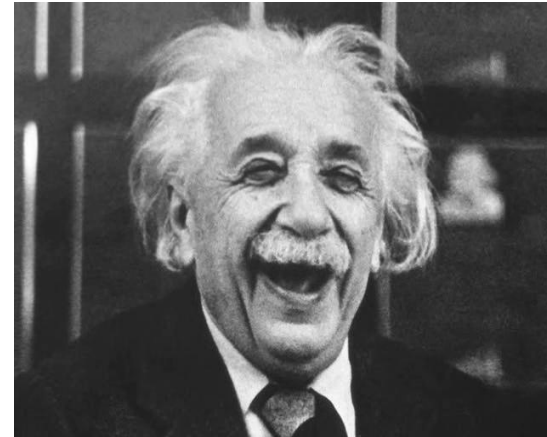


'Excellence and quality: Timeless challenges in PE ITTE'  
Refining and redefining practice:  
Towards pedagogy of risk taking to support  
the progress and development of trainee  
physical education teachers



Kerry Whitehouse  
20<sup>th</sup> March 2014

“A ship is always safe at the shore but that is NOT what it is built for.”  
Albert Einstein



"I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it."

*Pablo Picasso*



**‘I do it...’**



# WHY?

- ▶ Trainees were reaching a consistently 'good' level of teaching around 24 weeks.
- ▶ I wanted to support trainees to teach better lessons and move forward in their teaching at this stage
- ▶ Some trainees were happy to 'coast' and some wanted to experiment with new strategies and take risks in their teaching.
- ▶ At the time Ofsted characteristics (2008) were used to 'grade' trainees. Outstanding...
  - '(Trainees) take risks when trying to make teaching interesting, are able to deal with the unexpected and 'grab the moment'**

Collaborative research with tutors to find out more about risk taking.

# Defining Risk Taking

## Not an easy task

To risk is to “act in such a way as to bring about the **possibility** of an unpleasant or **unwelcome event**; to incur the **chance of unfortunate consequences** by engaging in an action”

<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/risk?q=risk>

This definition recognises that risk involves assessing potential negative consequences and getting some sense of the probability of those consequences occurring.

**To act with the certainty of negative consequences is not risk-taking in the sense presented here.**

# Defining Risk Taking

For this study risk-taking is defined as an action or activity taken by **choice** in which a trainee **takes risks** in their practice to **achieve a learning benefit**.

It considers the idea that trainees **reflect upon an element of their professional development and challenge their own practices and routines by moving out of their comfort zones**, assessing the **potential negative consequences and having an idea of the probability** of this occurring.

# Research Aims:

1. To explore the key features, opportunities, difficulties and impact upon PGCE trainee teachers who took risks in their practice.
2. To find out strategies used in schools to support 'risk taking' practice.
3. To explore the conditions which allow trainees to take effective 'risks' in their training.

# Research

Four tutors worked with 80 trainees and 20 mentors to collect examples of school based experiences

In depth information was gained from trainee case studies and focus groups interviews with mentors.



# Ethical Considerations

In addition to anonymity, right to withdraw and clarity of research.

The following considerations were made;

- ▶ Participants were informed that research intended to build upon **positive experiences** and practices to **explore new ideas** and **share good practice**
- ▶ Case studies would be inspirational knowledge, with care taken, that there was **no expectation that any trainee would carry out anything that they were uncomfortable with**
- ▶ Clarity that when encouraging 'risk taking' there would be **no link with any negative assessment outcome for the trainee**, either by the trainee choosing not to try out a 'risky' lesson or by a 'risky' lesson not working.

# What does it mean to take risks?

## Views of mentors

Going beyond comfort zone

Managing new learning technologies

Dealing with difficult relationships, especially emotional or behavioural

Stepping up for extra professional duties

Less direct control of a class

Allowing independent learning

# What does it mean to take risks?

## Views of trainees

- Being prepared to not control the lesson directly
- Doing something that you don't know will work
- Trying ideas from other PGCE trainees
- Using new technologies
- Teaching something out of your comfort zone
- Handing over responsibility to students
- Tackling difficult issues

# What barriers are there in school?

Time

Students capabilities

Participation

Behaviour of students

Resistance from staff

Curriculum constraints

Confidence (student/pupil)

