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Contesting discourses about Physical Education: A critical discourse analysis of 20 textbooks used in Physical Education Teacher Education in Denmark

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Abstract

This article investigates and problematises how contesting discourses about Physical Education (PE) as a school subject are immersed within textbooks used in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) in Denmark. The paper considers PETE textbooks as powerful documents that construct and maintain discourses about PE, and at the same time as central texts for the reading of such discourses. Fairclough’s and Foucault’s notions of discourse and discourse analysis are applied to identify dominant patterns in those 20 textbooks that are most used in PETE in Denmark. The findings reveal three different discourses that represent contesting philosophies about the value and practice of PE. These are termed: (1) Developing the potential for sport, (2) Basis for creative sensing and (3) Being part of a cultural ballast. The paper analyses these three discourses critically and concludes that PETE textbooks are deeply involved in the (re)construction, struggling and ‘working’ of classical discourses in PE. The discussion deals with the way that PETE textbooks comprise powerful documents that through their recurrent use of high modality are unequivocal in their suggestions for PE practices, and how pre-service teachers in this way are exposed to antagonistic discourses in PETE textbooks. We suggest that PETE teachers may use textbook analysis in the educational programme as a tool for reflection upon the working of discourses in PE in general and for discussing central ideological dilemmas in PE.
Keywords
Critical discourse analysis, Textbooks, Physical education, Physical Education Teacher Education, Discourses about Physical Education

Introduction
This article investigates and problematises how contesting discourses about PE as a school subject are immersed within textbooks used in PETE in Denmark. Several studies have explored the ways that discourses of PE are (re)constructed in different texts such as curriculum and policy documents (Evans, 2013; McEvilly et al., 2014; Olofsson, 2005; Penney, 2008; Rossi et al., 2009; Tinning and Glasby, 2002; Webb et al., 2008). Based on post-structural theory they consider discourses as regular, recurrent patterns of language that both shape and reflect the ideas, beliefs and values of their users and in this way ‘work’ to produce specific effects on practitioners in PE. This paper seeks to enhance this research by calling attention to a central source where discourses about PE are working and potentially produce effects on PE practice, namely in textbooks used in PETE.

PETE textbooks are central conveyors of knowledge about different areas including motor learning, exercise science, sociology and pedagogy. However, as Bernstein (1990) points out, textbook content is always the product of a process of transmission and selection. To a large extent, they are also carriers of particular values and ideologies, and they can be seen as powerful documents that embody, reinforce or (re)construct discourses (Apple and Christian-Schmidt, 1991; Johnsen, 1999; Selander and Skjelbred, 2004; Svendsen and Svendsen, 2014). Following the definition from Rossi et al. (2009), this paper considers PETE textbooks as ‘texts’ that embody discourses about body, movement and PE as a school subject. When we use the term ‘discourse’ we refer to Michel Foucault’s understanding of discourses as certain kinds of regularities involving the
notion of ‘regulating rules’ that govern both human thinking and practice (Foucault, 1971; 2002). Foucault considers discourses as contextually situated sets of ‘truths’ (Foucault, 2001) and in this way he emphasises that discourses are not truthful per se. This philosophical starting point also provides the potential for resistance. In that regard, this paper seeks to uncover how different discourses are at play in PETE textbooks and struggle to be established as ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1978). This in order to provide spaces for reflecting upon contemporary practices and alternatives (McEvilly et al., 2011).

The paper is part of a larger study concerned with educational texts\(^1\) in PETE in Denmark. It is based on a thorough examination of Danish PETE course documents that list educational texts prescribed by PETE teachers for PETE programmes in Denmark. For the purpose of this paper, we conducted a more specific analysis of the 20 most used textbooks based on the following questions: What discourses and truths about body, movement and the main progression in and aim of PE are immersed within PETE textbooks? How are they related and how do they contest? How can they be seen in the light of broader educational tendencies in PE? This led to the identification of three different discourses that represent contesting philosophies about the value and practice of PE. We have termed them (1) Developing the potential for sport, (2) Basis for creative sensing and (3) Being part of a cultural ballast. In this paper we will analyse these three discourses critically in order to illustrate and discuss the ways in which textbooks used in PETE are organised and to discuss the problems related to these findings.

