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Appreciative inquiry for physical education and sport pedagogy research: a methodological illustration through teachers' uses of digital technology.

Journal Item

How to cite:

Sargent, Julia and Casey, Ashley (2021). Appreciative inquiry for physical education and sport pedagogy research: a methodological illustration through teachers' uses of digital technology. *Sport, Education and Society*, 26(1) pp. 45–57.

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Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1080/13573322.2019.1689942>

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1 **Sargent, J. and Casey, A. (in press, 2019). Appreciative inquiry for physical education**
2 **and sport pedagogy research: a methodological illustration through teachers' uses of**
3 **digital technology. *Sport, Education and Society*, DOI: 10.1080/13573322.2019.1689942.**

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5 Preprint version – changes may appear in the published version.

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20 **Appreciative inquiry for physical education and sport pedagogy research: a**
21 **methodological illustration through teachers' uses of digital technology.**

22

23 **Abstract**

24 With the increasing drive towards exploring strengths based and positive discourses in PESP
25 it is important to explore approaches that can help researchers and practitioners. This has
26 particular relevance for areas such as digital technology where there is a need to appreciate
27 not only the technologies themselves, but also the pedagogical practices that surround their
28 use. Without such discussions, it is difficult to unpick 'what works' for practitioners and
29 'why'. Furthermore, in our efforts to be critical researchers we continue to recycle deficit
30 accounts of technology and repeatedly tell stories of failure, barriers and constraints
31 (Orlando, 2015; Perrotta, 2013). In short, we learn most about the 'do nots' and, in the
32 process, struggle to advance change (Enright et al., 2014). Running as a counter narrative to
33 the tales of 'do nots' is the burgeoning literature appreciative inquiry. This approach
34 prompted us to ask if it could be used, methodologically to investigate digital technology and
35 practices with digital devices. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to suggest and illustrate
36 a way in which appreciative inquiry can be used to provide insights into teachers' ongoing
37 use of digital technology. This is achieved by discussing the use of appreciative inquiry
38 before presenting examples from a research study that explored PE teachers' use of digital
39 technology. Through the use of a methodological illustration (Goodyear et al., 2018), we
40 suggest that appreciative inquiry is capable of providing a reflective space for practitioners
41 and researchers regarding practices with digital technology. We conclude by arguing that
42 appreciative inquiry is useful in our continued negotiation of digital practices in PESP.

43

44 **Key Words:** strengths-based inquiry, educational technology, pedagogy, ICT, teaching,
45 practice.

46 **Introduction**

47 There is a growing discussion and debate within the Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy
48 (PESP) literature between positive or strengths-based approaches and critical or deficit-based
49 perspectives (Enright et al., 2014). In his keynote lecture at the International Association for
50 Physical Education in Higher Education's (AIESEP) World Congress Conference in 2018,
51 Mikael Quennerstedt argued that transformative teaching and learning in Physical Education
52 (PE) can, and increasingly should, be seen through appreciative approaches. He reasoned that
53 studies using approaches such as appreciative inquiry centre on pedagogy and the process of
54 learning, and offer alternative foci on the education part of physical education (Quennerstedt,
55 2019). Put differently, Quennerstedt urged PESP to focus on the 'E' in 'PE'. Drawing on the
56 work of Enright et al. (2014), Quennerstedt (2019) further highlighted the growing feeling
57 that appreciative inquiry has the potential to transform PESP research because it takes a
58 salutogenic and strengths-based perspective on topics such as health, rather than a deficit or
59 risk-focus approach. He argued that studies using strengths-based approaches conceive
60 learning in different ways to those using deficit/risk approaches and help to address topics
61 and issues such as health in a better way than those that focus on health as an issue.
62 Consequently, and by their very nature, strengths-based approaches such as appreciative
63 inquiry deal with or discuss issues even when they are not the focus of the inquiry.

64

65 Appreciative inquiry has been used to in explore areas such as student disengagement (Gray
66 et al., 2019), coaches' practices (Pill, 2015) and embodiment (Hill et al., 2015). The word
67 "appreciate" in appreciative inquiry is seen as 'valuing; recognising the best in people and in
68 organisations' (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p.7). It is 'to fully know of' and 'to perceive
69 those things that give life to living systems' (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.1). Similarly, inquiry,
70 in this context, means 'the act of discovery, exploration, examination, looking at,

71 investigation, and study' (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, p.7). It is also seen as 'to
72 question...to be open to new potentials and possibilities' (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.1).
73 Collectively, therefore, appreciative inquiry might be summarised as questioning the potential
74 and possibility of people and organisation as they strive to give life to their endeavours.

