

A Qualitative Study of a Selection of Male High School Teachers' Perceptions and Practise of Fair Play in Physical Education

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Abstract

Recent research from Norwegian schools shows that fair play in physical education, rather than being an educational goal, is used as a tool for regulating behaviour and organising teaching. Fair play in physical education received strong emphasis in the Norwegian curriculum for 2012 but was removed as a concept in the curriculum for 2020 (LK20), although it retained its legitimacy. Fair play in the field of physical education in Norway has been discussed in several academic articles, yet there are few empirical studies on how fair play is perceived and practised by physical education teachers in the field.

Our study thoroughly examines how a selection of Norwegian male teachers in upper-secondary school perceive and practise fair play in teaching. The study's research question asks how fair play is perceived and practised by a selection of physical education teachers in upper-secondary school.

In the discussion of its findings, the study considers Sheridan's conceptualisation of fair play, which employs seven perspectives on fair play that take the term 'ethos' as a key concept. In this study, six physical education teachers in upper-secondary school were interviewed. The findings show that the teachers have varied understandings of fair play. Apparently, they may also practise the concept differently and, overall, they cover Sheridan's seven theoretical perspectives. A key finding is that the teachers in the study link fair play first and foremost to aspects of mastery, inclusion, and social skills.

Keywords: fair play, physical education, PE teachers, upper-secondary school

Introduction

Traditionally, physical education (PE) is legitimised in the Norwegian school system as an educational subject related to discipline and moral values with regard to defence, sport/PE, or health (Fjeld, 2009). The idea of education is continued in the overall purpose of the revised plan for physical education, which was applied from the school year of 2012/2013, and which states that the subject should continue to be general education and should include fair play. For the first time, fair play is mentioned explicitly as one of the subject's purposes: 'The social aspects of physical activities mean that physical education is important for promoting fair play and respect for one another' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). It had previously stated that 'honest competition, good conduct and cooperation within given limits are part of the core of sports' (KUF, 1996, p. 263).

Discussion of fair play in education generally and in PE specifically can be situated within a larger moral-philosophical discussion in the field of sport. McIntosh (1979) indicates different cultures in which the practise of sport is linked to education and character development. He traces this to ancient sport, which emphasised not only winning but also honour, courage, and justice (*dikaioσύne*).¹ Today, many seem to practise PE according to what David Kirk (2010) characterises as 'physical education-as-sport-technique'. In Norway, the subject has been criticised for its inability to revise learning-related content and practises (Moen, 2011; Standal, 2015). Moen (2011) shows that the study of PE as an academic profession seems to prioritise learning different sport techniques over focusing on the process of education and learning. In other words, students seem to reproduce their own background in sport. It is claimed that the subject is still dominated by traditional sports, particularly in upper- and lower-secondary school, which contributes to favouring those who practise such sports outside of school hours.

Yet the research and knowledge about how teaching takes place and what students learn in PE studies and in the profession in Norway remain insufficient (Jonskås, 2010; Løndal et al., 2021). This is also true of PE internationally (Stolz, 2014). However, there are a few Norwegian studies which study fair play in the PE subject (see, for example, Sæle, 2013, 2019; Dowling and Kårhus, 2011; Lauritzen et al., 2019).

1 For a detailed review of ancient sport ideology, see Miller (2004), Dombrowski (2009), and Reid (2011).

This study examines how a selection of male teachers in upper-secondary school understand and practise fair play in PE and discusses the topic in light of Sheridan's systematic division of fair play as a concept, which is presented in more detail below.

Theory: Sheridan's different perspectives on fair play

There are several systematic definitions of fair play within the field of sports research. Sheridan (2003) has made a systematic contribution to these by conducting a literature study that summarises seven perspectives of fair play. On this basis, the first definition takes a more formalistic approach to fair play and pertains to *keeping the rules of the game* (Sheridan, 2003). Sheridan is critical of such an approach, as she believes it does not consider the intentionality of the players. It is a thin or poor theory of games because it does not explain the wide variety of behaviour that occurs in sport.

The next perspective on fair play is *play*. Sheridan points out that several sport philosophers have emphasised the importance of playfulness and the joy of sport (Huizinga, 1955). The purpose of play is internal, not external or instrumental. However, she also states that 'while play is a conceptually necessary aspect of sport it is not clear how sport can be understood solely in those terms' (Sheridan, 2003, p. 168). This is an idealistic interpretation where sport is not considered to be competition or understood as a metaphor for war where much is at stake.

