

LEVEL 5/6 PROFESSIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS PRIMARY SCHOOL PE SPECIALISM AND PE SUBJECT LEADERSHIP

Nicky Collett, Suzanne Flint and Geoff Maltby

This article reflects on lessons learnt about the implementation and impact of the Level 5/6 Professional Vocational Qualifications delivered by Leicester-Shire & Rutland Sport, which won the Association for Physical Education and Sports Leaders UK Level 5/6 Professional Learning Centre of the Year Award in 2017.



INTRODUCTION

Back in 2014, the county sports partnership, Leicester-Shire & Rutland Sport (LRS), applied to become a nationally approved centre for the delivery of the Level 5/6 Professional Vocational Qualifications. From the outset, the aim of the course was to provide a quality, personalised and effective professional development opportunity for local primary colleagues. This article will explain how this has been approached, summarise some of the observed course impact and highlight some of the good practice shown by delegates over the years.

THE DELIVERY CENTRE

LRS is the local network and support team for physical activity and sport across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Our aim is to be the most active place in England, building a healthy and vibrant future for our communities.

Work is carried out as a partnership with the local authorities of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland along with a range of partners including schools, school sport and physical activity networks (SSPANs), local and national organisations, clubs, coaches and volunteers. As a partnership there is a shared commitment to enrich the lives of the residents of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland by:

- getting more people to take part in physical activity and sport
- improving our citizens' physical and mental wellbeing
- developing our paid and unpaid workforce
- creating a strong voice for physical activity and sport
- building a physical activity and sport environment that is safe, fair and customer focused.

The vision is for every young person across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland to receive a consistent and sustainable high quality physical education (PE), school sport and physical activity offer, for the benefit of their health and wellbeing. This is achieved by working together with head teachers, heads of department, SSPANs, local authorities and other key partners to help co-ordinate and deliver appropriate opportunities for all young people.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Following the Government's announcement of the Primary PE and Sport Premium, LRS were tasked and committed to supporting schools with guidance, advice and support on how to spend their funding appropriately in order "to make additional and sustainable improvements to the quality of PE and sport they offer". LRS were specifically focused on ensuring schools were looking at the long-term sustainability of an enhanced PE and school sport offer. This included providing staff with professional development, mentoring, training and resources, with the aim of helping staff to teach PE and sport more effectively, with increased confidence, knowledge and skills. It was agreed that one effective way to achieve this would be to deliver the Level 5/6 Primary School Physical Education Specialism and Subject Leadership courses.

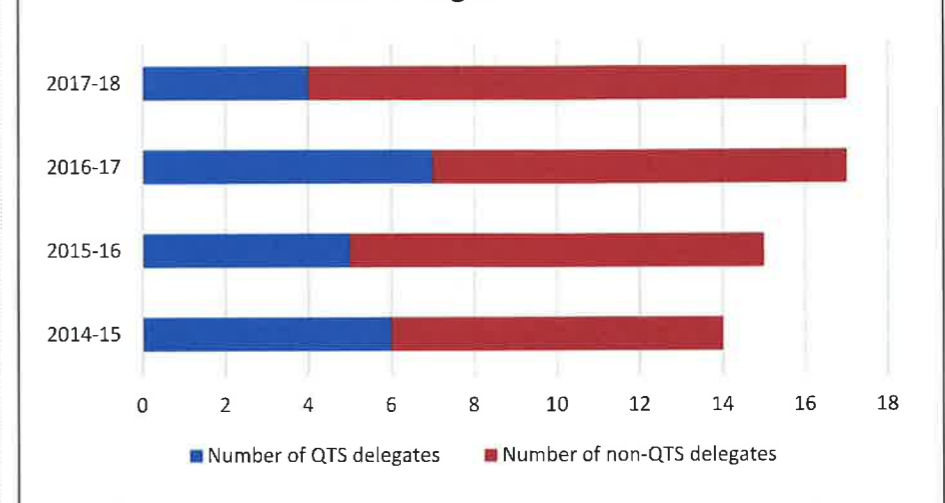
When planning the course delivery, one of the priorities was to ensure that as many as possible of the usual barriers to participation were removed. Any staff from Leicestershire, Leicester or Rutland schools who wanted to access this course should be able to do so locally and affordably and, by attending, receive the highest quality delivery with strong local knowledge of our area, structures and opportunities for schools and young people.

COURSE PROMOTION AND APPLICATION

The course is open to every primary school across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Although there hasn't been any specific targeted promotion, it has been promoted widely across our networks, including through our county School Games organiser forum and steering groups, our head teacher advocacy groups, the Leicestershire & Rutland and Leicester City primary heads forums and our primary PE network groups. The course has also been directly promoted to schools during school visits with head teachers and PE leaders regarding their Primary PE and Sport Premium funding and action plans.