75

76 Whilst the usefulness of this approach has begun to be explored, Enright et al. (2014) argue
77 that there is a need to engender more dialogue around strengths to counterbalance dominant
78 narratives around limitations. They argue that appreciative inquiry has the potential to enrich
79 the body of knowledge in the field by providing new lines of inquiry around change. This
80 argument has been supported by Lorusso and Richards (2018) who recently argued that
81 appreciative inquiry may be a pathway towards a sustainable future for PESP because it
82 provides a means through which to develop an attitude of flexibility, compromise and
83 cooperation in academic work. They consider appreciative inquiry to be an 'especially
84 exciting and potentially fruitful endeavour' (Lorusso and Richards, 2018, p.132) as it
85 encourages collaborative innovations so that individuals become committed to the
86 innovations they helped create.

87

88 Appreciative inquiry reflects a nod in the field towards strengths-based approaches, and other
89 alternative frameworks to inform research agendas that 'move beyond a deficit, or 'fix-it'
90 perspective' (McCuaig and Quennerstedt, 2016, p.1). Indeed, as Hastie (2017) argues,
91 appreciative inquiry should inform future research in PESP using descriptive studies of what
92 makes different programs effective or successful. In light of such discussions and debates
93 surrounding deficit and positive discourses, these scholars suggest we further explore such
94 positive discourses in order to advance understanding in the PESP field. As such, we explore
95 appreciative inquiry and its potential application to exploring digital technology in PESP.

96 **Debates between deficit and positive discourses in PESP**

97 Tinning (1991, p.1) argues that problem-based discourses and the ‘process of problem
98 setting’ has had considerable influence on practice and how we consider topics such as
99 pedagogy. Such an argument has a long history. Indeed, and as Fitzpatrick (2018) recently
100 highlighted, despite a sustained body of critical scholarship, research continues to show that
101 PE is exclusionary and marginalising space for many young people. Enright et al. (2014)
102 argue that PESP scholars have worked hard to identify and understand what’s broken the
103 nature of PESP’s failings. O’Sullivan et al., (1994) for example, argue that time has been
104 spent in the critical or ‘radical’ literature describing the problems and inequities of present-
105 day PE, fitness and sport. Others (Flintoff, 2015; Thorpe, 2003) over time have supported a
106 similar conclusion regarding PESP and deficit discourse. That’s not to say that we should see
107 critical scholarship from a deficit perspective. Kirk (2018) holds that it is difficult to see how
108 any of the valuable and necessary contributions of critical scholars in PESP, could be
109 described as deficit scholarship. Instead he advocates for a re-energised critical pedagogy that
110 shifts to meet new challenges. Whilst we agree with Kirk (2018), in relation to his perception
111 of this scholarship as a valuable and necessary contribution, we find ourselves agreeing more
112 with Enright et al.’s (2014) argument that this scholarship is more deficit in its outlook
113 because it tends to view problems or failures as a starting point for change before advocating
114 for certain courses of future action. Deficit theories, therefore, may provide researchers with
115 *a priori* descriptions of the world and, by extension, call upon them to intervene and ‘fix’ the
116 problems they perceive (Enright et al., 2014).

117

118 Writing in the field of youth sport, Fraser-Thomas, Côté and Deakin (2005) argue that
119 researchers and practitioners most frequently adopt a ‘deficit reduction paradigm’. In other
120 words, they argue that we have established a school of thought that looks at ways of reducing

121 the barriers and obstacles to participation. They propose, instead, an ‘asset building
122 paradigm’ which focuses on promoting positives rather than simply reducing the negatives
123 that may impact on development. Other examples of positive discourses include examples
124 such as the ‘Take Action’ process deployed by O’Connor et al., (2014) that aimed to utilise
125 strengths and explore young peoples lived experienced of physical activity.