**Related studies**

Foucauldian-influenced discourse analyses have been widely used in research on PE since the 1990s. This body of research captures how multiple and competing discourses are at play and

\(^1\)‘Educational text’ can be defined as any kind of text used in a pedagogical setting (Selander and Skjelbred, 2004). In PETE these texts are, for example, textbooks, popular articles, webpages, reports and pamphlets.
subject to negotiation and (re)construction by different agents such as PETE teachers and PE teachers (Dowling and Kårhus, 2011; Garret and Wrench, 2007; McEvilly et al., 2013; 2014; 2015; Olofsson, 2005; Rossi et al., 2009; Varea and Underwood, 2015; Webb et al., 2008; Wright, 2000). Only a few studies have used a post-structuralist approach with respect to discourses about PE in textbooks. McDonald (2013) critically examines how PE textbooks in Australia reproduce particular myths about biology. Hardin and Hardin (2004) study images of disabilities, and find that PE textbooks do not include such images. Images of disabilities have also been studied by Tabois-Pais and Rey-Cao (2012a). Their results suggest that, far from contributing to countering the discrimination and inequality encountered by people with disabilities, PE textbooks ‘engender a stigmatised vision of disability with regard to participation in sport and physical activity’ (Tabois-Pais and Rey-Cao, 2012a: 325). In another study based on the same dataset (Tabois-Pais and Rey-Cao, 2012b), they conclude that this is also the case for the portrayal of gender, and in a third (Tabois-Tabois and Rey-Cao, 2015) that PE textbooks furthermore engender a stigmatised version of race and in this way contribute to racial prejudice. Grahn (2012) also looks at gender constructions in textbooks for coaching education programmes and finds some remarkable differences in the discursive construction of boys as opposed to girls. Finally, Hsu and Chepyator-Thomson (2010) look at the use of multicultural education concepts by textbook authors writing for secondary school PE in the USA, and conclude that ‘textbook production is not free from the values of the writers and their experiences’ (Hsu and Chepyator-Thomson, 2010: 217).

These studies illustrate how some discourses are privileged in PE textbooks and how textbooks are consequently powerful mediators of values and interests related to PE. Our study seeks to enhance this research. It differs from these studies since we are not interested in the treatment of specific content areas by textbooks (such as gender or disability). Furthermore, the above-mentioned studies are all concerned with textbooks for school PE. In this study we analyse
textbooks in PETE, as we consider them ‘central resources for studying—and challenging—those discourses that influence on the PE teachers' perceptions of PE and [on] their choices when they come to organise a PE class’ (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2014: 4).

**PETE in Denmark**

In Denmark the four-year teacher training programme takes place in Teacher Training Colleges (University Colleges). The education corresponds to 240 ECTS² and consists of four elements: (1) A knowledge base for teachers (theories on pedagogy, didactics and child development, for example), (2) Two or three main subjects, (3) Internship and (4) Bachelor project. PETE is offered as one of the main subjects and thus PETE is one aspect of becoming a generalist teacher. Graduates can become teachers at primary and lower secondary schools. The main aims and objectives of PETE are formulated in a national curriculum (Ministry of Research, Innovation and Further Education, 2013). However, the particular themes and content, the methods and the weighting of the course are a local responsibility and described in each institution’s local curriculum. PETE as a main subject corresponds to 30-45 ECTS depending on the local structure of the programme. A total of 16 PETE programmes are offered in Denmark.

The Danish system allows anybody to produce and sell textbooks. Furthermore, it is not the responsibility of the State to determine which textbooks educational institutions should use. It is PETE teachers themselves, therefore, who plan the content of their courses, and they can freely select (and produce) textbooks for their educational programmes. These are listed in course documents that constitute the basis for the final examination for pre-service teachers. These course documents form the empirical basis of this study.

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² ECTS means European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and 60 ECTS equates to a full year of study.
Theoretical background

Theoretically this study draws on post-structuralism and especially Michel Foucault’s and Norman Fairclough’s notions of discourse and discourse analysis to understand discourses as certain kinds of patterns that embody ideological positions and ‘work’ to produce specific social practices. The basic belief is that there is always a range of constraints on our speech, thinking and acting. This regulation of speech and thought is what Foucault terms ‘discourse’ (Foucault, 1971, 2001), and according to Foucault, discourses are ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 2002: 54). This involves the ideas of power and power relations. Foucault emphasises that power exists everywhere, and he considers it a relational phenomenon that addresses relations between actions (Webb et al., 2008). Thus, power should be considered ‘productive’ in the sense that it makes certain actions possible and rejects others (Foucault, 1978; Webb et al., 2008). He is especially concerned with the way that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge and ‘truths’ (Foucault, 2002; McEvilly et al., 2013). Against this background, we base our analysis on the idea that meaning (and meaningful practice) is produced, limited and regulated within discourse, and that power is constituted through the way that textbooks project their content as ‘truth’.