The next perspective fair play is *respect for the game* and applies to respect for oneself, for the other people participating in the game, and for the game itself or the spirit of the game. Sheridan perceives this as too abstract and idealistic and as not taking consideration of what respect should mean specifically in a given sport context.

In this list we also find fair play as *a social contract*. Loland (2002) refers to Rawls' concept of fairness (Rawls, 1971), in which he assumes that all participants in a society consider the need of others as free and equal peers. Loland situates this in the context of sport, with emphasis on it being in the interest of all participants to abide by the rules of the game. This understanding may also be too idealistic, especially considering the nature of elite sport, where, as some would claim, the goal is to 'win at any cost'. Here, too, one would not consider sport's self-understanding,

nor the cultural context in which it stands, nor that it is an exploratory and contingent activity that cannot be ‘put into a formula’ (Slagstad, 2008; Sæle, 2017).

A similar approach is to consider fair play as *a system of rational norms*. Loland formulates ethical norms such as fairness and impartiality to form the basis of a common moral code of conduct for the overall practise of sport. It is not enough to just follow the rules of the game; Loland claims that one must also emphasise the game’s ethos. Thus, Loland and McNamee (2000) define fair play as follows: ‘If voluntarily engaged in sporting games, keep the ethos of the game if the ethos is just and if it includes a proper appreciation of the internal goods and the attitude of playing to win’ (p. 76). By inner goods, they mean perceived values and the experience of ‘the sweet tension of uncertainty of outcome’ (Loland and McNamee, 2000, p. 73). This can be understood as the joy, the mastery, the excitement, the bitterness, the ecstasy, and the other emotions associated with sport. The game’s ethos applies not only to its own norms and rules, but also to each individual’s expectations of sportsmanship, fighting spirit, behaviour, achievements, moods, and rituals. Key to their understanding of fair play is that it distinguishes between *formal* and *informal fair play*. Formal fair play is ‘a norm relating to the keeping of the written rules of the game’ (Loland and McNamee, 2000, p. 64). An informal and more overall understanding of fair play emphasises the inner characters of the performers and respects both the game and the opponents.

According to the next perspective identified by Sheridan, fair play is understood as *a virtue*. MacIntyre (1984) supports this view and emphasises the values and norms enshrined in a sport’s own tradition, culture, and community. If we look at the history of sport, we can clearly see moral virtues associated with this tradition. Within this understanding, participants are perceived as having inherent moral virtues such as justice, courage, moderation, wisdom, etc. that they can realise through sport. With reference to Aristotle’s ethics (1999/2006), it is emphasised that these virtues can be developed only through own practise and experience. A weakness in this understanding is that it is not very specific relative to the particular challenges of sport.

Sheridan concludes that, in understanding fair play, it is key not only to understand and follow the rules of the game but also to understand the ethos that applies to the game and to the players of the specific sport, as well as the socio-cultural context in which the game is situated. Hence, she supports Loland and McNamee (2000) definition of fair play.

Fair play in the PE curriculum

Traditionally, sport has been linked to Norway's education of children and young people (Sæle, 2013, p. 179). Although the term 'fair play' was not included in the Norwegian PE curriculum before 2012, many of fair play's values were included in previous curricula. The focus on courage, strength of character, respect, and interaction in the earlier curricula relates closely to the concept of fair play, even if the term is not mentioned.

In this study, reference is made to the physical education curriculum of 2012 and not the new curriculum (LK20), because the teachers had used and related to the previous curriculum when they were interviewed in 2020. How and to what extent do we find the term 'fair play' emphasised in the revised PE curriculum for 2012? The main part of the document dealing with these subject states that 'the social aspects of physical activities mean that physical education is important for promoting fair play and respect for one another' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). This is further elaborated on in the main subject areas where the competence aims are formulated. One of these main areas is *sport activities*, which covers a wide range of sport, play, dance, and alternative physical activities. Here we find it emphasised that 'fair play and common rules for participation are important parts of the subject' and, secondly, that 'the concept of fair play involves showing respect for one another in different activities', and, thirdly, that 'interaction and working together are key elements of this concept'.