126

127 **Why look on the ‘bright side’?**

128 Those wishing to pursue more positive discourses have chosen to create alternative
129 approaches that shed light on the ‘bright side’ of the topic under investigation. For example,
130 in language studies, positive discourse analysis (PDA) explores discourses one likes rather
131 than discourses one wishes to criticise (Macgilchrist, 2007) and represents a shift in analytical
132 focus on moments such as liberation, agency and justice (Rogers and Wetzel, 2013). As
133 discussed above, appreciative inquiry is one example of more positively focused approaches.
134 It was used by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987, p.129) who presented it as a qualitative
135 research process and as a ‘conceptual reconfiguration of action research’. Kemmis (2009)
136 defined action research as a critical and self-critical cyclical process aimed as animating and
137 transforming both an individuals and collective practices through understanding our practices
138 and transforming the conditions that enable or constrain our practice. Their position was that
139 action research used a problem-solving approach to creating change, which acted as a
140 constraint on its contribution to knowledge (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). Since these
141 discussions, the notion of critical participatory action research has been explored by those
142 such as Kemmis et al., (2013) and highlights the notion of self-reflection and participatory
143 approaches to explore the complexities of practice and strengths. Whilst Cooperrider and
144 colleagues arguments against action research may not have stood the test of time, their
145 approach to focus on strengths had gained momentum. Indeed, some of the early writers

146 using appreciative inquiry have recently termed the approach as ‘positive action research’
147 (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Vianello, 2019).

148

149 Instead of focusing on problems and what is not working and why, appreciative inquiry asks
150 organisations to discover what worked particularly well and then to envision what it might be
151 like if the best of what worked occurred more frequently (Preskill and Tzavaras Catsambas,
152 2006). It exists as a ‘tool for recalibrating the lenses through which we experience a
153 phenomenon’ and to create opportunities for future change built on past and present strengths
154 (Harrison and Hasan, 2013, p.67).

155

156 This development of ideas reflects the appreciative mode of inquiry as a means that goes
157 beyond questions of epistemology in that it is a way of ‘living with, being with and directly
158 participating’ with the organisations and people we are studying (Cooperrider and Srivastva,
159 1987, p.12). Appreciative inquiry would, therefore, seem to be a construct that is more of an
160 orientation of philosophy or ontology guided towards uncovering the strengths of an
161 organisation, rather than a reduction to a singular method or technique (Enright et al., 2014).

162

163 Over the last 30 years, appreciative inquiry has developed from an academic theory-building
164 approach to a practical and powerful framework and process for organisations and communities
165 (Coghlan et al., 2003). Whilst Cooperrider (1986) discussed appreciative inquiry as a
166 generative theory building method, he later wrote that appreciative inquiry was not a
167 methodology (Watkins and Cooperrider, 2000) but ‘more than a method or technique’
168 (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987, p.12). Despite its relative unestablished status in the
169 educational literature, appreciative inquiry is fast developing into a framework, research
170 perspective employed internationally for organizational development (Fiorentino, 2012).

171 Research in this area has explored the use of appreciative inquiry in areas such as educational
172 institutions (Bergmark and Kostenius, 2009; Harrison and Hasan, 2013; Kozik et al., 2008),
173 community psychology (Boyd and Bright, 2007), tourism (Raymond and Hall, 2008) and
174 nursing (Carter, 2006; James et al., 2014). Due to this diversification, appreciative inquiry has
175 been described in myriad ways and it would be inaccurate to say that it is conducted in a
176 universal fashion (Bushe, 2010).

177

178 The uniqueness of appreciative inquiry lies in the *positive principle* which highlights the
179 importance of documenting the strengths of an organisation. It is important to understand that
180 appreciative inquiry is not just focused on the positive but that it also incorporates both critical
181 and negative elements to appreciate an organisation. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003, p.78)
182 describe how the ‘principles of appreciative inquiry point to one simple message– appreciative
183 inquiry is about conversations that matter’. The most popular means of applying appreciative
184 inquiry is Cooperrider and Whitney's (2001) ‘4-D’ (discovery, dream, design and destiny)
185 cycle:

- 186 1. *Discover*. In this stage participants reflect on and discuss and highlight those factors
187 that ‘give life’ to the organisation or topic of inquiry.
- 188 2. *Dream*. This section asks participants to imagine themselves, their group or community
189 at its best and attempt to identify what it could be in the future (Ludema and Fry, 2008)
- 190 3. *Design*. The third phase is to ‘*design*’ the future through dialogue crafting ideas and
191 discussion around proposals for change (Ludema and Fry, 2008).
- 192 4. *Destiny*. The final phase ‘*destiny*’ is an invitation for participants to create new targets,
193 gaps to fill and objectives towards transformation (Ludema and Fry, 2008).

194

195 Scholars have utilised this cyclical model to frame their methodologies and questions in an
196 appreciative inquiry manner (c.f. Carter, 2006; Harrison and Hasan, 2013). In the next section
197 we will look specifically about how appreciative inquiry had been applied in PESP.