In his framework for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Norman Fairclough draws on Foucault’s constructivist vision of the nature of the discourse (Fairclough, 1992). Fairclough emphasises, however, the dialectical nature of the discourse, and, drawing on Voloshinov (1973), Bakhtin (1986) and Halliday (1978), among others, Fairclough defines the concept of the text as embedded in the social structure (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough 1992; Fairclough et al., 2011). Thus, according to Fairclough (2001), a text—in this case a PETE textbook—can be regarded both as material (i.e. distinct units in the form of words and phrases) and as a product of complicated discursive processes. Fairclough suggests that discourses ‘embody ideological
assumptions’ (Fairclough, 2001: 33), and he defines ‘ideology’ as ‘significations/constructions of reality […] which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices’ (Fairclough, 1992: 87). In that connection, he emphasises that ideology is most effective and powerful when it is least visible. The main goal of CDA is, in this regard, to look for dominant patterns (Janks, 1997) in order to expose and challenge how ideological assumptions are projected as ‘common sense’ (Fairclough, 2001: 3) in different texts. In this context, CDA allows for an analysis of the linguistic features of the texts (see the following methodology) in order to scrutinise how PETE textbooks embody ideological assumptions concerning PE.

**Methodology**

The results presented in this paper are part of a larger study on educational texts in Danish PETE (also described in Svendsen and Svendsen, 2014). In this study we conducted a systematic collection and analysis of course documents from PETE programmes in Denmark. We contacted the teachers responsible at each of the 16 PETE institutions in Denmark, asking for course documents that list the educational texts that they had prescribed for their current PETE classes, as well as the themes for which they were prescribed. Out of 16 requests and two reminders, 11 course documents were submitted. These course documents were tailored specifically to the one-year PETE course of the teacher training programme at each institution and they contained the educational texts that formed the basis of the final examination taken by pre-service teachers enrolled in the course at the time of the data collection. In total, 296 different texts (all Danish texts except one in English) were listed. We ordered them by title, author, year of publication, number of pages and number of appearances. To find the most relevant texts for this paper, we used two criteria. Texts should 1) present themselves as textbooks (meaning that they are produced specifically for use in educational
settings)\(^3\) and 2) have been mentioned on at least three syllabuses (see table 1).

Table 1 inserted here.

This gave us 20 titles (all written in Danish) that were the subjects of a deeper qualitative analysis (listed in appendix 1). We conducted the analysis on the Danish versions of the texts and a professional English-speaking translator translated them. In the translation we paid close attention to the correspondence of wording in the texts. The analysis led to the identification of three different discourses, which we termed: (1) Developing the potential for sport, (2) Basis for creative sensing and (3) Being part of a cultural ballast. These discourses are our own constructions based on a relatively rough categorisation of dominant patterns in the 20 textbooks (for the categorisation of the textbooks, see appendix 1). They came about through analysing the textbooks for dominant patterns, particularly regarding (a) dominant knowledge areas, (b) conceptualisations of the body and the main goal of movement and (c) the more or less implicit goals and suggested progression of PE (from basis to final competence). In the more detailed analysis of the textbooks we used parts of Fairclough’s procedure for critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; 2000; 2001; 2003). Fairclough himself emphasises that, ‘the procedure should not be treated as a holy writ - it is a guide and not a blueprint’ (Fairclough, 2001: 92), and that readers must choose those parts that are relevant for their purposes. On this basis we have especially looked for:

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\(^3\) Other texts mentioned on the syllabuses are popular articles, webpages, reports and pamphlets.
• Metaphors (concerning the body, for example)
• The ideological differences between the texts in their representations of the world as expressed in their wording
• Grammatical features (passive or active sentences, positive or negative sentences)
• Modality markers used to strengthen or undermine different utterances
• Presuppositions (allowing us to examine the underlying principles and rules behind various statements in the texts)

These parameters provided a framework allowing us to interpret, describe, systematise and compare our findings. They have been used heuristically, but have been central both in relation to the coding of the textbooks and the comparison and interpretation in the analysis. To make the picture clearer we have chosen to pick out two textbooks as representative of each discourse.

