the Small Sticks programme as including ‘the teacher being trained, a minimum of four coaching session (sic) in school time with an accredited coach, a resource kit for schools to use after the programme is finished’ (New Zealand Post, 2012). The moveMprove® programme expected teachers ‘to work alongside the coaches and to assist the children with the activities’, in order for teachers to ‘develop and further their understanding of movement learning’ (GymSports New Zealand,

2006). Get Set Go also offered ‘teacher & coach professional development’ (Athletics New Zealand, 2012) with an aim to ‘support teachers, coaches and parents in the assessment, planning and development of foundation skills’.

I am not suggesting that teachers and principals were ‘duped’ into outsourcing privatised PE programmes through the promise of expert professional development. These programmes were, first and foremost, a means for teachers to shift the responsibility for teaching PE to multi-sector funded sports organisations, programmes and associated expert coaches. *How* teachers became convinced that the outsourcing PE was ‘normal’, ‘necessary’, and largely unproblematic was achieved through *practices of assemblage* that worked to gather ‘heterogeneous elements together’ (Li, 2007a, p. 264) and make them ‘stick’.

Securing the fragile assemblage: Resolving tensions and managing failures

The privatisation assemblage, like all assemblages, contained a number of relay points - points of connection between the heterogeneous elements – that were fragile and susceptible to fracture (see Li, 2007a). In order to keep the assemblage secure and ensure teachers were governed ‘at a distance’ to meet certain (i.e. privatised) ends, the brittle connections between expert and inexpert subjectivities, Kiwisport, National Standards, professional (under)development, neoliberalism, discourses of PE as sport, multiple authorities, partnerships and outsourcing, needed to be made robust. This required tensions and contradictions between elements to be swiftly resolved, failures managed, and critiques suppressed (see Li, 2007a). In order to test the strength of the privatisation assemblage required an interrogation of *how* these tensions were resolved (often rather seamlessly), *how* the failure of these governmental programmes to provide expert PE were transformed into successes, and *how* teacher’s critiques of (and resistance to) outsourced PE were confined.

As discussed earlier, the outsourced ‘PE’ programmes were promoted by the outside providers and understood by some teachers as beneficial to students’ learning *and* teachers’ teaching. However, what outside providers ‘promised’ in terms of professional development for teachers, what I observed in the schools, and how these teachers understood and experienced these externally provided PE-PD sessions contained a number of contradictions and failures that threatened the security and stability of the assemblage. Small Sticks, for example, was promoted as a programme that would ‘train’ the teacher through the four hockey sessions that the children received. However, the four sessions I observed at St Luke’s School included no formal training with the teachers and neither Ms Ellie nor Miss Black utilised the free ‘resource kit’ after the programme had finished. Despite the apparent failure of the outsourced programme and its expert provider to deliver the training it promised and support Ms Ellie to continue coaching hockey to her students, Ms Ellie managed this failure by arguing that there were ‘lots of things that I got out of [Small Sticks] by watching that can actually transfer to lots of other sports ... So there is some professional development’.

This idea that ‘watching’ an outside provider take a PE lesson acted as teacher professional development was ubiquitous. When I asked Mrs Donna how she felt about outside providers taking her students for PE, she replied:

Doesn’t worry me one bit. Because I’m *watching them and learning too*, because *I always take on board what they are doing* and sometimes it’s nice [to have providers] who are focused on one thing. I mean as school teachers we’ve got to focus on reading, writing, maths, health, PE, science, and it’s like sometimes our brains are brain-dead, and you do get into a rut and teach the same thing again and again and again. *And then you see someone else with another idea* and you think ‘that’s so cool’.
(my emphasis)

The rationalisation of outsourcing as a ‘watching and learning’ professional development opportunity acted to manage the contradiction between what these teachers considered to be ‘quality’ or ‘effective’ professional development in other curriculum areas and what was provided (or claimed to be provided) by the outsourced PE experts.

Mrs Donna and other teachers not only managed to assure themselves that outsourcing the teaching of PE ‘counted’ as PD, but that by watching the experts teach their students they would be ‘inspired’ to use a game or activity or lesson in the future. This is a notable contradiction, given that following the implementation of these PE/PD programmes teachers continued to prefer, indeed rely on, the external experts to teach PE *for them*. For instance, when I asked Mrs Donna how she felt using outside providers to teach her students, she replied:

I think it’s perfect. I personally think it should happen more often PE – it’s not my sort of passion. If I can miss out PE I will miss out PE! (laughs) ... If someone is coming in [for PE] I would say ‘yes’. I can go out, I can watch, I can learn from it. I will probably use it again. But I don’t have to think about ‘Oh my god, what I going to do with the kids for PE today? What game am I going to do that I haven’t done?’