There is a central application process for the course, managed by LRS, with all potential candidates' applications being reviewed by the course tutors to ensure their suitability before being accepted onto the course. This includes information on the candidate's current role within their school, their responsibility for PE and school sport and, most importantly, why they want to undertake the course. As a result, LRS has been extremely flexible in terms of the candidates we have accepted onto the course, including experienced PE apprentices and support staff, not just qualified teachers.

Course Delegate Breakdown



Each course has seen a very different group of delegates from a wide variety of schools within and beyond the LRS boundaries. This, without doubt, adds to the course and participants can see that their challenges to success and barriers to the delivery of PE are shared by others. There is also the fantastic opportunity to share good practice and look at how other practitioners deliver PE in their schools. The quality and enthusiasm of the delegates to share their learning and experiences aids this significantly, and there have been many useful discussions between candidates who want to learn and explain to others the delivery of PE in their own schools – be that an inner-city school with over 400 pupils or a small village school with fewer than 50 pupils.

COURSE IMPLEMENTATION

The aim is to support as many delegates as possible to complete the course within one academic year. The tutor-delivered sessions start around the end of September and run through to April. Within this time, candidates attend five full training days at a central location and receive a combination of classroom-based theory and practical activity learning. In addition, they are asked to allocate and complete set tasks in their school for two additional half days, one before the delivered sessions and one afterwards. The practical learning also incorporates a school visit, giving candidates the opportunity to observe and evaluate a real PE lesson.

Course assessment is carried out through formal written assignments, group-based tasks, individual written tasks in sessions and discussions. As part of the assessment a senior leader at each candidate's school is required to undertake an observation of their PE teaching. This is a really valuable

aspect of the course, both for the delegate and the status of PE within the school. In many schools the Level 5 observation has raised awareness of the subject area and Level 6 delegates have had to arrange meetings with senior management to discuss whole school strategies to improve PE.

The course is delivered by two tutors who, between them, have worked within Leicester and Leicestershire schools for over 40 years. To make the course as relevant as possible for delegates, it was important that the tutors not only had appropriate subject matter experience, but also have current knowledge of the local area, including the SSPANs, local schools, the county sport partnership and local programmes and opportunities for schools and young people to engage with. This additional local insight is vital in terms of supporting candidates to develop and deliver an enhanced offer for their pupils, as well as the core purpose of the course in terms of developing their knowledge and learning of high quality PE and school sport. The decision to deliver with a two-tutor team means there is a good mix of delivery techniques and styles, there is a high delegate to tutor ratio for support and guidance, a greater pool of subject expertise and the opportunity to cross check and verify decisions. The additional delivery capacity also means that, in addition to the core learning hours, the course tutors can offer additional mentoring to any delegate that may need it.

The course has heavy theoretical content, but in response to delegate feedback nearly all tutored sessions include an element of practical learning or ideas for PE delivery. Delegates have also been encouraged to share their personal expertise with the group and, over the years, the cohorts have

experienced a whole host of new activities including Gaelic football, futsal and ballroom dancing! The sessions focusing on inclusive activities are always well received and as a result of that participation several schools have successfully introduced boccea and New Age Kurling to the spectrum of activities they offer.