Findings

‘Developing the potential for sport’

This discourse is dominant in 11 textbooks. It is concerned with PE as a subject that should improve performance, individual excellence and the ability to engage in traditional sports. This discourse manifests itself in two different ways: Some books take as their starting point a clinical ‘mapping’ of the body and its functions based on exercise science, anatomy and physiology and relates this to sporting activities, while others take pedagogical issues and teaching in PE as their starting point for presenting the improvement of skills and engagement in sports as the main goal of PE. As representative of this discourse and the two different approaches, we will in the following analyse *Idræt – teori og træning [Sport – theory and training]* by Nielsen and Wolf (2006) and *Idrættens ABC 1-2-3 [The ABC of physical education 1-2-3]* by Andersen and Nielsen (2005). In Wolf and Nielsen (2006) we find the following paragraph:
Human beings and animals have [...] the ability to adapt to the conditions they are exposed to. The adaptation is the organism’s response to various demands. It consists of changes to the cells, tissues and organs, which are either stressed or not stressed. This means that human beings, for example, who are bed-ridden for a prolonged period, may experience a decline in their physical capacity. By contrast, physical capacity is increased when we begin to exercise (Nielsen and Wolf, 2006: 86).

This quote exemplifies how this textbook gives the reader a detailed introduction to different elements and their functions and in general understands the body as an organism consisting of ‘cells, tissues and organs’. By using words like ‘increase’, ‘decline’ and ‘demands’, the textbook presents the body as a biological machine, whose functions and responses to different actions may be mapped with precision. This objectifying approach to body and movement is supported by a tendency towards measuring and computing the body, as demonstrated in figure 1.

Figure 1 inserted here.

Through this detailed mapping of the body, the textbook projects an idea of a condition of bodily normality that can—and should—be improved through systematic exercise. In this way, it contains a clear instrumental view of the body.

It is nothing new that natural science areas in PE include defining the body as an object and movement as an instrument that should improve the body’s physical capacity. Several researchers have described how the body is objectified and alienated from the self in such discourses (Tinning, 2010; Wright, 2000), and furthermore how this Cartesian idea of the body is also prevalent in wider society (Van Leeuwen, 2005; Webb et al., 2008). What is more interesting
in this context, however, is how the presentation of these scientific themes is continuously related to sport. For example, the recurrent use of expressions such as ‘improvement of results’ and statements like ‘long-distance runners provide an example of athletes that have a good aerobic capacity’ (Nielsen and Wolf, 2006: 98) supported by several pictures of athletes, underlines a close relationship to discourses of performance and sport. The strong modality of the words used in these examples contributes to a construction of PE as a subject where work has to be done in order to improve the abilities of the body to engage in sporting activities.

Andersen and Nielsen (2005) do not take natural science as their starting point. Still, however, the objectifying approach to the body and the idea that the body should be worked upon for sportive goals manifests itself. First of all, several movements are described in detail: ‘the forearm is swung forcefully outwards’ (Andersen and Nielsen, 2005: 644) and ‘the elbow is pushed forwards’ (Andersen and Nielsen, 2005: 644). The use of the passive voice and of the present tense in these examples projects the content as ‘common sense’ and depicts the body as something (non-subjective) that should be controlled and trained. Secondly, most of the pictures in the textbook are line drawn pictures (not photographs, for example) of bodies in movement, pictures of bodies displaying technical skills or pictures of stick figures placed in a game on a well-known sportive square, as illustrated in figure 2.

**Figure 2 inserted here**

The many descriptions of techniques and the pictures of sport-specific squares encourage the pre-service PE teachers to follow and perform instructions that will ensure that their pupils learn to follow the rules of the games and to perform the various techniques and exercises correctly and in a specific order. In that connection, this textbook contains concepts relating to different types of fundamental elements, such as ‘basic training’ (Andersen and Nielsen, 2005: 107) and ‘ball basis’ (Andersen and Nielsen, 2005: 503). These elements are both supposed to develop
the ability to take part in (and develop specialised abilities within) more traditional sports disciplines, as made clear from this quote: ‘It is evident that motor skills together with physical development and exercise condition are of the greatest importance for taking part in sports’ (Andersen and Nielsen, 2005: 67). This is further substantiated by headings like ‘Football—from playing with a ball to final game’ (Andersen and Nielsen, 2005: 549). Thus, even though this textbook presents several activities that are playful and not immediately related to sport, the above examples emphasise how the participants in both textbooks should first and foremost be encouraged to move in a corporal sense in order to optimise different physical elements of a biological body and with specific focus on the ability to take part in traditional sports.

