Occupational Socialization Theory in Physical Education: a scoping review

Teoría de la Socialización Ocupacional en Educación Física: una revisión de alcance

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Abstract

Introduction: Occupational socialization theory (OST) has been the principal framework for understanding how physical education teachers are recruited, prepared, and sustained in the profession for over four decades, yet no integrative synthesis has appeared since the last comprehensive review in 2019.
Objective: This scoping review, conducted following Arksey and O'Malley's framework, mapped research applying OST in physical education between 2019 and June 2026 and examined what this body of work implies for the theory itself.
Methodology: Systematic searches in Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO, supplemented by hand-searching specialist journals, identified sixty-three empirical studies.
Results: Qualitative designs predominated (79.4%), and most studies came from Anglophone systems (61.9%), chiefly the United States. Professional socialization was the most studied phase (42.9%), followed by organizational socialization (34.9%), acculturation (11.1%), combined-phase studies (9.5%), and one multiple-phase longitudinal design (1.6%). Evidence on organizational socialization, including that on teacher educators, rests mainly on Anglophone settings, whereas non-Anglophone evidence concentrates on professional socialization.
Discussion: Recent studies are associated with three theoretical movements: extension to teacher educators, a more conditional reading of wash-out and wash-in, and the treatment of the phases as overlapping rather than sequential pressures. These patterns are largely compatible with habitus-based accounts; the review does not show that OST explains more than such accounts, but it identifies where its phase-based, occupation-specific structure adds analytic value and where it reaches its limits.
Conclusions: Future research should compare OST with alternative frameworks, use designs capable of estimating effects, and test the theory in under-represented systems.

Keywords

Acculturation; occupational socialization; physical education teacher education; professional identity; scoping review.

Resumen

Introducción: Durante más de cuatro décadas, la Teoría de la Socialización Ocupacional (TSO) ha sido el principal marco para comprender cómo se recluta, forma y sostiene al profesorado de educación física; no existe una síntesis integradora posterior a la revisión de 2019.
Objetivo: Esta revisión de alcance, según el marco de Arksey y O'Malley, cartografió la investigación sobre la TSO en educación física entre 2019 y junio de 2026 y examinó sus implicaciones para la teoría.
Metodología: Búsquedas sistemáticas en Web of Science, Scopus y EBSCO, más búsquedas manuales en revistas especializadas, identificaron sesenta y tres estudios empíricos.
Resultados: Predominaron los diseños cualitativos (79,4%) y los sistemas anglófonos (61,9%). La socialización profesional fue la fase más estudiada (42,9%), seguida de la organizacional (34,9%), la aculturación (11,1%), las fases combinadas (9,5%) y un diseño multifásico (1,6%). La evidencia sobre socialización organizacional, incluida la de formadores, se apoya sobre todo en contextos anglófonos; la no anglófona se concentra en la socialización profesional.
Discusión: Los estudios recientes se asocian con tres movimientos: extensión a formadores de docentes, lectura más condicional del wash-out y el wash-in, y fases superpuestas y no secuenciales. Los patrones son compatibles con explicaciones basadas en el habitus; la revisión no demuestra que la TSO explique más, pero identifica dónde su estructura por fases aporta valor analítico y dónde alcanza sus límites.
Conclusiones: Futuras investigaciones deberían comparar la TSO con marcos alternativos, emplear diseños capaces de estimar efectos y probar la teoría en sistemas subrepresentados.

Palabras clave

Aculturación; formación inicial docente; prácticas pedagógicas; revisión de alcance; socialización ocupacional.

Introduction

Physical education teachers enter their profession already formed by it. Physical Education curricula and initial teacher training programs are contextualized based on the territory where they are implemented and, consequently, on their history and curricular architecture with intentions defined by their academic faculties (Curtner-Smith et al., 2025). Long before a prospective teacher applies to a preparation program, that person has spent thousands of hours as a pupil, a player, and often a coached athlete inside the very institution they will later attempt to reform or reproduce. Lortie (1975) named this phenomenon the apprenticeship of observation, and in few fields is that apprenticeship as protracted, embodied, and affectively saturated as it is in physical education. In this regard, the pedagogy of experience in physical education becomes intelligible, as it establishes affective bonds through didactic actions (Volshøj et al., 2025). The implication is not merely biographical but fundamentally theoretical: if teachers arrive at formal preparation already carrying deeply sedimented dispositions toward movement, competition, and pedagogical authority, then any framework that treats professional formation as beginning with university coursework is structurally inadequate to the phenomenon it seeks to explain.