IMPACT

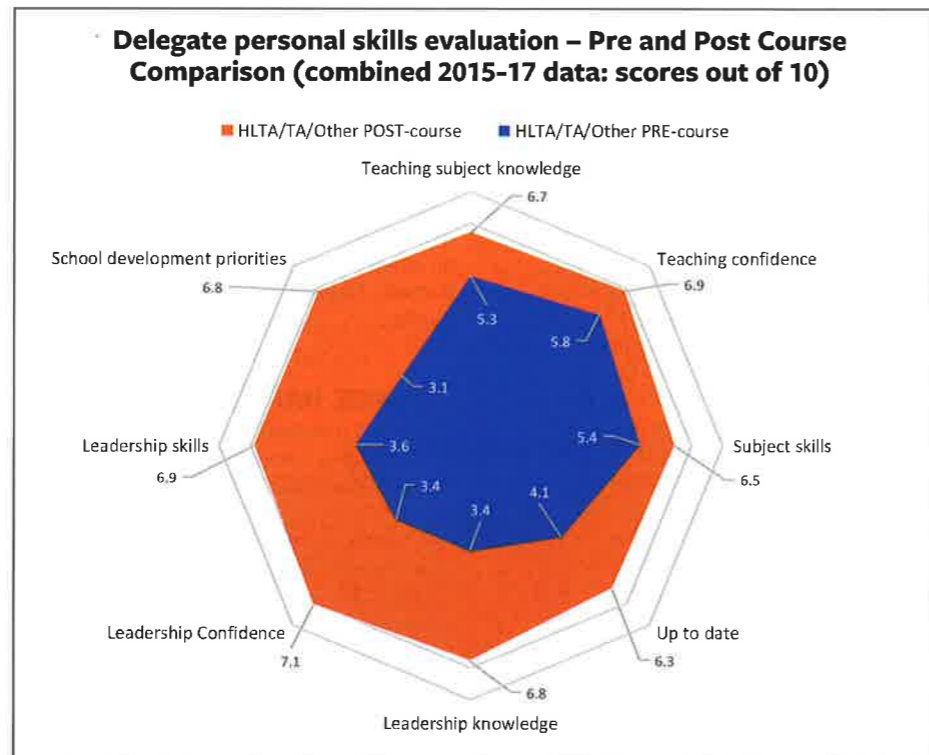
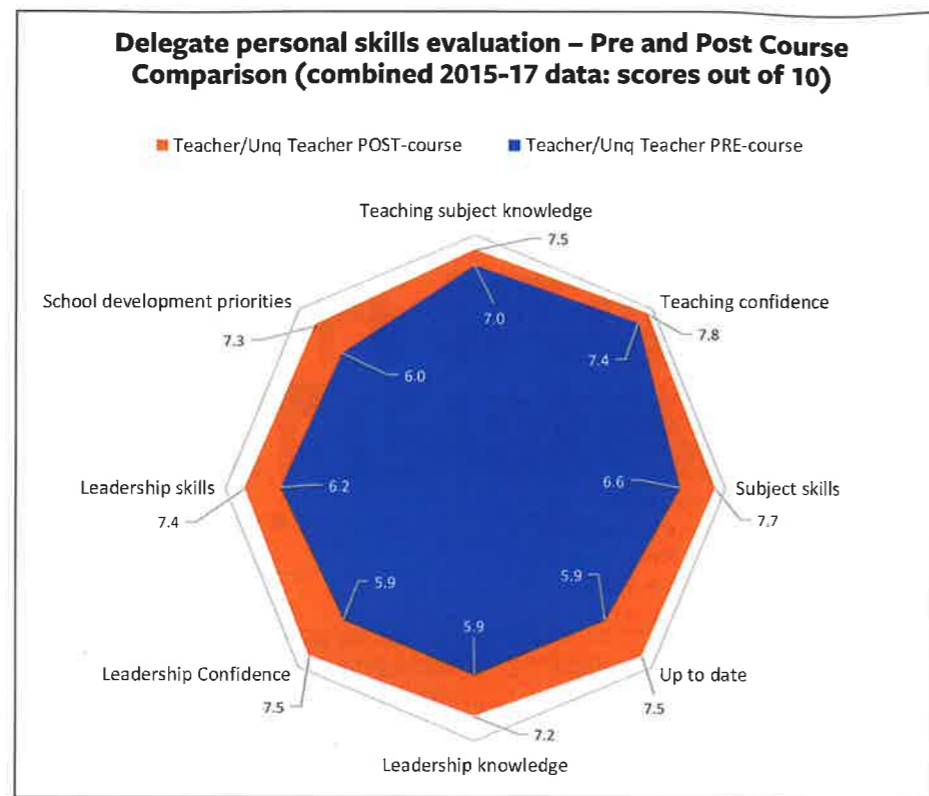
One of the most enjoyable parts of delivering the Level 5 and 6 courses is the opportunity to see how taking part can impact on and contribute to each delegate. The diverse nature of each cohort means the benefits for each school, individual and groups of pupils are wide-ranging, but sharing their experiences with each other is something that the feedback shows delegates really value.

DELEGATE IMPACT

Over the last few years, in an attempt to quantify some of the personal development of our delegates, pre- and post-course personal skills evaluations were carried out. In order to help create valid data, delegates were not provided with their previous answers for the second assessment. The following charts summarise the improvements reported. Of particular note are some of the improvements made by our non-QTS delegates.

At the end of the delivered sessions, delegates also complete a comments-based evaluation form. One of the questions is: "Which aspect of the course has been of most use to you/your school?" This is a short summary of the responses from the 2016-17 delegates:

- ideas for projects to increase physical activity
- assessment for learning strategies
- outstanding lesson plan and observations
- curriculum map assistance, ideas and expectations
- regulations for swimming
- safe practice, being aware and including in planning
- developing and planning of active lessons
- resources, sharing experiences/ expertise
- practical sessions and demonstrations
- so much gained knowledge from other delegates
- the planning aspect of teaching and PE
- learning how to teach gymnastics and dance
- much more confident
- greater subject knowledge.