Mentors attitudes

Facilities and space

Resources

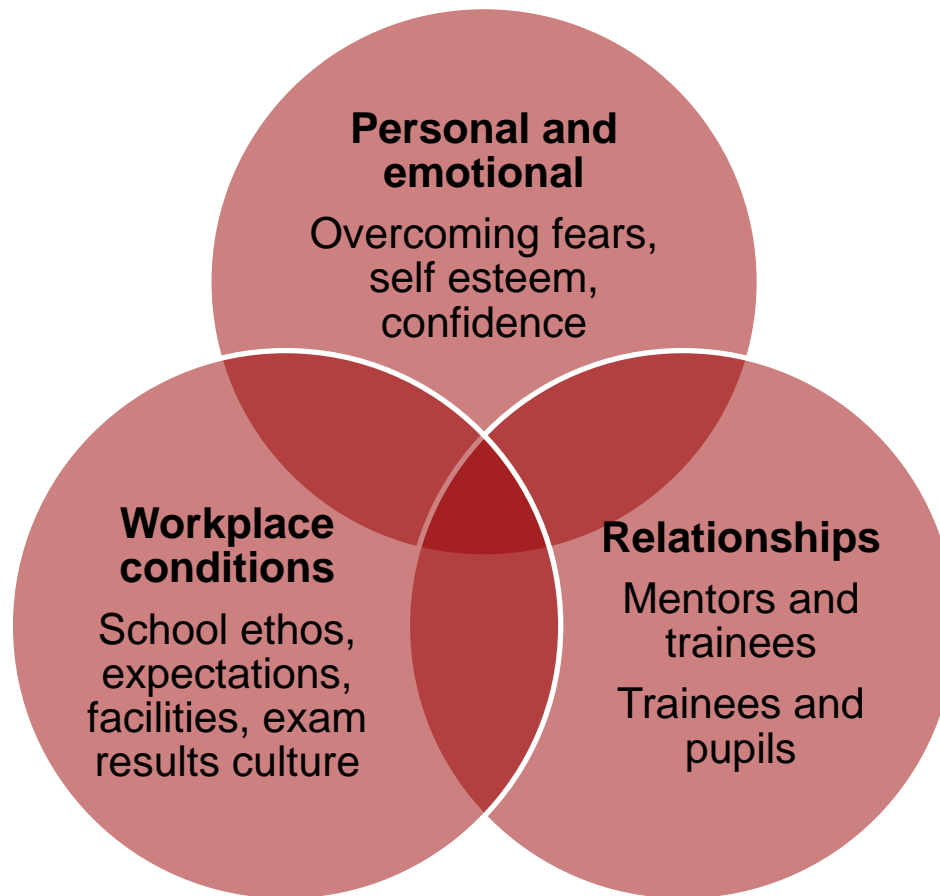
School policies and practices

Preferred teaching methods

Personal experiences

Trainees who were achieving well were reluctant to try new things and 'make mistakes' particularly as those assessing performance would be the ones that mistakes were made in front of.

# Conceptualising the risk taking



# Leah. Dudley. (2011)

- Leah was teaching a **low ability boys group** who were disaffected with GCSE PE theory lessons. To help **engage pupils**, she planned an activity where pupils dissected hearts to learn about the cardiovascular system and heart function.
- Leah had **support** from the Science department with resources, health and safety and dissection technique.
- For her this was an area in which she had very little knowledge and was a **perceived risk** in terms of her own skills and the engagement of pupils.
- The lesson was extremely successful
- with significant **pupil enthusiasm, engagement and learning.**
- This also impacted upon the engagement of pupils in **future lessons.**



# Amy. Birmingham 2011

- To challenge a **high achieving year 9 Girls** Basketball group Amy wanted to link practical to GCSE theory work.
- She worked with a **sport education** approach and gave pupils responsibilities to lead in the lesson. She had 2 teams, 2 medics, 2 coaches and 2 referees.
- Coaches were responsible for tactics, medics for monitoring heart rate and referees were in charge of timing and rules.
- This was a challenge for Amy as it involved **pupils working independently** and taking the lead in **every** element of the lesson. Amy had to take a step back from the lesson and **allow learning to evolve**.
- She said “This lesson worked really well, it was great to be able to watch the pupils adapt to different roles and allow for me to take a step back to get a clear picture of learning. They were essentially in charge of the lesson. At the end we used the data medics had collected to analyse heart rate during exercise and linked this to theory. The pupils were really **engaged** and worked well together! It also gave me the **confidence** to try new ideas again”