198

199 *Appreciative inquiry in PESP*

200 Appreciative inquiry (amongst other strengths-based approaches) is an emergent area of study
201 in PESP. Pill (2014) used both appreciative inquiry and case study to explore teachers' use of
202 Game Sense (a games-based teaching approach) pedagogy. He later used appreciative inquiry
203 to explore coaches use of Game Sense pedagogy (Pill, 2015). He argued that appreciative
204 inquiry enabled 'imaginative capturing of the rich grounded educational experience of the
205 teachers' and aided him to engage 'with the positive experiences of the teachers' practice' (Pill,
206 2014, p.15). In further documenting the appreciative inquiry process, Pill (2014) argued that it
207 did not deny critical processes, but allowed teachers to open up to possibilities, consideration
208 of problems and the discussion of concepts such as power relations and multiple identities.
209 Thus, appreciative inquiry proved useful when exploring teachers' and coaches' pedagogical
210 experiences. Hill et al. (2015) articulated similar benefits when using appreciative inquiry.
211 They used an appreciative inquiry guided case study to investigate the construction and
212 maintenance of the body in a dance community. Their approach resulted in the participants
213 being able to show appreciation of what shaped their positive dance community through the
214 interview processes.

215

216 A more recent example of appreciative inquiry in PESP is that of Gray et al. (2019) who used
217 appreciative inquiry to understand (dis)engagement in PE from both a teacher and student
218 perspective. In this study, appreciative inquiry enabled the teacher to re-articulate and re-enact
219 their practice and learning and overlap more meaningful and empowering programmes for their

220 disengaged pupils. Gray et al. (2019) suggest that whilst there has been very little educational
221 research carried out using appreciative inquiry, the approach can add an important means of
222 understanding and potentially enhancing PE pedagogy.

223

224 It is important to note here that appreciative inquiry is not just a blind acceptance and focus on
225 the positives. Instead, and as these colleagues have noted, appreciative inquiry offers a more
226 rounded means of exploring aspects such as identity, community and power relations. An area
227 of investigation that is still yet to be explored from this perspective is that digital technology
228 in PESP.

229

230 **Digital Technology in PESP**

231 Echoing the field of educational technology, there has been increasing focus on digital
232 technology developments in PESP. Given the burgeoning interest in both teachers' and
233 students' use of digital technology in PESP (c.f. Goodyear, Armour and Woods, 2018;
234 Koekoek and van Hilvoorde, 2018; Wyant and Baek, 2018), we argue that it is particularly
235 timely to explore the use of alternative perspectives such as appreciative inquiry to explore
236 digital technology in PESP.

237

238 As a backdrop to our discussion, Casey, Goodyear and Armour (2017b) highlighted that
239 while *Sport, Education and Society* recently encouraged a discussion about the future of
240 digital technology in PE, the work of Gard (2014), Lupton (2015) and Williamson (2015)
241 offered pessimistic views of PESP and its prospective digital future. In summarising the
242 arguments presented in these three papers, Casey et al. (2017b) argued that Gard, Lupton and
243 Williamson outlined ways in which a data-driven society's exaggerated using digital
244 technology could lead to levels of body surveillance that are unintended, unimagined and/or

245 untested. These outlooks present a negative future for digital technology use in PE; one that
246 Casey et al. (2017b) claim seems to bypass teachers.

247

248 If we can apply appreciative inquiry to research in PESP generally, and the use of digital
249 technology specifically, then adopting an asset building paradigm can aid researchers to
250 investigate the facets of practice that engender positives and how we can support and nurture
251 these practices going forwards. In this paper we present an example of how appreciative
252 inquiry can be used to explore practitioners ongoing practices with digital technology.

253 Drawing on the work of Goodyear, Casey and Quennerstedt (2018) we use an empirical
254 illustration of teachers' use of digital technology in PE as an example of asset building
255 research. More broadly, we relate this example to ways in which practitioners and
256 researchers can explore other areas of the field. We suggest ways in which appreciative
257 inquiry may begin to impact upon our desires for progressive change.

258

259 **A methodological illustration of teachers' uses of digital technology**

260 The aim of this section is to outline how the methodological illustrations that scaffold the rest
261 of the paper were conceived. It starts with an explanation of the original research study,
262 exploring how PE teachers viewed, and the reasons why they used digital technology. It
263 includes a consideration of the participants and setting, the embedded nature of appreciative
264 inquiry in the data gathering methods and in the use of Grounded Theory as a data analysis
265 lens. In particular, it explores how we coded emerging data and, through coding, defined
266 themes (Charmaz, 2010).

267

268 **Participants and setting**

269 The research was conducted with four PE teachers in the UK who were selected on the basis
270 of their self-identified use or aspiring use of digital technology (all names of teachers and
271 schools are pseudonyms). All time periods below should be read as being at the time of the
272 study.