Occupational socialization theory, developed across a sequence of foundational papers by Lawson (1983a, 1983b, 1986), was constructed precisely to take this fact seriously. Lawson (1986) defined occupational socialization as encompassing all the forms of socialization that first draw individuals toward physical education and that subsequently govern their perceptions and conduct as teachers and teacher educators. The definition commits the researcher to treating recruitment, preparation, and practice not as three separate research problems but as three moments in a single biographical arc, each conditioning the interpretive possibilities of the next. The theoretical architecture that has organized four decades of research under this framework distinguishes three phases: acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization (Lawson, 1986). These are understood not as a rigid sequence but as a dialectical unfolding in which the individual is neither a passive recipient of institutional pressure nor a fully sovereign agent of self-fashioning (Schempp & Graber, 1992). This dialectical commitment separates occupational socialization theory from the structural functionalist accounts of professional formation that preceded it, in which the novice was assumed simply to be molded into conformity with existing occupational norms (Merton et al., 1957).

The concept that undertakes the heaviest theoretical lifting within this dialectical model is Lawson's (1983a) notion of the subjective warrant: the internalized, pre-reflective theory of the occupation that a recruit constructs during acculturation and carries into formal preparation. Reading the subjective warrant through a Bourdieusian lens as a form of habitus, a durable embodied disposition that structures perception and action without being fully available to conscious reflection (Bourdieu, 1990), helps to interpret why acculturation appears to exert such strong influence over subsequent phases. It is not simply a set of beliefs that professional coursework can correct through better argumentation, but an embodied orientation toward movement, competition, and pedagogical authority laid down through years of practical, largely unreflective participation in sport and schooling. This reading is consistent with acculturation studies in which British, German, and Chinese preservice teachers alike carry curricular preferences and pedagogical instincts traceable to childhood sporting experience rather than to any subsequent formal instruction (Curtner-Smith et al., 2025; Li, 2025; Merrem & Curtner-Smith, 2019). The theoretical payoff of this reading is that it offers a plausible interpretation of why professional socialization, however well designed, is so often reported to produce what the field has called wash-out: the erosion of program-aligned practice under the pressure of a return to deeply sedimented, pre-professional dispositions (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). At the same time, the dialectical model permits its theoretical converse, wash-in: the durable transfer of professionally acquired practices under conditions of sustained organizational or peer support (Cruickshank et al., 2026a, 2026b; Moy & Rossi, 2026).

The most comprehensive account of this field to date remains Richards et al.'s (2019) review of occupational socialization research in physical education. That review traced the theory's development from Templin's (1979) foundational study through the mid-2010s and established several structural features of the field that remain the necessary point of departure for any subsequent synthesis. The literature has been overwhelmingly qualitative in orientation, has concentrated disproportionately on professional and organizational socialization relative to the earlier and arguably more foundational acculturа-

tion phase, and has been produced predominantly by scholars working in the United States. This concentration raises legitimate questions about the theory's portability to national systems in which teacher labor markets, school governance, and the structure of teacher preparation itself differ substantially from the North American case. That review called explicitly for the theory to be tested outside its historical population of preservice and early career schoolteachers, and for greater attention to be paid to the university-based socialization of the academics responsible for delivering physical education teacher education. This population, whose formative influence on the field had until recently gone almost entirely untheorized, represents a significant frontier for the theory's extension.

In the years since that review, a small number of further syntheses have appeared that bear directly on occupational socialization theory without superseding the need for a comprehensive update. Smith-Suchon et al. (2026) conducted a dedicated scoping review of physical education teacher education faculty socialization, formally extending Lawson's model to include anticipatory academic socialization, doctoral preparation, and secondary organizational socialization: the process by which new faculty members are inducted into the norms of higher education rather than of schooling. Malinowski et al. (2026) undertook a parallel synthesis of how occupational socialization shapes teachers' adoption and implementation of pedagogical models, sharpening understanding of one particular outcome without addressing the acculturation phase that precedes it or the organizational contexts that sustain or erode model fidelity once teachers are in post. Adjacent to occupational socialization proper, further scoping reviews have illuminated organizational or professional socialization phenomena using vocabularies drawn from curriculum theory, pedagogy studies, and disability studies rather than from Lawson's framework itself (Fjellner et al., 2024; Hordvik & Beni, 2026; Karamani et al., 2026). Taken together, these contributions demonstrate that the intellectual energy surrounding occupational socialization has neither dissipated nor stood still since 2019. They also demonstrate, by their very specificity, that no study has yet mapped the field as an integrated whole across all three phases of the model for the period following Richards et al.'s (2019) review.