Furthermore, we find that fair play is to be integrated into the student group during the three years of upper-secondary school. According to the core element of *sport activities*, after Vg1 (the first year of high school), one should 'practice and give an account of the basic rules for a selected number of sports and activities' and, furthermore, 'practice fair play by including others in sports, regardless of the pupils' levels of skills, in a selected number of sports and activities'. After Vg2, the students should be able 'to use and instruct others in the principles of fair play during physical activity' and 'to interact with others in team sports'. As the students are finishing Vg3, they should be able to 'discuss and elaborate on how one's own fair play can influence others in activities, exercise and play'. In other words, we see that various aspects of fair play are strongly emphasised in PE in upper-secondary school, with a focus on being able both to practise the concept and to reflect on it.

The strong emphasis on fair play in upper-secondary school must be considered an extension of the strong emphasis on the term in the curriculum for the primary and lower-secondary school programmes, which state that students shall learn in grades 1 to 4 about interaction and in grades 5 to 7 to follow simple rules and principles for interaction and to respect the results of sport. Finally, in upper-secondary school, the term ‘fair play’ is mentioned with reference to students practising fair play by including others in various sports and activities, regardless of their own prerequisites.

Method

The aim of this study is to describe how fair play is understood and practised by PE teachers in upper-secondary schools in Norway. A qualitative research design is used, as this method is suited to finding data to describe how something is ‘done, said, experienced, appears or developed’ (Brinkmann and Tanggaard, 2012, p. 11). Human experiences and the informants’ opinions and reflections regarding these are in focus (Thomas, et al., 2015). The purpose has been to bring out the informant’s authentic ‘voices’ in accordance with their perceived world of life (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2018), or, in other words, how phenomena appear to the individual from a first-person perspective (Tjora, 2017).

In the spring of 2020, a selection of high schools in Vestland County were asked to take part in this study. A contact list of PE teachers was received from about a third of these schools. An information leaflet about the study was sent to the teachers on this list. A semi-structured interview was conducted with a small sample of informants. The interview guide in the study by Lauritzen et al. (2019) was used as a pattern for our study. The interview was planned and formed on the basis of three different perspectives on fair play: 1) fair play as a concept, 2) fair play in the PE subject, and 3) fair play and the learning environment.

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion were established ahead of the selection of informants, who had to be teachers educated in PE and for teaching PE in upper-secondary school. For capacity reasons, the study was geographically delimited to schools in Vestland County. Variation in gender, age, and work experience was desirable. Unfortunately, no female teachers volunteered to participate in the study. Nine teachers who wanted to participate met the selection criteria. Since some of the teachers were working at the same school, we chose a composition of informants so as to

represent as many schools as possible and ended up with a selection of six male teachers. The informants have been anonymised with fictitious names.

Ivar is in his early 60s. He is educated at The Norwegian School of Sport Sciences and has a cand.mag. degree from officer training from the Norwegian Armed Forces. Ivar has taught PE for over 20 years and been active in various sports in his spare time. He has played hobby sports such as football and gymnastics and actively played underwater rugby. In addition, he has been a trainer for various club teams on a hobby basis.

Marius is in his 30s and works as a sports and physical education teacher at a secondary school. He has a master's degree in PE and sports. In addition, he has 60 credits in natural sciences and Practical Pedagogical Education (PPU). He has experience as a teacher in both sports' pedagogy for Norwegian students in Australia, and sports and PE for students at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. Marius has played several ball sports. He is involved in competitive sports, mainly football, volleyball and badminton.

Jarle is in his 30s and has worked for ten years as a teacher in sports and PE with football as a specialisation subject. Jarle has a bachelor's degree in sports and public health, in addition to PPU. He is also an assistant referee in the elite soccer league in his spare time and has refereed matches internationally.

Helge is in his 60s. He works as a teacher in PE and has his education from The Norwegian School of Sport Sciences. He has further education in natural sciences and biology, in which he also has taught. Today, Helge only teaches subjects in PE. In his spare time, he works as a coach in athletics. He was actively involved in athletics when he was younger and is very much involved in voluntary sports.

Sindre is in his 30s and is a trained sports and PE teacher. In addition, he has taken PPU and several courses and further education in ball sports. Sindre has been teaching for a few years and is particularly interested in ball sports. He has been active in basketball and has several years of experience as a coach.