273

274 *Patrick (33 Years Old)* had taught PE for 10 years (all at Newton School) and had been head
275 of department for 4 years. Newton is a co-educational school with a large proportion of White
276 British students and a small proportion of students for whom English is an additional language
277 (EAL).

278

279 *Dillon (34)* had been teaching PE for 9 years (all of it at Wurbuton School) and had been head
280 of department for 2 years. Wurburton school is a co-educational Church of England Academy
281 School (11-18 years) where around a quarter of its students are from White British background.
282 The remainder are from a range of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, the largest
283 of which are those of Pakistani heritage.

284

285 *Alice (33)* had been teaching physical for 12 years and has been in her current role at Lutterford
286 for just over a year. Lutterford, an Academy school (15-18 years) situated in the outskirts of a
287 city, has a large proportion of students from BME groups, many of whom have EAL. The
288 school has a lower than average percentage of students on pupil premium¹.

289

290 *Harriet (24 years old)* has been teaching PE for 2 years (all of it at Birchwood). Birchwood is
291 a co-educational Academy school (11-18 years) situated in a small town. The school has a large

¹ Pupil premium is a sum of money given to schools by the Government to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children.

292 proportion of students from White British backgrounds and a high proportion of students
293 eligible for pupil premium.

294

295 **Data Generation**

296 Given the importance of interviewing in appreciative inquiry (Enright et al., 2014; Hill et al.,
297 2015; Michael 2005), we focused on this method for this paper. The researcher (first author)
298 initially conducted four separate one-on-one interviews with each of the four teachers.

299 Following school visits, follow up interviews were conducted with each teacher. As such,
300 there were between 5-6 individual interviews with each teacher. The research and interview
301 questions were underpinned by the 4-D cycle outlined above and the grounded theory
302 process. However, due to the limited literature exploring PE teachers uses of digital
303 technology in PE, our application of appreciative inquiry focused mainly on the discovery
304 phase. The interview questions were structured as follows.

305

306 Interview one studied each teacher's view of digital technology, the role and value of digital
307 technology in their lives and what they used digital technology for. Interview two focused on
308 each teacher's school context and their view of digital technology for teaching. Interview
309 three sought to understand the position of digital technology in the teacher's practice.

310 Interview four investigated how their practices could be developed further and how they
311 could be sustained. The follow up interviews explored their practice in further detail and
312 asked any questions arising after the school visits. Example appreciative inquiry questions
313 included in these interviews were '*can you describe a situation where digital technology has*
314 *worked best for you and your students and why?*', '*what do you value most about teaching*
315 *with digital technology?*' and '*how do you think your practice is successful for you and your*
316 *students?*'

317 **Data Analysis**

318 Data were analysed using a constructivist approach to grounded theory. Charmaz's (2014)
319 approach and criteria were used to support the iterative analysis process. Data were transcribed,
320 organised and stored in NVivo before coding. Two stages of coding occurred in the data
321 analysis process; initial and focused coding. Initial coding involved labelling the text using
322 gerunds² and "mining" (Charmaz, 2014, p.14) the data for analytical ideas to pursue in further
323 data gathering and analysis. A process of constant comparison between new and previously
324 collected data were enabled through this process and supported by memo writing. The second
325 phase of focused coding looked at the refining the initial codes and focusing on those ideas that
326 had occurred more frequently or those that had significance. Focused codes often contained
327 more than one initial code and were then compared back with other data for refinement. Themes
328 were then constructed from these final focused codes and related back to the research questions.
329 Example focused codes included 'embedded culture', 'forward thinking' and 'establishing
330 routines'.

331

332 **Findings: Discovery - what did appreciative inquiry allow us to explore?**

333 Appreciative inquiry allowed us to (a) reflect and discuss past and/or current success, (b)
334 initiate dialogue to act as a springboard for change and (c) identify future aspirations for
335 practice. We discuss these in turn below drawing upon selected extracts from our data before
336 presenting a discussion.

337

338 **Reflecting and discussing past and/or current success**

² A gerund is a verb which functions as a noun. Typically, the word ends in 'ing' such as appreciating, resuming or resisting.