The range of responses demonstrates the different situations and priorities of the cohort; however, all felt they had gained something that would make a significant difference to their particular setting. The time spent between the tutors and the cohort – understanding, appreciating and supporting each delegate's situation – is hugely beneficial for all. It allows for appropriate differentiation in the delivery methods and

course focus, but also delegates often find that by sharing good practice (e.g. resources, activities, policies, assessment methods) and challenges (e.g. they are not the only school struggling to find two hours for PE, working with staff who do not deliver PE when they should, and have problems with children, parents and attitudes to PE) there is a lot of common ground and they find additional ideas and support for their own roles.

PUPIL IMPACT

There have been many notable course-related projects and pieces of work undertaken by delegates over the last four years which have had a significant impact on pupils. As part of the Level 5 course delegates focused on planning and implementing a project that would positively impact on the physical activity levels of pupils at their schools. These plans have taken on many aspects of school life and focused on different target groups and included curriculum time, after-school clubs and playtime activity. Here are a couple of examples.

Swimming and activity level focus: One delegate based at a Leicester City primary school used the Level 5 course task to evaluate swimming sessions. There was concern about the number of children who could swim 25 metres at the end of Key Stage 2 and that physical activity levels in swim sessions did not meet National Curriculum expectations. The organisation, delivery and pupil attainment in swimming were analysed, and from the findings some significant changes were made to the swim programme. Changes included increasing the number of sessions children attended in a year, the format of the sessions, record-keeping by the external swim instructors and taking time to raise the importance of water safety with parents. Less than 12 months into the new swim programme there had been an improvement in children's attitudes to swimming and an increase from three children being able to swim 25m (at the end of Key Stage 2) in 2014-2015 (5 per cent) to at least 12 children in 2015-2016 (20+ per cent). This practice is now shared with candidates on the courses, which supports more staff and schools in an area which is currently very pertinent to new requirements through the Primary PE and Sport Premium swimming focus.

Girls-only activities: After carrying out a survey of extra-curricular opportunities and attendance, a gap in Key Stage 2 girls' participation was noted. After talking to the girls, the delegate ascertained that they would like to play football but lacked confidence to take part in the mixed session that was currently offered. The Leicestershire-based delegate created a girls-only club, but attendance was still variable. Taking feedback from the participants, an external female coach was brought in and participation numbers increased. The school was then able to enter a girls' team in local competitions for the first time, and they subsequently won the 'Sainsbury's determination award'. Following that initial start, the girls felt confident enough to attend the mixed club and six have subsequently started to attend a community club.



COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE PLANS

The course manager and course tutors work closely together to continuously review how the sessions are going and what could potentially be changed and improved each year. Listening and responding to delegate feedback and comments from our internal and external verifiers has also shaped delivery. The course has continued to change in line with both the course guidance and changes in national initiatives and priorities, as well as supporting new local initiatives and programmes run by LRS, the SSPANs and schools themselves. This year has been a challenge with the introduction of the new specification in October. Swimming is now a key element and this supports the recent changes to the Department for Education funding criteria. Another new piece of work is that delegates must think about their own personal development and choose an area in which they would like to gain deeper knowledge. Our cohort for 2017-2018 has a wide range of focus areas, including specific activity knowledge and intervention strategies, although the majority are looking at ways to support target groups within their school, for example, higher ability pupils or children with additional needs.

The course allows us to build excellent relationships with the delegates; however, something we would like to develop is fostering stronger relationships with the senior management teams at the schools. To date this has only happened on an ad hoc basis and at informal meetings, but that experience has shown that working together with school senior leaders can help to support the delegates' work on the course and raise the profile of PE.

LRS has a vision of ensuring that a member of staff in every one of our primary schools across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland accesses this training. The aim is to create a sustainable PE, school sport, physical activity, and health and wellbeing offer for our children and young people by embedding qualified staff in our schools. By continuing to work on the quality and delivery of the course, sharing good practice, and supporting and learning from our delegates, we believe we are moving towards that goal.

“The Level 5 PE Specialism qualification has been an excellent opportunity for two of our members of staff to enhance their knowledge and skills of planning and teaching PE across the school. The enthusiasm that pupils show, due to the enhanced skills of our staff, is greatly improved and the outcomes for pupils in terms of participation, enjoyment and skill have risen dramatically. The course offers an opportunity to recognise the importance of PE and school sport and gives me, as the head teacher, the confidence to know that my staff are well trained to deliver a wide range of opportunities to pupils to a high level of expertise across the primary age range.”

Alex Smythe, Executive Head Teacher, Newcroft Primary Academy and Thornton Primary School ■

Nicky Collett and Suzanne Flint are course tutors and former secondary PE teachers and partnership development managers. Geoff Maltby is Sports Development Manager (Children & Young People Lead) at Leicester-Shire & Rutland Sport.