Several researchers have investigated how sport is dominant in PE (e.g. Garrett and Wrench, 2007; Green, 2008; Kirk, 2010; Trost, 2006). Kirk (2010) describes how a shift occurred in PE in the 1950s, from being dominated by gymnastics to being dominated by sport and sport-techniques. This shift was based on, among other things, new ideas about child-development and education that followed in the decades after the First World War. Originally, the arguments for sport as the main content of PE formed themselves as an antithesis to the Swedish disciplinary gymnastics (Kirk, 1996; 2010). The idea was that PE should not only be ‘education of the physical’ but also ‘through the physical’, with a focus on ‘the whole child’ (Kirk, 2010). Sport was seen as an emancipatory and playful discipline that, with reference to Foucault, formed a more ‘loose form of power over the body’ (Kirk, 2010: 74). However, according to Vlieghe (2013), the disciplinary power inherited in Swedish gymnastics had ‘in reality only shifted its locus and modus operandi’ (Vlieghe, 2013: 282) because the regulation of the body still occurred in sport, only in a more individual and indirect manner. Vlieghe’s statement supports our findings. In the textbooks analysed above, the sportive approach is obtained with the schooling of the physical and is closely related to values of modern sport, such as quantification, rationalisation and standardisation.
In these textbooks, sport is not so much constructed as a ‘moral practice’, but more as a place for personal physical excellence. Furthermore, the body is primarily regarded as an object and the regulation of the body first and foremost takes place at an individual level. It has been emphasised several times how this sport-geared focus in PE may increase the polarisation between more and less athletically gifted children (Trost, 2006) and potentially reproduces social inequalities relating to, for example, gender (Van Amsterdam et al., 2012; Grahn, 2012) and social class (Evans and Davies, 2008; Kirk, 2010). These are also the risks related to this discourse in our analysis. What is more thought provoking in relation to these textbooks, however, is the way that these textbooks use high modality to stimulate the reader to accept and follow the exercises and instructions in the books and not to reflect upon the content they present, the relevance of sport in a schooling context or the potential problems related to this discourse (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2014). Instead, they position the pupil as a bodily entity that should optimise the body in order to perform better in sport.

‘Basis for creative sensing’

The second discourse identified is dominant in three textbooks, especially in the textbooks Med kroppen som materiale [Using the body as material] (Ravn, 2001) and Fodfæste og himmelkys [Foothold and heavenly kisses] (Winther et al., 2001). These textbooks are characterised by explicitly taking phenomenological theory and experimental approaches to the body as their starting point. They are both specifically directed at teaching modern dance and they are characterised by the premise that PE should lead to increased awareness about aesthetics, body language and the pupil’s own (emotional) life. Here is a quote from Ravn (2001):
We do not work with the forms and dynamics of the body in order to make a game with a ball function or to score a few goals, nor to be able to run the 100-metres faster or to train our buttocks to look hot in a bikini. Working with dance is about the formable body, which is investigated in various interactions in relation to its possibilities and its expression through movement (Ravn, 2001: 20).

This quote exemplifies how these textbooks explicitly distance themselves from the previously described sportive and natural scientific approach to body and movement. This they do, for example, by using phrases with epistemic modality like ‘we do not’. Also, the textbooks, theoretically anchored in phenomenology, emphasise that the body is not just something that ‘we have’, but is also something that ‘we are’ (Ravn, 2001: 20; Winther et al., 2001: 78). In doing so, they also distance themselves from the metaphor of the body as a machine and instead conceptualise the body as a ‘basis for creative sensing’ (Winther et al., 2001: 14) and a ‘facticity, which is constantly both in progress and in exchange with the surroundings’ (Ravn, 2001: 21). The body can be considered, then, as a reservoir of personality and emotion and in that connection as a site where the teacher has the possibility to work with the pupils’ emotional life and ‘the individual’s possibility for living and expressing life’ (Winther et al., 2001: 13). Thus, the value of PE is not placed in a biological condition, but rather in a phenomenological and psychological element. This also means that the arguments for various kinds of training constitute an explicit antithesis to the sportive discourse. Mobility training, for example, is not just about training physical mobility, but also about ‘working with adaptability, flexibility and changeability as a mirror of interpersonal communication in our lives in general’ (Winther et al., 2001: 78). In addition, these textbooks focus on experimental forms of working and on improvisation as a
method. Improvisation is defined as an activity that ‘demands some kind of presence’ (Ravn, 2001: 91) and which is about ‘being open to encounter whatever is there’ (Winther et al., 2001: 135). The emphasis is on there being no right or wrong and on appreciating that an important part of the lesson should be about ‘daring’ to experiment and to risk that some of the others might think that you look clumsy or whatever’ (Ravn, 2001: 63). This forms again a clear challenge to the detailed description of correct/incorrect techniques in the former textbooks.