339 A strength of appreciative inquiry was that it allowed us to discover previous successes or
340 strengths in each teacher's practice and identify why they were successful. In turn, this
341 allowed the teachers to reflect on their own or other teachers practices and, in doing so,
342 identify some of the value or benefits of digital technology for both themselves and their
343 students. In some cases, this was a particular stepping stone in crafting ideas for change and
344 thus, moving towards some of the latter stages of the appreciative inquiry cycle. A particular
345 example of this *discovery of success with digital technology* came from an interview with
346 Alice. Alice had discussed examples in her teacher training whereby video analysis had been
347 used to support demonstrations of a rugby scrum to students. Despite Alice's willingness to
348 discuss the positives of this practice, such as engaging the students and enabling them to
349 visualise the breakdown of the skill, she had yet to replicate this practice in her teaching:

350

351 **Interviewer:** Could you explain why you haven't perhaps used it [video analysis]
352 again for those demonstrations?

353 **Alice:** ... to be honest I just haven't really thought about it again. Now you [the
354 interviewer] are making me think, I might do it and it is a really good thing to do and I
355 probably should do more of it...I forget about the fact that I did that [practice using
356 video analysis] and I adapted my teaching. I moulded my lessons to be able to teach it
357 without using it [technology]. Whereas now, it is lovely for me to sit and talk to you
358 and reflect. I'm thinking yeah I could actually do that now we've got the iPads. It
359 would be quite useful and beneficial so it's now opening up doors again I suppose and
360 remembering that you can do it.

361 The use of appreciative inquiry in these interviews allowed Alice to begin to identify how
362 and why digital technology had worked in the past and comment on how this was something
363 that she wanted to attempt again. The first author also observed Alice using the department's

364 iPads in a trampolining lesson after the interview. Indeed, the extract above shows that Alice
365 began to question herself as to why she had not tried these practices again given her previous
366 success.

367

368 Patrick similarly found discovery questions beneficial for highlighting positive factors of his
369 practice.

370 **Interviewer:** Where has technology worked best for you in your teaching?

371 **Patrick:** I made the mistake of trying to download every app under the sun. I almost
372 used them [pause] I wouldn't say as a gimmick to start with...I would like to be more
373 positive and say trialling, trialling each one to see what impact it could have and
374 quickly eliminate those that I didn't think were worthwhile.

375 Reflecting on the process of trial and error when using digital technology was, as a result,
376 identified as a key finding in tailoring the use of technology to meet the needs of each
377 teacher. Asking the teachers to unpack experiences where technology had worked best and to
378 anticipate how this can feed forward into future practices is a particular focus of appreciative
379 inquiry. Being able to reflect on this was also useful for explaining their approaches to other
380 teachers and to understand their approaches to their developing use of technology.

381

382 **Initiate dialogue to act as a springboard for change**

383 Whilst the intention of these appreciative inquiry interviews was to focus on the discovery
384 phase, there were examples from the data which highlighted unforeseen aspects of the *destiny*
385 and *design* phases. This extract from Dillon shows how appreciative inquiry enabled him to
386 craft ideas for change (*design*) and create new targets or objectives towards change (*destiny*).
387 In a previous interview Dillon had identified that one of the areas that had been successful to

388 his practice was taking a student-centred approach to technology and students taking
389 responsibility for their learning.

390

391 **Interviewer:** What do you see as some of the causes of that [practice] being a success
392 for you? Can you identify why those things have worked well or what do you think
393 are the reasons why those particular instances have been beneficial?

394 **Dillon:** Yeah. Being student-centred, so talking to the student as to why it is
395 successful across both those two examples I would say that its student paced so its
396 personalised.

397 After the interview Dillon created new roles for his students called ‘digital managers’. These
398 roles involved the students setting up different pieces of technology prior to the lesson,
399 supporting other students with their technology use and the creation of research materials to
400 support the use of technology in PE. This change in Dillon’s practice was not an anticipated
401 aspect or intention of our discussion. Yet, Dillon felt that, through the interviews, he had
402 further identified outcomes he wanted to achieve through his use of technology (i.e.
403 leadership and student-centred practices); this was a change that would enable him to attempt
404 to reach this new goal. The generative impact of appreciative inquiry on the participants (for
405 example on their perspectives of teaching or future adaptations), therefore, may stretch
406 beyond what is reported by research studies.

407

408 **Identify future aspirations for practice**

409 The appreciative inquiry interviews were also beneficial in discovering and identifying future
410 aspirations for each teacher’s practice. Identifying future aspirations for practice are
411 important for the *dream* and *design* phases of appreciative inquiry as they have the potential
412 to build upon previous success and can act as starting point for goal setting. An example of

413 these discussions occurred with Harriet where appreciative inquiry aided discussions of
414 future plans with technology and short/long term goals.