This absence carries consequences beyond mere bibliographic completeness. Scoping reviews perform an epistemic function that individual empirical studies cannot: they render visible the shape of a field's attention, including what has been studied repeatedly, what has been studied nowhere, and what has begun to be studied in ways that strain against the theory's original assumptions (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2020). Without such a synthesis, three risks accumulate. First, the extension of occupational socialization theory into new populations, including university faculty, doctoral students, school principals, and teachers working in special and adapted physical education, proceeds without a shared sense of how these extensions relate to one another or to the theory's original scope. Second, methodological gaps identified as far back as Richards et al.'s (2019) review, most notably the near-total absence of designs capable of estimating the strength rather than merely the presence of a socialization effect, cannot be evaluated for whether they persist. Third, and most consequentially for practice, findings that in isolation appear as scattered case studies of individual teachers, faculty members, or preservice cohorts accumulate, when read together, into a considerably more forceful empirical claim about the conditions under which teacher preparation succeeds or fails to survive contact with schools. This claim remains invisible so long as the studies documenting it are never brought into the same analytic frame.

A further theoretical elaboration visible in the recent literature concerns the increasing formal recognition that Lawson's three phases (Lawson, 1986) do not simply succeed one another in linear fashion but overlap, recur, and in some documented cases actively contradict one another within the same biographical moment. Bergentoft and Kougioumtzis (2026) explicitly hybridize occupational socialization theory with Bernstein's concept of the pedagogic device in order to model how preservice teachers negotiate simultaneously contradictory messages from university coursework and school placement. These are messages that Lawson's original model, in treating professional and organizational socialization as sequential, is not well equipped to represent. Backman et al. (2023) reach a structurally similar conclusion through the vocabulary of pedagogic fabrication, tracing how a single teacher's approach to assessment is continuously reconstructed rather than transmitted intact across the transition from preparation to practice. Most substantially, the extension of the theory to secondary organizational socialization, the induction of physical education teacher education faculty into the norms of higher education (Dennis et al., 2024; Kinder et al., 2023; Smith-Suchon et al., 2026), applies the same dialectical logic to an entirely different occupational context. This raises the question of whether the socialization

of schoolteachers and the socialization of those who prepare them are parallel instances of a general theoretical mechanism or a single recursive, multi-generational process in which the subjective warrants of future faculty are themselves partly constituted by their earlier socialization as schoolteachers.

Yet mapping a literature is not the same as advancing a theory, and the case for an update therefore cannot rest only on the absence of a recent synthesis. Many of the propositions around which occupational socialization theory is organized, that experience before formal preparation shapes how teachers later interpret it, that institutional settings condition what survives of that preparation, and that professional trajectories are not linear, are also well established in the sociology of education and of the professions (Lortie, 1975; Merton et al., 1957). The theoretical question addressed here is therefore a narrower one: what, if anything, does a phase-based and occupation-specific account add to explanations already available in that tradition? The question is sharpest for the subjective warrant, which the framework's own literature reads through Bourdieu's (1990) habitus. If the subjective warrant is a form of habitus, the relevant comparison is with habitus, field, and capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990), which also account for durable dispositions, for their interaction with position in an institutional space, and for the unequal resources that settings offer. What OST would then contribute is a specification of the sequence of institutions that socialize a teacher (recruitment, preparation, and the school workplace) and of the mechanisms, wash-out and wash-in, through which those institutions reinforce or displace one another. Whether that specification explains more than the general concepts do is an empirical question that has rarely been posed directly, and the present review examines what recent studies allow us to say about it.

A second problem is that the framework was developed in, and has been applied mostly to, North American school systems. Teacher-preparation systems differ in their structure and length, in how placements are organized, and in how schools hire, induct, and evaluate teachers. Recent descriptions of physical education teacher preparation in Chile, for instance, show programs described through graduate profiles and curricular structures and a labor field in which schools are the main destination (Caniuqueo-Vargas et al., 2023), and work in Peru describes university physical education instructors constructing their professional identity within hierarchical institutional arrangements that they experience as imposed rather than self-developed (Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024). Neither study used OST, but both show settings whose institutional arrangements cannot be assumed to match those in which the theory was developed. It cannot be taken for granted that acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization have the same meaning, or operate in the same way, across such systems. Cross-cultural transferability is therefore treated in this review as a theoretical problem in its own right and not only as a limitation.