Per is in his early 40s, and he is a trained teacher in PE. He is currently doing a master's degree in pedagogy alongside his job. Per has taught PE for 12 years, and has taught at several primary schools, and he also teaches at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. He also teaches in other subjects than PE. In his spare time, he does a lot of physical activity and outdoor activities.

The interviews were conducted at the individual teachers' workplaces. Audio recorders were used in the interviews, and the recordings were later transcribed and coded in NVivo 12. In the analysis work, two main categories gradually crystallised, with several subcategories – see the Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Overview of the main and subordinate themes identified in the findings*

Main categories	Subcategories
Understanding and practising fair play	Upbringing and good manners Interaction and communication Care and inclusion Rules and justice Respect Raising awareness of fair play Willingness to win
Fair play and learning environment	Students' awareness of fair play Students' participation Solidarity A safe learning environment The teacher's relationship to fair play

Ethical concerns

The study has been approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data. All informants were informed about the research project and the ethical guidelines that applied to it. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study and the interview at any time.

Results

Different perspectives on fair play

This section presents the results from the interviews and discusses them in light of previous theory and research and on the basis of the study's research question: how is the concept of fair play perceived and practised by a selection of upper-secondary school teachers?

Making students aware of fair play

Jarle finds that in the beginning of the school year, the students are not that aware of fair play; he perceives PE as mostly sport and performance-oriented, such as students should 'jump high, run long and fast and take many repetitions in the bench press'. He notes that what the student teachers receive in PE in upper-secondary school varies greatly, because the students have very different starting points at the beginning of upper-secondary school. Although students start the class in upper-secondary school with different prerequisites, the teachers find that the students develop positively together during the three years. Most of the teachers point out that when the students finish high school, they are much more reflective about the concept fair play.

The teachers strive to promote fair play by reflecting with the students on situations that arise that may be perceived as unfair, for instance. Some informants used words such as 'make students aware of', while others used words such as 'remind them'. In order to ensure fair play in PE, Ivar says that 'students must be made aware all the time, and I try to do that in my PE classes. They need to be aware that they are going to pay attention to each other. In case someone does something perceived as unfair, they must be reminded of it.'

The issue of justice is central to raising awareness of fair play. Ivar lets the students reflect on whether something is fair or not in class. He believes that reflecting together with the students on injustice will also help students who experience injustice themselves to speak out more often.

Per points out that when students become more aware of the concept of fair play, they take more responsibility in the lessons, become more active, and cooperate, and thus acquire deeper ownership of the game/activity. This is especially true when he conducts student-led teaching, because students do not want to ruin it for their fellow students who are chairing the class. Per also plans for more student-led sessions when he observes that the students have confidence in each other, and he points out to them that being good in the subject is first and foremost about a good team effort: 'I say to them, "The point is not to win, but to be as good as possible." You are not good because you have won, but because the whole team has done its best.'

Play, rules and justice, and respect

Few teachers specifically refer to play when they refer to fair play. They would rather refer to sport and other activities and in that way, they reflect the syllabus. As Ivar points out, fair play is particularly relevant in ‘competition, games, or play or other activities where the students are dependent on each other’.

Several informants mention rules in their understanding of the concept of fair play. Marius says that fair play ‘is about understanding the rules, about following the regulations in a good way and accepting the regulations’. Jarle expresses a similar understanding and adds that ‘you have to accept rules, accept those who participate in the sport, both teammates and opponents’.

Several informants mention respect when they comment on fair play. Jarle notes that fair play is about accepting those who participate in the sport, both teammates and opponents. He says that it is necessary to accept the similarities and differences of teammates and opponents and ‘[o]ne should include everyone on the team, and one should have respect for fellow student teachers.’

Upbringing and good manners

When Ivar is asked how he understands fair play in PE, he says that it is about ‘making students aware and teaching [them] to relate to other students in a decent way’. Marius responds to the same question by emphasising the importance of students’ attitudes towards the subject, towards him as a teacher, and towards their fellow students and of having respect for other’s roles.