415 **Interviewer:** What are your future plans with regards to technology? Do you see it
416 fitting in with your future practice?

417 **Harriet:** Yeah, I would like to get a broader content knowledge of how I would use it.
418 I would like a bigger toolbox if that makes sense...like my resources bucket would
419 keep increasing and then I can pick and choose, as and when, what is appropriate.

420 **Interviewer:** And if you were to look at your short-term and longer-term goals, what
421 would they be in terms of technology?

422 **Harriet:** Short-term, to keep improving, to keep looking to things like that [Twitter
423 and other practitioners]. Long-term I'd like to think that I'd be a teacher that's very
424 consistent. If I'm using technology it's got a meaning and it's having a positive
425 impact and it is a little more embedded rather than just sporadic.

426 **Interviewer:** What do you think might help you to reach those goals?

427 **Harriet:** Practice, a little more CPD (continuing professional development), some
428 feedback and lesson observations.

429 Similar themes around consistency and CPD were also identified by Patrick.

430 **Interviewer:** What would you need in the future to maintain and sustain your use of
431 technology?

432 **Patrick:** I think we all need to get to a point where we use one platform so the
433 students are very familiar with it.

434 **Interviewer:** What would allow you to extend your use of technology?

435 **Patrick:**...that comes from CPD opportunities whether that is in school or outside.
436 Making sure we know what the current initiatives are and what's working...staying

437 up to date with the practice that's going on things like social media because, to be
438 honest, it's the best resource out there.

439 With little known about how practices with digital technology are shaped or changed over
440 time (Prestridge, 2017), appreciative inquiry could be used as a tool to begin to understand
441 the mechanisms that could support future change (i.e. CPD or consistency).

442

443 **Discussion: 'Dream and Destiny' - limitations, challenges and opportunities for future**
444 **research**

445 Appreciative inquiry allowed participants to reflect and discuss past or current successes.

446 However, a common concern with appreciative inquiry is that the approach may invalidate or
447 ignore the negative experiences of participants (Bushe, 2010; Egan and Lancaster, 2005). We

448 focused on appreciating each teacher's practice in line with the aims of the research, but we

449 also attempted to include the 'negative stuff' (van der Haar and Hosking, 2004, p.14). For

450 example, we also discussed the teachers' experiences regarding accessibility to technology,

451 their trial and errors and issues such as intermittent Wi-Fi access. It was particularly

452 interesting that, even though the teachers were aware of the research focus and had been

453 asked to reflect on why they believed a particular practice had been successful, many of their

454 answers used a negative as a starting point. For example, when asked to identify when

455 technology had worked best for him or worked well, Dillon started his answer by talking

456 about the issues of practical PE, technology and his problem of a lack of consistency at the

457 start before going on to discuss the value of using technology to provide personalised

458 feedback. Similarly, Patrick started by saying about the mistakes he had made before then

459 discussing positives and aspects he had changed. As such, appreciative inquiry may have, at

460 times, felt unnatural to the teachers.

461

462 On reflection, it seems important to strike a balance between introducing the concepts of
463 appreciative inquiry and adapting the terminology to the environment. Being able to use
464 appreciative inquiry as a starting point whilst ‘maintaining a momentum for change’
465 (Michael, 2005, p.229) can be harder in practice than in theory. A means in which this
466 balance could be achieved, and to ensure that there is a focus on reflecting/discussing past
467 and or current success, could be to use a combination of both critical theory and appreciative
468 inquiry (Enright et al., 2014). Grant and Humphries (2006) and Ridley-Duff and Duncan
469 (2015) suggest that by combining the two, we may begin to better understand not just how
470 appreciative inquiry develops in the process of research, but also the knowledge and power
471 influences which might be negotiated as the process unfolds. This approach may not only
472 allow for a deeper understanding of teachers’ past or current successful practices with digital
473 technology but, also, deepen our investigation of the research process itself. By treating the
474 apparent contradictions of appreciative inquiry and critical theory as a paradox, Grant and
475 Humphries (2006) argue that we can begin to explore the potential and tensions of both
476 perspectives rather than allowing ourselves to be constrained by them. As such, we believe
477 this is a fruitful combination to be explored in future research as it has implications not only
478 for what successes we seek to know, but also how such success came to be.