These textbooks also posit another idea of progression. What are considered basic elements here are courage, presence and contact with the body rather than physical fitness, strength and speed, and the goal is first and foremost that the participants should be equipped with comprehensive *experiences* of movement rather than *skills* for participating in sports. In continuation hereof, these textbooks also involve choreography and choreographic elements as central parts of their content. Winther et al. (2001) emphasise that ‘choreography is not just a question of orchestrating the body in a specific way. It is important to remember that as a teacher you are working with human beings who can express themselves through the body and who must dare to do so’ (Winther et al., 2001: 175). The presupposition here is that the pupils do not dare, but should be taught to dare to express themselves, and that this constitutes value for the individual. This subjective starting point, rooted as it is in experience, is underlined by the use of organic and personal drawings (Figure 3). These drawings are not mass-produced on a machine, but hand-made and denote lack of control, courage, presence and irregularity. In these textbooks PE is considered an arena of activity in which participants should be moved emotionally through physical movement.

**Figure 3 inserted here.**

This discourse reflects tendencies in contemporary western societies involving ‘the ‘open’ expression of emotion in certain contexts and the importance of ‘knowing’, ‘working upon’ and ‘managing’ one’s emotional self’ (Lupton, 1999: 292). Furthermore, it is important to notice
that modern forms of dance, based on the approach of Rudolf Laban, are ‘built on a radical critique of ‘unnatural’ movement patterns in industrial society’ (Kirk, 1992: 56). In this way, these textbooks may also be seen as a response and critique of the values of industrial society (specialisation, standardisation and production) that are also present in modern sport (Eichberg, 1997). Thus, this discourse is obtained with the idea of education through body and movement and is concerned with emancipation and self-development more so than discipline and performativity. However, taking a Foucauldian understanding as our starting point, it is also possible to claim that even though these activities at first sight seem to be a liberation from disciplinary regimes like Swedish gymnastics or the acquisition of skills in sport, it might imply a more surreptitious form of subjection (Vlieghe, 2013). Where the discourse on sport situates the pupil as a (potential) athlete in possession of a general abstract body that should be worked upon to become fit for sport, this discourse situates the pupil as a subject with a personal and situated body that should be used to manage and develop one’s emotional life.

‘Being part of a cultural ballast’

The last discourse is dominant in six textbooks. These textbooks are characterised by having a very specific focus on PE as a school subject and, on this basis, they are re-interpreting traditional elements of PE into an educational and cultural context. This includes a view of the body as a socio-cultural entity and the premise that PE should develop the pupils’ capacity to participate in (democratic) societies. In the following part we analyse Idrætsundervisning” [Teaching PE] by Rønholt and Peitersen (2008) and Bolden i spil – teambold i teori og praksis [Bring the ball into play – Teaching games for understanding in theory and practice] (Halling et al., 2005). In Rønholt and Peitersen we find the following phrase:
The content of PE is affected both by the existing movement culture and by political circumstances and conditions. Alongside the traditional sporting disciplines and their incorporation and transformation into physical education as a school subject, there will always emerge ‘epoch-typical key issues’ (Klafki, 2001, 59), which have didactical interest for PE (Rønholt and Peitersen, 2008: 26).

This quote exemplifies how these textbooks situate PE in a culturally circumscribed educational context where the basic approach is grounded in continental didactics (e.g. Klafki). On the basis of this theoretical standpoint, both books re-interpret and transform traditional sporting elements of PE. Rønholt and Peitersen (2008) underline that sport is a movement culture which is occupied with ‘faster, higher, stronger and the constant optimisation of the individual’s performance and ability to transcend barriers’ (Rønholt and Peitersen, 2008: 153), and they take a critical stand when they write that ‘when professional attitudes about sport are immersed in children’s sport […] there is a risk that play is replaced with seriousness and pressure much too soon’ (Rønholt and Peitersen, 2008: 153). On this basis, they describe athletics, in contrast to the sportive discourse, as a content area which should not so much be about ‘performing well’ or ‘producing results’ but more about ‘being part of the cultural ballast of the child, which it may relate to, partly through its own particular and personal experiences, and partly through an intellectual ability to process the impressions they have from the world of sports’ (Rønholt and Peitersen, 2008: 313). We find a similar example in Halling et al. (2005) where ball games are constructed as activities that ‘function both as a goal in themselves and as a medium for achieving goals outside lessons’ (Halling et al., 2005: 42). This approach, where sportive elements are continuously embedded in social elements, is visually supported by the
incorporation of a number of reflexive models as exemplified in figure 4.