The present study addresses the gaps identified above by conducting a scoping review of occupational socialization research in physical education published between January 2019 and June 2026, following the five-stage methodology set out by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and refined by subsequent methodological guidance (Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018). The review pursues three aims. The first is descriptive and thematic: to characterize what is currently known about physical education teacher socialization through peer-reviewed, English-language research published in the target period, in terms of its methodological composition, its geographic and demographic distribution, and its substantive findings across the three phases of the model. The second is analytical: to examine whether the patterns reported differ across populations (pupils, preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators) and across institutional and national contexts. The third is critical and forward-looking: to assess which propositions of OST recent evidence confirms, reformulates, or calls into question, what the phase-based framework adds to habitus, field, and capital, and what follows for the theory's transferability, for the design of teacher preparation programs, and for the professional lives of the practicing teachers and teacher educators the theory was constructed to understand.

Method

The present study adopted a scoping review methodology, following the five-stage framework established by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and subsequently refined by Levac et al. (2010) and the Joanna Briggs Institute (Peters et al., 2020). Reporting followed the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR; Tricco et al., 2018). Scoping review methodology was selected in preference to systematic

review given the breadth of the research question, the heterogeneity of designs represented in the literature, and the exploratory objective of mapping the conceptual and empirical terrain of occupational socialization research in physical education teacher education (PETE). The five stages comprised: (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) study selection; (4) data charting; and (5) collation, synthesis, and reporting of results.

Research Questions

The review was guided by three interrelated research questions. The first concerned the descriptive and thematic characteristics of peer-reviewed, English-language studies employing occupational socialization theory (OST) in the context of physical education (PE) and published between January 2019 and June 2026, mapped across the three canonical phases of the OST model (acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization). The second concerned whether the patterns identified vary across populations and across institutional and national contexts. The third concerned the implications of this body of research for (a) the theoretical development of OST, including which of its propositions are confirmed, reformulated, or challenged and what the framework adds to habitus, field, and capital; (b) the design of initial teacher preparation programs; and (c) school- and university-based professional support structures.

Search Strategy

A systematic database search was conducted in June 2026 in Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus, and EBSCOhost (SPORTDiscus and Academic Search Elite). The same Boolean strategy was adapted to each database: population terms ("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") were combined using AND with construct terms ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out"). The strategy was applied to the title and abstract fields in all databases. Searches were restricted to English-language peer-reviewed articles published between January 2019 and June 2026. The strings used American spelling only, so variants such as socialisation were not searched. The complete string, field, filters, and date for each database are reported in Table 1. The database search was supplemented by hand-searching six specialist journals (Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, European Physical Education Review, Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, Sport, Education and Society, Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education, and Kinesiology Review) for the *same period.*

Table 1. Search strategy by database

Database	Search field	Search string	Filters	Search date
Web of Science Core Collection	Title (TI), abstract (AB)	TI=(("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") AND ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out")) OR AB=(("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") AND ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out"))	English; Article; 2019–June 2026	June 2026
Scopus	Title, abstract	TITLE-ABS(("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") AND ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out"))	English; Article; 2019–June 2026	June 2026
EBSCOhost – SPORTDiscus	Title (TI), abstract (AB)	TI ((("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") AND ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out")) OR AB ((("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") AND ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out"))	English; Peer-reviewed; 2019–June 2026	June 2026

EBSCOhost – Academic Search Elite	Title (TI), abstract (AB)	TI (("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") AND ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out")) OR AB (("physical education" OR "physical education teacher education" OR "PE teacher*" OR "physical education teacher*") AND ("occupational socialization" OR "teacher socialization" OR "professional socialization" OR "organizational socialization" OR acculturation OR "wash-out"))	English; Peer-reviewed; 2019–June 2026	June 2026

Note. Asterisks denote truncation. Searches covered publications from January 2019 to June 2026.

Eligibility Criteria and Study Selection

Eligibility criteria required that studies: (a) be published in peer-reviewed journals between January 2019 and June 2026; (b) be reported in English; (c) focus substantively on the socialization of physical education teachers, pre-service teachers, teacher educators, or closely related populations (e.g., adapted physical education specialists, doctoral students, or school administrators); (d) explicitly employ occupational socialization theory or draw substantially on Lawson's foundational framework; and (e) report sufficient methodological detail to permit classification of design, population, and findings.