For Ivar, fair play in PE plays an important role in the development of students’ morality. He points out that fair play in the subject is about learning good manners. He sees fair play as part of the teacher’s task of raising and educating students. Per highlights a classic expression from the city of Bergen in his description of how he and the students understand fair play: ‘When I say *belite deg!*,² the students understand what fair play is about. Fair play is to follow the rules, and simply how you behave together with others.’ He adds that ‘fair play is a bit of personality and how one behaves in general’. It is important that the teacher be aware of the importance of communicating good fair play values to his students so that

2 This is a local Norwegian expression that is difficult to translate into English but means something like ‘follow the rules!’

the students can internalise such values and apply them actively and independently during their time in high school. He also points out that such values are important not only in a school context but also in life in general. Through the focus on personality, behaviour, and morality, Ivar and Per make a direct connection between fair play and the students' educational development. Jarle mentions the importance he as a teacher has as a role model for the class. He believes that when he is aware of how his teaching practise affects students, the result is a good learning environment.

Interaction, communication, and mastery

Interaction and communication with other students are highlighted as important aspects of fair play and PE. For Ivar, fair play is particularly relevant in competition and play, or in other activities where the participants are dependent on each other. Fair play plays a role not only in values such as respect, recognition, and values, but also in terms of interaction, problem-solving, and other forms of cooperation in various activities.

The feeling of mastery through interaction with others is emphasised by Sindre. Sindre opens the school year with simple exercises, so that everyone achieves a feeling of mastery and a joy of movement, which they can build on further. When students have developed a basic understanding of an activity, it is also much easier to reach what fair play really deals with, Sindre adds. According to Marius, even in activities that are not characterised by team competition or individual achievement, 'it is still about taking care of each other, and about including everyone. It is about having positive attitudes to the subject, and that you can still carry out an activity that you think is boring, but still keep your spirits up.' Per emphasises interaction, both verbal and nonverbal, as one of the most important things. He points out the importance of students being able to really see their fellow students, respect their peers, and play well with each other.

Sindre also points out that fair play and unfair play can be conveyed nonverbally. You can give other students an affirmative nod, a pat on the shoulder, an appreciative look, or a thumbs up, and this helps to create a positive atmosphere between the students within the group.

Care and inclusion

Marius emphasises care as an important factor: 'Fair play is so much, but for me it's a bit about attitudes. It's about taking care of everyone. It's

about showing care.’ Sindre, who has a lot of experience from basketball, points to inclusion as the main element in the concept of fair play, saying, ‘I want them to play or exercise so that everyone has fun. So that the activity becomes inclusive and everyone gets something out of it. Get everyone involved, be inclusive.’ The inclusion Sindre is talking about means that everyone is made to feel they are contributing, that they are valuable and can feel important regardless of technical skills. Sindre also emphasises inclusion in the assessment of students: ‘What differs between grade six and grade five is whether you can make the others have fun, too, and to increase their skill. It’s fair play.’ Sindre’s reason for emphasising inclusion is that he wants to highlight collaboration.

Marius also associates fair play with inclusion, and he endeavours to make students understand that not everyone is at the same skill level and that they therefore need to support each other: ‘It’s not about winning in PE, but about including everyone.’ Jarle also points out that fair play, which is a concept in sport, has been given a broad interpretation in PE wherein everyone should pay attention to everyone else regardless of their sport skills.

We see that fair play in PE can be perceived as a more spacious concept of care than is the case in competitive sport. The PE teachers focus on inclusion and care, in contrast to the competitive sport focus on the winning mentality.

Care and inclusion seem difficult to place within Sheridan’s perspectives on fair play. Such teacher statements support the PE curriculum’s emphasis on soft values such as care and inclusion: ‘practice fair play by including others, regardless of prerequisites’ (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015).

Competitive instinct

Several informants find that students who do competitive sport in their free time are not always aware of fair play in PE teaching:

Those who do not do competitive sport in their spare time have a more conscious relationship to fair play than those who do do it. Those who compete daily have a competitive instinct that tones down fair play. They do what the judge or the rules allow, whether it is fair or not. (Ivar)

More of the teachers have had a similar experience. Jarle adds nuances to the picture as follows:

If you want to be able to practise fair play in a good way, you have to have some skills that allow you to use your fellow students in a good way, so that you can put others in a good situation. So that you can be honest about whether the ball is in or out of the goal and if you have tackled too hard. If you have less skill in sport, you can become very passive and fail to practise fair play in a good way.

The skilled athletes who have a strong competitive instinct seem to be a problem and a challenge for several of the teachers. The informants believe that a strong will to win can hinder the practise of fair play in PE. The will to win is, however, an important part of Loland and McNamee's definition of fair play and the game ethos. In their definition, the competitive instinct must not be so great that practitioners are willing to compromise with other aspects of fair play, such as rules and norms. The will to win and a competitive instinct will still be a very important part of fair play in competitive sport, but the informants find that competitive instinct does not necessarily contribute to fair play in PE classes.