479

480 In alignment with other scholars use of appreciative inquiry, the approach was beneficial in
481 initiating discussions that then acted as a springboard for change. Some of the teachers were
482 able to identify new roles for their students to support their teaching and self-imposed
483 development (e.g. digital managers). As Scott and Armstrong (2019) argued, the use of the
484 appreciative inquiry perspective can act as a strategy to disrupt a deficit discourse, replacing it
485 with growth and self-determined change. With dialogue being regarded as an important facet
486 of changing organisational culture and bringing about positive change (London, McGuire and

487 Santos, 2019) we believe that appreciative inquiry can be employed by PESP researchers and
488 practitioners respectively to adopt an alternative approach to their studies.

489

490 Identifying future aspirations for future practice was discussed in terms of both short term and
491 long-term aspirations that could be supported by CPD. Makopoulou (2018) recently held that
492 many CPD tutors feel that the development of professional practice should come from the
493 participants themselves. As some of the teachers in this study suggested, being supported to
494 identify future aspirations for practice may also translate into bringing personal and practice-
495 based goals and/or areas for development to the fore. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this work
496 to measure the longevity or sustainability of such change, it is reassuring to gain a sense of
497 teachers constructing a personal experience through their reflections which has been shown in
498 other contexts to constitute both a success and challenge for CPD (Griffiths, Armour and
499 Cushion, 2018).

500

501 In relation to the topic of study, instead of focusing on the barriers or obstacles to teachers'
502 digital technology integration, researchers could explore why, and in what
503 contexts/circumstances, digital technology supports teaching and learning? or, how have
504 teachers and their schools overcome such barriers? For example, in the educational technology
505 literature, Tschannen-Moran and Hofer (2019) recently advocated for the use of appreciative
506 inquiry to build on strengths for integrating digital technology in schools as it provides a helpful
507 lens to engender conversations and a shared vision about what approaches might uniquely
508 support teachers and students. We also feel that asking questions from an appreciative inquiry
509 perspective would help to better understand the pedagogical process involved with negotiating
510 digital technologies.

511

512 Researchers working with teachers or students could use elements of appreciative inquiry (such
513 as the philosophy, questions or cycle) to explore other questions or gaps in the field such as the
514 role of technology in young people’s learning. Goodyear, Armour and Wood (2019) contend
515 that adults can reduce risk and realise more of the positive impact of social media for young
516 people by focusing on content. As such, appreciative inquiry could be employed to look at
517 appreciating what elements of social media have a positive impact on their learning? Or, how
518 could both teachers and students design positive strategies for change? We feel, that questions
519 and topics such as these could also be explored by practitioners both within and beyond their
520 own departments/school contexts. Such shared understanding and identifying useful practice
521 that could be used to develop practice in the future. Indeed, as Hastie (2017) advocated, this
522 could also have broader implications for future research in PESP.

523

524 **Conclusion**

525 In this paper we have argued for the need to explore positive discourses in order to advance
526 the field. In addition, we argued for the application of appreciative inquiry (as an exemplar of
527 this positive discourse) to digital technology in PESP. We have provided both a background
528 to those interested in discovering more about the approach and examples of how it can be
529 applied in practice.

530

531 Through our methodological illustration we have demonstrated how appreciative inquiry can
532 help participants to reflect and discuss past and/or current success, initiate dialogue to act as a
533 springboard for change and identify future aspirations for practice. We would argue that these
534 outcomes are one way, amongst many, that could contribute to better understanding of the
535 use of digital technology in PESP. Indeed, and as Lorusso and Richards (2018) and Hastie
536 (2017) argued, appreciative inquiry can encourage co-constructions of innovations and helps

537 us to understand what makes different practices more effective and successful for individuals.
538 Thinking more broadly than this, investigating the various organisational stakeholder
539 involved in digital technology implementation in PE and sport could initiate more
540 collaborative and change inducing practices.

541

542 Thorborn, Gray and O'Connor (2019) argued that understanding and appreciating our field is
543 altogether a finer grained and more nuanced matter than considering that PE, health and sport
544 is either in crises or not in crises. Equally it helps us to see that or that a strengths-based
545 perspective on experience and social engagement needs to be tempered by an understanding
546 of the complexities of how such intentions might be enacted. We have, alongside other
547 scholars, began to provide an insight into a way that appreciative inquiry can aid us, as
548 researchers and practitioners, to support such change. Our contribution, metaphorically
549 speaking, allowed us to 'shine a light' and 'put under the spotlight' the factors that already
550 supported teachers' use of digital technology. It provided an insight into a significantly
551 under-researched aspect of teachers' pedagogical use of digital technology. In contributing
552 such knowledge, we hope others can use appreciative inquiry and adapt its principles as the
553 'launch pad and not the (final) destination' (Pill, 2014, p.16) of future research.

554

555 **Disclosure Statement**

556 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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