# How did tutors support risk taking?

- Created an environment and culture which was secure and where 'it was ok to make mistakes'
- 'Teach your pupils that it's all right to make mistakes. Mistakes aren't reasons for shame but chances to learn to do better'***  
***(Katafiasz, 1997)***
- Developed trainee knowledge on PE and generic teaching pedagogy (Sports Education, TGFU, accelerated learning, learn to learn)
- Empowered trainees with knowledge, utilising collaborative planning and encouraging learning conversations between each other and school staff
- Created opportunities to celebrate trainee successes and reflect upon best classroom practice using a knowledge cafe, appreciative enquiry approach during lectures.



# What did P.E. Mentors do?

- Created an environment where trainees were comfortable to try new ideas, take risks and learn from mistakes
- Gave over 'the reins' and allowed trainees to work independently (sometimes a risk for the mentor) - TRUST
- Allowed trainees to practice perceived 'risk' activities in collaborative lessons so as to give trainees confidence to apply them when teaching full lessons

# Impact.

Trainee evaluations highlighted that these elements of the course had a significant impact upon their progress and ability to become 'outstanding' trainee teachers

All P.E. trainees who took part in the research and wrote a case study on their personal 'risk' completed the course as 'outstanding'

These trainees were the first to secure jobs.

**We all make progress at different rates and taking risks is like learning to ride a bike...**



**You make a start in a comfortable and secure environment...**



**with patience and support from others.**





**You may make mistakes (and fall off)...**



**but only by getting back on and practicing...**



**will the risk you once took become second nature.**





## Where now?

*‘The idea of learners being encouraged to take risks ... suggests a pedagogy that is not totally controlled by specified learning outcomes.*

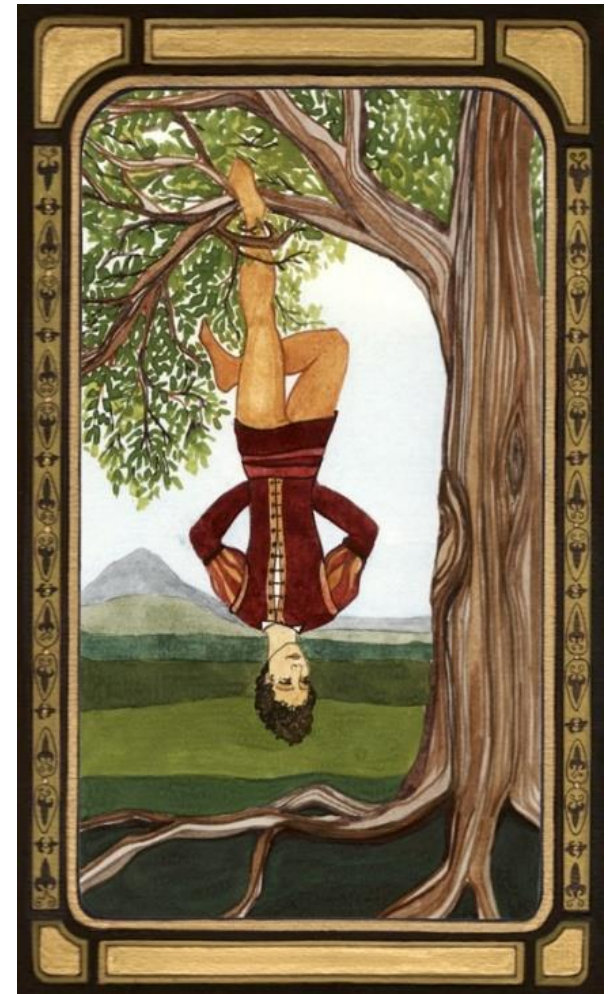
*It suggests a flexible teaching-learning space that attempts to accommodate unpredictable or unexpected directions in learning’.*

(Atkinson, 2011 p.3)