Fair play and the learning environment

The informants agree that the role of the teacher is of great importance for students' well-being in PE. They highlight such crucial factors as being aware of the role of the teacher and the concept fair play as central to the subject. In this context, teachers emphasise the promotion of a good learning environment, with an emphasis on factors such as participation, solidarity, and security.

Marius usually introduces three to five main rules in ball sports that students should focus on. These rules are often settled in dialogue with the students. Marius says, 'When students have the opportunity to share their knowledge and skills in sports they otherwise are engaged in in order to improve others [and] help and include others in the game, that is also an expression of fair play.' Ivar claims that those who do not like physical activity and feel left out and worthless in PE will not show up in class. He adds that it is important to create a classroom environment where students thrive. All the informants point out that solidarity is important. Some note that this also includes opponents. Marius says that in order to get a flow in a badminton game, you must adapt the rules of the game to correspond with the skills of the student: 'For example, we see this in volleyball in both the primary and secondary schools, where separate rules have been developed that are adapted for the students' skill levels'.

Jarle says that he continually tries to make students aware of fair play throughout the three years of high school, among other things by allowing them to judge matches after he has worked a lot with them on the concept of fair play.

Security and room for mistakes

Marius emphasises the importance of allowing students to make mistakes:

Within these four walls, mistakes are allowed. It is allowed not to be on the top of everything. It is allowed to try the best you can. No one can ask for anything more. And it is allowed to ask for help and to make mistakes, and it is ok not to be the best in everything.

Being able to make mistakes presupposes the creation of a safe learning environment, according to Marius. Per elaborates that fair play is very much about creating security, teaching students to support and help each other, and showing that they can fail. He elaborates by saying, 'It is very much required of the students to be open to learning activities such as gymnastics. And if you think it is not only technically difficult but also scary, they will have a hard time admitting it and receiving good feedback.'

Discussion

Six of Sheridan's seven perspectives of fair play are referred to by three informants. The one perspective not explicitly mentioned by the informants is the game's ethos. Five of the six informants mention respect and care, inclusion, and consideration. A focus on the collective, with an emphasis on inclusion and collaboration, is also accentuated in the study conducted by Lauritzen et al. (2019). Sheridan (2003) refers to interaction as a key aspect of fair play, which is achieved by following the rules that apply to the game. She points out that such interaction constitutes a social contract: an informal, binding agreement between the participants that contains both the formal and informal rules and norms that are part of the game. We have also pointed out that interaction is a key competence goal in the PE curriculum for upper-secondary school, which includes the following: 'to be able to practice the ability to interact in team sports' (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 7). It is not just technical interaction in PE; it is just as much social-ethical interaction, conveying

given values and norms through body language, words, and actions. Furthermore, the rational perspective, which is one of the perspectives of fair play, is understood through the elements of justice and equal treatment.

Singleton (2003) takes a closer look at fair play and gender aspects of power and control in PE and is critical of the subject's traditional masculine orientation. She refers to various aspects of fair play and points out that a masculine emphasis on PE leads to the practise of a strict and formal interpretation of fair play that is linked exclusively to equality and compliance with the rules of the game. What is lacking is a 'softer' interpretation of fair play, where values such as care and inclusion are emphasised, values that are also central to the PE curriculum.

We also see respect for teachers and fellow students as a perspective that the informants emphasise, which corresponds to Sheridan's focus on respect for others and oneself. Respect is also a key factor in a previous Norwegian study, by Lauritzen et al. (2019), who refer to respect for one's fellow students, respect for the rules, respect for the result, and respect for differences.

The virtue perspective is not explicitly mentioned by the informants, but it is linked to good manners, behaviour, and attitudes. Sæle links fair play in PE to Aristotelian virtue ethics, which emphasise moral qualities such as moderation, restraint, courage, and wisdom. These qualities are central social-ethical qualities, in PE in particular and in daily life at school in general. A 'virtue ethical' perspective on fair play emphasises that educational qualities such as morality and wisdom can be developed only through reflection and practice in PE (Sæle, 2013, 2020).