Mrs Donna’s belief that outsourcing PE to the experts was a ‘perfect’ practice that she could ‘watch and learn’ from successfully masked the failure of these programmes to develop her skills, confidence or expertise to teach her own students a core curriculum area. Instead the status quo remained and Mrs Donna continued to outsource her lessons. The failure of these programmes to develop teachers’ ability and confidence to teach their own students PE was further accentuated when teachers did not even stay to watch the lesson. As Small Sticks

coach Andrea noted, there were a number of occasions where teachers were unwilling to ‘watch and learn’:

I have had teachers who have walked off. They’ve just dropped their class off and then walked off and they are like ‘Oh yeah, here you go, thanks’ ... I just think the ones who dropped them off are completely useless (laughs). The ones who observe, they can learn something from it ... but some just like see it as an hour off ... I do mind for [the students] that their teacher’s looking lazy and just goes have a cup of tea. [The teachers] aren’t learning anything.

Another notable contradiction was between what teachers and principals considered and demonstrated as ‘good practice’ or ‘best practice’ in *teaching* literacy and numeracy and the practices employed by the expert outside providers of PE. Although classroom teachers had *expert knowledge of the students* (i.e. students’ learning needs, (dis)abilities, levels of confidence, family situations, lives and their names), it was the outside providers (with little or no knowledge of the students) that were given responsibility for planning and teaching PE. The failure of the outside providers to know the students was not just problematic, but at times, ‘dangerous’. One such time was during Ms Ellie’s class’s second Small Sticks session. Andrea instructed the Year Six/Seven students on the rules for ‘Minefield, where all students were to dribble hockey balls around cones inside a ten by ten metre square. If their hockey ball touched one of the ‘mines’ (cones) their leg would be ‘blown off’ and they would have to hop on one leg and dribble for the rest of the game. One of the students looked rather befuddled at this rule - he only had one leg.

An additional failure of these outsourced programmes, one closely interwoven with outside providers ‘inexpert’ knowledge of the students, was their reliance on pre-planned, pre-packaged lessons and resources. This was clearly evident one day at St Luke’s School

when Ms Ellie's Year Six/Seven class and Miss Black's Year One/Two students participated in almost indistinguishable moveMprove® sessions, where 13 of the 15 activities were identical (e.g. jumping over a box, doing a forward roll down a slope). These 'one-size-fits-all' programmes frequently failed to meet the wide-ranging educational, physical, emotional, language, spiritual, social, behavioural needs of the children they were teaching. For example, there were a number of other instances in moveMprove® sessions when individual students were either unable to perform the 'right' skill in the 'right' way (for example, six year-old Asatasi at St Luke's School could not bunny hop over the bench) or did not find the set task challenging (such as six year-old Dudley School student Leo who told me the activities were 'too easy'). In both instances, students' experiences contradicted GymSports New Zealand's (n.d.) claim that it promoted 'a learner-centred approach' through 'flexible delivery models' where the expert coaches would 'add variety and to continually challenge children'.

An additional tension that needed to be resolved was that these schools already employed qualified, experienced and talented primary school teachers, but still needed to employ *unqualified* sports coaches to teach a core curriculum area. As Petrie et al. (2014, p. 31) note, in the New Zealand context few outside providers of health and physical education 'appear to have knowledge of learners or learning, education settings, curriculum or pedagogy'. Charles, principal of Dudley School, resolved this tension by stating that outsourcing PE gave 'another option for kids apart from the teacher - the same teacher all the time - although we have great staff, great teachers. But I think it's an outside agency that gives a lift to the programme'. Mrs Sergeant, principal of St Luke's, agreed:

I mean it's like when you listen to any old, crap record going on and on and on, you know? You just switch off. I think teachers here bend over backwards to make what they're presenting to children is engaging and you know, hugely grabbing and

effective. But having someone come in is brilliant! Because it's a new face, and a new voice and a new approach. And we can't beat variety! Come on, it's brilliant! Kids love it! I think part of it is having somebody different telling them these things rather than just their teacher.

The value placed on the expert outside provider was so strong that even the failure of the sports coach to meet the needs of the teachers or students was glossed over as insignificant. As Ms Ellie told me:

Even the one sport that didn't have great coaches, the children still loved it. I guess it's a different voice that's harping on to them. They make them quite fun activities, especially with the Kiwisport sports.