Figure 4 inserted here.

The idea of this model is to encourage the PE teacher to address PE from several perspectives. In this case, the perspective of ‘præstation’ [performance] is enhanced. In line with the overriding message of the textbook, the perspective of performance, however, does not stand alone. Through the circular illustration, comprising the weak segregation (Van Leuween, 2005) of the main concepts, performance is interweaved with more collective categories like ‘leg’ [play], ’social læring’ [social learning] and ‘sundhed’ [health].

Pedagogical theory is incorporated in both textbooks in order to emphasise the role of PE as ‘a subject that deals with child development’ (Rønholt and Peitersen, 2008: 45). This potential for child development is situated in the philosophy of Bildung, and it consists, among other things, of the ability to achieve ‘emancipation, and the capacity to practise self-determination, participatory democracy and solidarity’ (Rønholt and Peitersen, 2008: 45). In that context, Halling et al. (2005) emphasise with high modality that ‘it is crucial that pupils in modern society learn how to use their competences satisfactorily and to reflect upon their choices’ (Halling et al. 2005: 20). The force of the words ‘is crucial’ and ‘satisfactory’ reflects the premise that PE should not so much be a training ground for physical mastery or personal development but more a medium for the acquisition of cultural and social competences, to use them ‘satisfactorily’ and to be able to ‘reflect upon their choices’. The presupposition here is that ‘taking a stand’ is in itself a positive action and that all pupils have the same abilities to be reflective and critical consumers of movement culture. Basic elements then become the ability to take responsibility, to reflect, to discuss and to take part in decision-making processes. According to these textbooks, PE should be a sphere of activity for moving pupils physically and socially with the intention of raising them to become citizens.
This discourse can readily be seen in light of the current debate on citizenship in PE (e.g. Eley and Kirk, 2010; McCuaig and Hay, 2010; O’Donovan et al., 2010; Stolk et al. 2012). According to Stolk et al. (2012), the concept of citizenship emphasises the role of the state or society in PE, and they suggest that the main idea here is that ‘physical education is used as an instrument in nation-building’ (Stolk et al., 2012: 733). As already mentioned, sport was initially regarded as a suitable vehicle for education through the body with a focus on the ‘whole child’ rather than the development of specific skills. Lupton (1999) emphasises how this humanistic approach to PE was closely related to the notion of citizenship. In the textbooks analysed above it is clear that they portray sport and games as a central place for teaching values such as responsibility, inclusion, democracy, equity and respect—all inherent qualities of a model citizen (Lambert, 2004). Thus, they consider sport, as well as other elements in PE (play, modern dance, outdoor education etc.), as a medium for educating citizens. This aligns with the phenomenology discourse in the focus of education through the body, but differs from both of the two previous discourses by focusing more explicitly on a collective identity. With that considered, it is important to notice that citizenship always contains a normative dimension (Houdt, 2008). In this specific context, this means that the construction of the pupil as a citizen in democratic communities with rights and obligations also involves a normative construction of the right citizens to be the ones that take initiatives, use their competences and reflect upon their choices.

**Discussion**

We find in our analysis classical ideological discussions about the idea of PE: should it be about the education of or through the body? Should it encourage freedom of expression or adult responsibility? Should PE be obtained with the acquisition of specific skills or use more experimental approaches? Should PE constitute a subculture or a counterculture to contemporary
physical cultures in society? Generally seen, these are ideological dilemmas that have marked the discussion about PE for several years. Our findings thus present well-known discourses in PE. However, they give a novel picture of the way that PETE textbooks are involved in the (re)construction, struggling and ‘working’ of discourses in PE, and as a consequence, our findings point to two central educational focal points.