Fretland et al. (2020) have studied the approach to fair play among primary school teachers in PE and discuss the role of the teacher relative to the learning aspect of PE. They point out that it is the teacher's responsibility to follow curriculum goals related to fair play in their everyday practise. Thus learning and educational development can occur in the student. Other authors also emphasise the teacher as a role model for students (Sæle, 2013, 2017; Kvikstad and Sandell, 2016).

None of the informants explicitly refers to the ethos of the game. If, however, we interpret this ethos as applying a set of norms, as defined by Loland and McNamee, we find several elements in the analysis that deal with the ethos of the game. This is the case when the informants mention such aspects as participation, behaviour, cooperation, justice, and following the rules. When it comes to the aspect of winning, we see that teachers do not give it much emphasis. On the contrary, the informants suggest

that winning and competitive instinct tend to counteract and inhibit fair play. We see that the focus on mastery, social interaction, and lifelong joy of movement is also emphasised in PE, and this focus is also central to the PE curriculum.

Some informants mention the importance of students gaining influence in the subject, for example by being referees in games. We have also seen that several teachers perceive solidarity as a value of fair play. Møller (2016) points out the importance of students learning to judge in games because it makes them aware of acting in solidarity. He emphasises that students must learn to resolve conflicts with other students, conflicts that may arise in the interpretation and exercise of rules in team competitions. Møller finds that reflecting and coping with demanding situations in games are good learning situations that can contribute to students' education.

We also see that some of the teachers emphasise the importance of allowing students to experience mistakes. Sæle and Hallås (2020) discuss the importance of security and room for failure in PE. They emphasise that it can be difficult to promote democratic values when a learning environment has been set so as to provide no room for error. This does not necessarily have to be at the expense of elements of competition. Møller (2016) believes that the widespread use of competitive elements in the teaching of PE can to some extent contribute to strengthening qualities such as respect, empathy, and fair play among students. This presupposes that the teacher continually seeks to make students aware of how they should behave in the event of a loss or victory. Møller (2016) emphasises what is most important is to make the situation safe, teach students to become both good losers and good winners, and to create security for students so that they will dare to try and to fail.

The fact that several students who do well in sport seem to pay less attention to the other students may be explained by their reproduction of experience from the sport in which they engage in their spare time. Lauritzen et al. (2019), on the other hand, have discovered that sports-active students have the ability to adapt to a wider and more inclusive understanding of fair play in PE. We see that the teachers seem very concerned with emphasising a broad concept of fair play that goes beyond what competitive sport conveys. This is in accordance with the study by Lauritzen et al. (2019), in which teachers were more concerned with toning down the competition motive in favour of including all students, even those who do not have very good mastery of sport skills. Other studies show that teachers often emphasise competition and sport skills in PE, which is due to the

notion that they reproduce their own sports background in their PE teaching (Kirk, 2010; Moen, 2011; Standal, 2015). Kvikstad and Sandell point out that, in a sport context, fair play is an established concept that many are familiar with, so it can 'therefore be difficult to introduce an expanded and/or a different understanding of the concept' (Kvikstad and Sandell, 2016, p. 90). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2012) has published a guide to what they include in the term, however Kvikstad and Sandell believe that the guidance, through the examples it shows, rather than bringing out the full breadth and nuances of the concept, instead presents a narrow understanding of fair play.

Several authors emphasise *informal* fair play as the most important aspect of fair play (see, for example, Loland and McNamee, 2000). This is about developing wisdom in both sport and PE. As Sheridan points out, rules will not cover the challenges inherent in participation in a game of sport. The West Point Fair Play Project, a four-year study programme involving more than 3,000 students, also took a broad approach to fair play (Butler, 2000) and concluded that constant effort is required to educate students about all aspects of fair play and for them to be able to cope with the ethical challenges they face in PE and sport. In addition to the fact that rules must be interpreted, there can sometimes be situations not covered by the rules which require participants to use wise judgment, or what Aristotle calls *phronesis*, or wisdom. Traditionally, fair play in sport has been closely linked to characteristics of both athletes and students, a line of thought that seems to continue among today's PE teachers. Several of them used key words such as wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation to highlight Aristotelian virtue ethics as central ethical qualities in both sport and school (see, for example, Arnold, 1991; Kvalnes and Hemmestad, 2010; Sæle, 2013; Sæle and Akslen, 2014). Kvalnes and Hemmestad (2010) discuss fair play specifically by using Aristotle's concept of *phronesis*. They believe that if such a quality is to be developed within students, the teacher must emerge as an ethical role model. The teacher must then also be able to guide the students (Arnold, 1991, p. 72). By reflecting on fair play, students can gain critical distance from their own moral practise and become aware of their role as *reflective practitioners* (Sæle, 2013, 2019), a term derived from Donald Schön (1991). The goal must be for students to become as autonomous as possible as moral actors (McIntosh, 1979, p. 174).