There were obvious points of tension that made the assemblage vulnerable to rupture and the 'naturalness' of privatisation susceptible to resistance. Yet the failure of the expert outside providers to effectively 'teach' students or teachers were passed off 'as the outcome of rectifiable deficiencies' (Li, 2007a, p. 265). Mrs Sergeant, for example, glossed over the problem that some coaches do not 'understand how [our students] learn best' as 'the only disadvantage' of outsourcing PE, a 'minor' one at that. For Mrs Sergeant, the advantages of outside providers – a 'new face, and a new voice and a new approach' outweighed the disadvantages; disadvantages which included outside providers not differentiating a PE lesson to meet the varied needs of her students, not knowing students' names, whether or not they spoke English, or only had one leg. My point here is not to criticise individual teachers, principals or outside providers for their perceived inability to teach PE or a 'lack' of resistance or criticality, but rather to problematize the ways – and the ease - by which tensions in the assemblage were resolved. Although maintaining connections between elements is a difficult and complex task, the 'triumph of "the neoliberal imaginary"' (Ball,

2012, p.2) is well-illustrated by the fact that teachers not only *relied* on outside providers to teach PE to their students, but re-imagined the privatisation of PE as ‘natural’, even ‘perfect’.

Conclusion

Teachers and principals were governed to outsource PE lessons through a messy ensemble of discourses, government policies, corporate funding, sporting organisations, and (in)expert subjectivities which converged and cohered in ways that constrained and even removed the potential ‘choices’ that teachers and principals could make. As Foucault (1982, p. 789) stated, the exercise of modern government is achieved by ‘a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions’. This privatisation assemblage acted to direct teachers conduct ‘at a distance’ by restricting their thinking about PE (conflating it with coaching sport) and their ability to act in what would previously been considered a ‘normal’ way to teach PE: teaching *their own* students. Although on the surface, schools were ‘allowed’ the freedom to choose how they spent their Kiwisport funding and who they used to teach PE, in the end there was one only obvious choice: the ‘perfect’ practice of outsourcing the teaching of PE to the experts.

Not only did the privatisation of PE appear to solve the ‘problem’ of inexperienced classroom teachers (not) teaching PE, but by defining both the problem (inexpert teachers) and the solution (outside providers), a range of public, private, voluntary and ‘not-for-profit’ organisations and actors were able to redefine the place of PE within the boundaries of the school curriculum. Ideas about the purpose of PE, what quality PE looks like, who the PE expert should be, were re-assembled to align with the aims, interests, expertise and ambitions of those with the ‘will to govern’ (Li, 2007b). The state provided more ‘choice’ to schools whilst concomitantly dissolving its responsibility to provide support and professional development to teachers; national and regional sports organisations were able to ‘get into

schools' to coach children, recruit new players, and receive an injection of funding; and corporations were able to gain branding and public relations opportunities through their partnerships with outside providers (see also Powell, 2013).

The privatisation assemblage worked to establish new margins between those 'with the capacity to diagnose deficiencies in others, and those who are subject to expert direction' (Li, 2007b, p. 7). In the case of the privatisation of PE teaching, it is useful to understand that this dividing line between the inexperienced classroom teacher and the expert Kiwisport provider is one which is both *contrived* and *fragile* and must be conserved by those who seek to govern. It is therefore also a boundary that can be challenged and re-drawn (see Li, 2007b).

Challenging the boundaries of the inexperienced/expert and resisting the privatisation of PE is not a straightforward matter. One potential avenue for resistance is encouraging researchers, teachers and principals to interrogate the *non-politics* of the assemblage - the ways in which authorities who govern teachers (including teachers themselves) 'exclude the structure of political-economic relations from their diagnoses and prescriptions' (Li, 2007b, p. 7). By making non-politics visible, the 'solutions' to the complex problem of teachers *not* teaching PE can be shown to be over-simplistic and work to occlude and exclude fundamental questions about how government policies, bodies of expert knowledge, corporate strategies and neoliberalism work to de-professionalize and de-skill classroom teachers. Further critical examination of the multifarious ways in which teachers' thoughts, actions and work are imagined and shaped within the assemblage may enable the privatisation of PE to be exposed as anything but inevitable, natural, or 'perfect'.

Notes

¹ The names of all schools, children and adults are pseudonyms.

² All currencies quoted are in New Zealand dollars.

³ HTC Sportsworld are ‘global consultants in sport’, with expertise in sponsorship and brand development (see www.htcsportsworld.com/index.html).

⁴ The National-led government also implemented policies at this time to encourage schools to outsource professional development and support from education consultancy organisations, such as Cognition and Core Education.

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