Firstly, our findings emphasise that textbooks are central agents in the (re)construction of discourses in PETE and eventually in PE. According to Foucault (2002), power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge and constructions of ‘truths’. Textbooks are especially interesting texts in that connection, as they are mostly considered authoritative texts that convey ‘true’ knowledge on specific areas (Apple and Christian-Schmidt, 1991; Johnsen, 1999). This happens, among other things, on a linguistic level. Our analysis has revealed how these textbooks in several instances are written with a high modality, and, according to Hodge and Kress (1988), those who control modality also control ‘which version of reality will be selected out as the valid version’ (Hodge and Kress, 1988: 147). Furthermore, following Fairclough’s (2001) statement that ideology is most effective when it is least visible, it is especially relevant to be aware of the way that textbooks form a natural and inevitable part of everyday school life (Selander, 1991; Svendsen, 2015). Taken together, this makes textbooks extremely powerful texts. Textbooks can therefore be seen as a power technology that operates through everyday communicative practices (Van Leeuwen, 2005). In this way, they constitute what Foucault terms the ‘microphysics of power’ (Foucault, 1978). Thus, following McEvilley et al. (2013), our analysis reveals how PETE textbooks position teachers and pupils in ‘deficient ways through different ‘truth regimes’’(McEvilley et al., 2013: 744). Accordingly, it seems extremely relevant in educational contexts like PETE not only to use textbooks as knowledge providers, but also to analyse the discourses they (re)construct and the truths they present.
Secondly, this paper reveals that PETE –textbook content exposes pre-service teachers not only to different discourses, but also to what Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) term antagonistic discourses. By antagonistic discourses, they mean that these different discourses are more or less incompatible. In this case, it is evidenced in the strongly contradictory discourses that request the pre-service teacher to assume contesting ideas about the value of PE and, as a consequence, to engage in three oppositional and/or overlapping practices in the same educational context. Furthermore, as already stated, the linguistic elements of the analysis reveal how these textbooks are written in a declarative mode and with a high modality. Inspired by Rossi et al. (2009), we may say that this induces strong claims of certainty and that these textbooks are ‘unequivocal’ in their arguments for PE and their suggestions for PE practices. Aside from a few paragraphs (eg. in Rønholt and Peitersen, 2008: 73f and Ravn, 2001: 20), the analysed textbooks do not invite dialogue between discourses, trans-disciplinary work or reflection among readers neither upon the content they present nor the idea of body, movement, progression or goal of PE they construct. Textbook analysis—or specific textbooks that more clearly reflect these different discourses in PE—may represent an essential tool in providing space for reflection upon the working of contesting discourses in PE.

**Conclusion**

Our analysis shows how contesting discourses concerning body, movement and the progression in and purpose of PE are immersed within PETE textbooks. There is good reason to believe that pre-service teachers’ knowledge and practices are shaped by the discourses they come across in PETE. According to Moen and Green (2012), PETE has an ‘in-built tendency towards reproducing itself and its modus operandi’ (Moen and Green, 2012: 12). Furthermore, they emphasise, in line with others (Capel, 2005; Tinning, 2010), that PETE tends to ‘confirm rather than challenge student
teachers’ beliefs about PE’ (Moen and Green, 2012: 16). In this regard, our analysis accentuates how textbooks used in PETE are deeply involved in the (re)construction of classical ideological dilemmas and well-known discourses in PE, often without reflecting their own contribution in the field and the way they provide answers to, prolongations of or challenges to former or present discourses. However, the post-structuralist view that asserts that there is always a range of constraints on our speech, thinking and acting is not equivalent to saying that subjective agency is alienated (Garrison et al., 2012). According to Fairclough (2001), critical discourse analysis can effect social change by providing students and teachers with insights that show them how they are positioned and indicate how their relations are constructed through different discourses. Based on the findings of this study, it is possible to consider textbooks as a central tool for reflection upon the working of discourses in PE and for discussing central ideological dilemmas in PE. Thus, the scrutiny of educational text that we have applied here could be used by PETE teachers to help pre-service teachers de-naturalise the particular construction of PE that they encounter in different texts and contexts.

We acknowledge that textbooks are only one space in which prospective teachers encounter discourses on PE. PE teachers also come across discourses of PE in curricular texts, political documents, in media and in their everyday practices in schools and sports clubs. Thus, it is important to stress that this study does not address how textbooks are used in PETE. It may be beneficial to investigate what impact textbooks have on the practical organisation of PETE and later PE in schools. Thus, a further development of this study will be to investigate how PETE teachers use textbooks and in what way these discourses influence pre-service teachers’ practical work with PE.
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