The PE teachers' differing perceptions of fair play seem to relate to this point, because the PE subject contains such a variety of sport and activities. As Jarle points out, the curriculum's focus on mastery and the joy of

movement is not always as obvious to students who have experiences of various sports. From a formalist perspective, this is a weakness of fair play, according to Sheridan. What fair play is and how it should be practised will thus be perceived differently from one sport to another and, in our case, from one student to another. Even where there are written rules, their interpretation and practise may vary depending on the environment.

A challenge in transferring the concept of fair play in sport to PE is that sport is perceived as a voluntary activity (Loland and McNamee, 2000), while PE is mandatory. Another challenge relates to whether the principle of equality is emphasised as part of fair play. It is expected that athletes who compete have the same athletic prerequisites. If participants' skill levels are quite different, the open outcome, unpredictability, and excitement of the game may cease (Loland and McNamee, 2000). We see several teachers in this study addressing this by emphasising fair play values such as inclusion, care, consideration, and respect in order to achieve good play or a good game. The Directorate of Education also believed that the concept of fair play had a broader meaning in the curriculum than the Norwegian Sports Confederation had earlier assumed (Kvikstad and Sandell, 2016).

The informants' views on fair play promote care, inclusion, and mastery to a greater extent than the sport literature shows, probably because the PE subject belongs to a different context than does voluntary sport, although they have several similarities. At the same time, we see that the informants' overall understanding of fair play seems to cover most aspects of fair play as outlined in the field of sport, with reference to Sheridan's systematic categorisation of different perspectives and understandings of fair play.

In a larger Norwegian study (Standal et al., 2020) examining what concerns students in upper-secondary school, fair play is highlighted as a central learning goal. The authors perceive fair play as having a dual function as a valuable social learning goal and a control mechanism. In the first case, it was linked to qualities such as following rules and being a good team player. They also discovered, as did our study, that fair play is perceived as a very broad concept that embraces issues beyond fair play as understood in sport philosophy (Loland and McNamee, 2000). The teachers in our study emphasised that fair play has a transfer value to other areas of life. Fair play can thus be perceived as synonymous with fairness (Pawlenka, 2005), which pertains to behaving in a moral and fair way in everyday life and in society in general. Fair play is also perceived as a control

mechanism, where teachers make negative comments about misconduct. Some teachers even associated fair play with pragmatic tasks such as putting equipment back in place or cleaning it after a teaching session. Thus, fair play was part of the assessment for order and behaviour. Fretland et al. (2020) additionally conclude that primary school teachers primarily use fair play as a tool for regulating behaviour and organising teaching.

An expanded perspective on fair play in a PE context also seems to correspond with other international studies (e.g., Miura, 2015). Miura concludes that fair play in PE is linked with an ability to think and learn. More specifically, it is associated with terms such as knowledge and attitude as well as with thinking and judgment.

In summary, we can claim that the teachers in our study do not have a common or unambiguous opinion about how fair play should be understood or practised in PE. Nevertheless, we note that a common denominator crystallises: they all have a broader understanding of fair play in a PE context than what is commonly understood in a sport context. We find that this is mainly due to the teachers closely linking fair play to the ethical values and norms expressed in the PE curriculum. This also accords with Sheridan's main view, that fair play must be considered within the social context where the game takes place. This is applicable in the various forms of sport as well as in PE.

Some of the present study's limitations need to be mentioned. The selection of informants in the study was on a small scale. As only male teachers were included as informants, there can be no gender analysis. For example, we are aware that female teachers are often more oriented towards fair play than male teachers are (Bronikowska et al., 2019). If we had sharpened our focus on a few specific aspects of fair play, we would have been able to produce an even more complete analysis. In the future, we will need further studies to shed light on how both teachers and students relate to the concept of fair play in PE. In addition, we need studies that examine variables such as upbringing, family, friends, previous background in sport, and more.

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