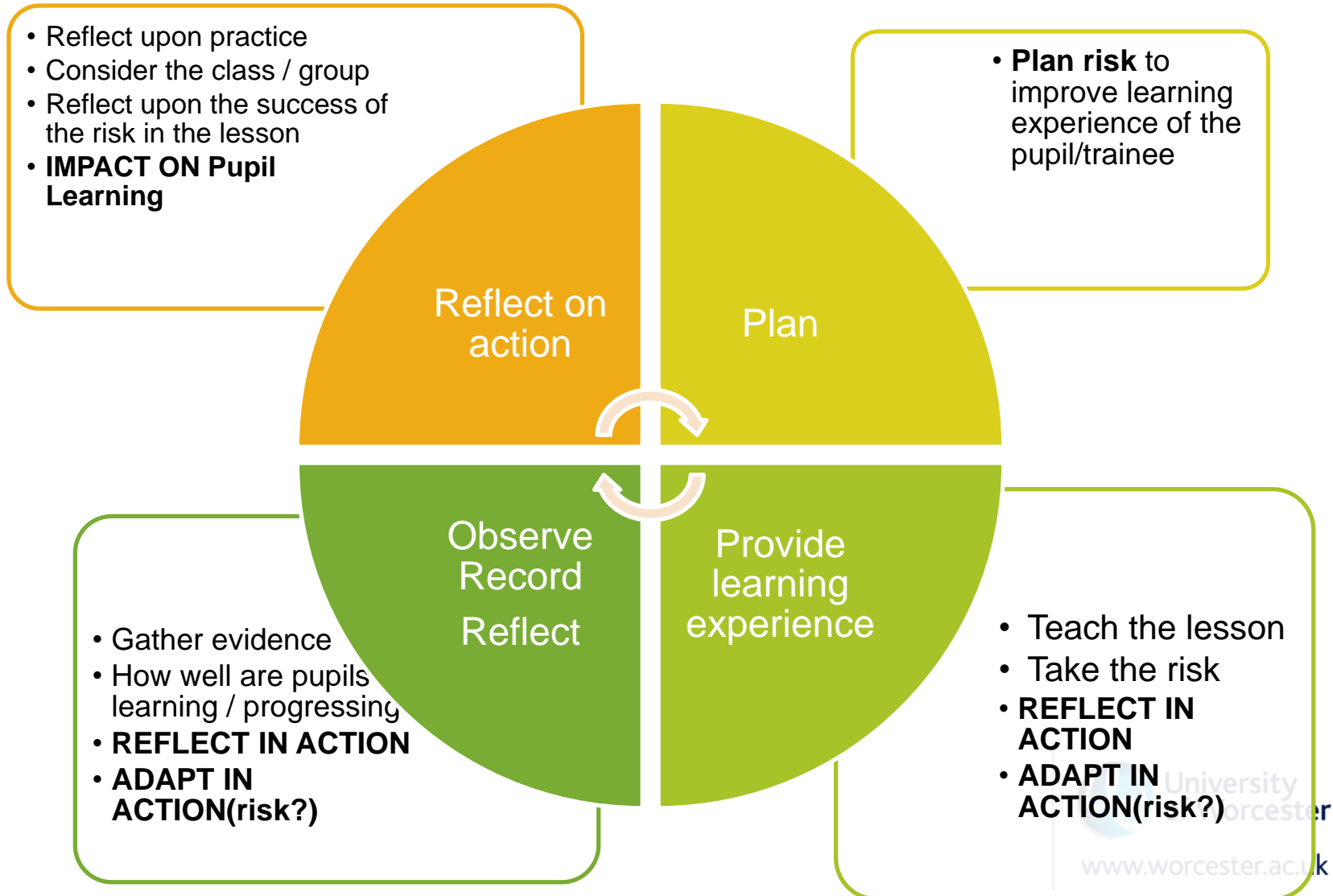
## Turning the world on its head...

Moving on from previous priorities  
that are embedded in practice  
Seeing learning from a new angle  
Pausing to reflect  
Taking time to just be and see  
Living in the moment  
Seeing opportunities and acting  
upon them

This takes **CONFIDENCE**



Adapted from Schon 1993



# Learning Mat discussions

## Where now?

Please take a little time to reflect upon this session and its application to your context by considering the questions on your learning mat

Do you have any questions or suggestions?

# One final thought....



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