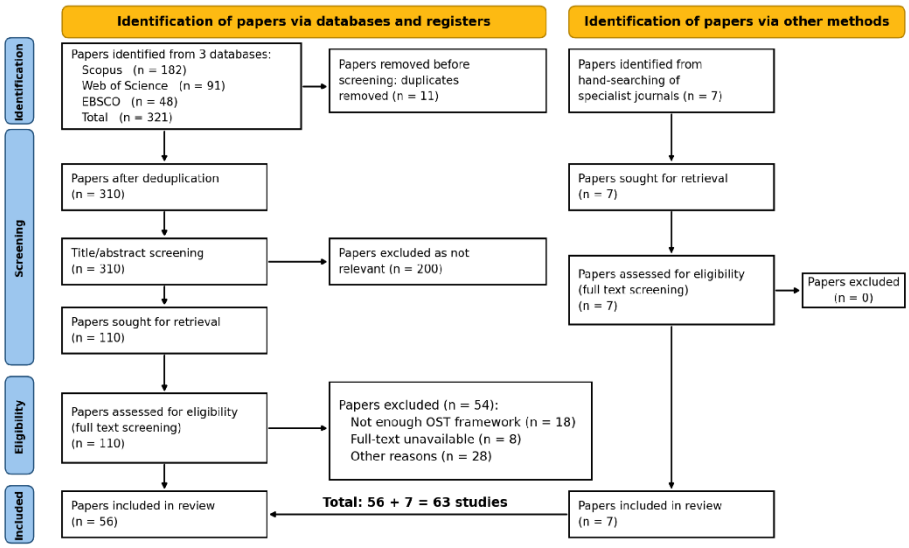
Studies were excluded if they mentioned socialization only, incidentally, addressed teacher beliefs or practices without situating them within an occupational socialization framework, or were unavailable in full text.

Consistent with the scoping nature of this review, studies addressing any phase of occupational socialization were included, even when participants were not yet in-service teachers (e.g., secondary pupils in acculturation studies) or were school administrators/teacher educators whose perceptions shape organizational socialization. However, studies focusing solely on curriculum analysis without human participant data or targeting non-specialist generalist teachers without explicit OST application, were excluded.

Study selection was conducted by a team of four reviewers, who worked collaboratively through both stages. Titles and abstracts were first examined against the predefined eligibility criteria, followed by full-text assessment of potentially eligible studies. When decisions differed, the reviewers discussed the evidence presented in the original article and resolved the discrepancy by consensus.

The database search identified 321 records (Scopus, n = 182; Web of Science, n = 91; EBSCO, n = 48). After removing 11 duplicates, 310 records were screened by title and abstract, and 200 were excluded as not relevant. The full texts of the remaining 110 reports were assessed, and 54 were excluded because the study did not use occupational socialization theory as a sufficient framework (n = 18), the full text was unavailable (n = 8), or for other reasons (n = 28), leaving 56 studies. Hand-searching of the specialist journals identified seven further studies, all of which met the criteria (7 retrieved, 7 assessed, 0 excluded). In total, sixty-three empirical studies were retained for full charting and analysis (56 + 7 = 63). Figure 1 presents the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram detailing the identification, screening, and inclusion process.

Figure 1. Flow diagram of research selection process using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Tricco et al., 2018)



Note. OST = Occupational Socialization Theory; PE = Physical Education; PRISMA-ScR = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews.

Data Charting and Synthesis

For each of the sixty-three included studies, information was extracted and tabulated regarding authorship and year of publication, country or countries in which data collection occurred, the phase or phases of occupational socialization addressed, the composition and size of the study population, the study purpose, the research design and data collection strategy employed, the theoretical framework, and the principal substantive finding reported. Data were charted using a structured coding form developed for this review. The four reviewers examined each included study jointly and recorded the information through discussion and agreement. The form was not pilot-tested. Each study was assigned a primary phase classification: acculturation, professional socialization, organizational socialization, combined phases, or multiple phases. The combined-phase category was used for studies that explicitly addressed two phases, and the multiple-phase category was reserved for studies that tracked the same participants across a phase transition. Because this classification requires interpretation, when disagreements or ambiguities arose the reviewers discussed the evidence reported in the original article and reached consensus before the information was entered in the final coding form.

Given the heterogeneity of the corpus, two further dimensions were coded for each study. Population was classified as secondary pupils, preservice teachers and recent graduates, in-service teachers, PETE faculty, or school leaders. Institutional and national context was classified by the country of data collection and grouped into Anglophone systems (United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), continental European systems, East Asian systems, Latin American systems, and multinational or unspecified contexts. These groupings are analytic simplifications used to examine whether patterns recur across settings; they do not treat the systems within a group as equivalent. Research designs were classified as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods according to the design and data collection reported by the authors, and survey, psychometric, and pre-experimental designs were classified as quantitative. The thematic synthesis proceeded inductively within each phase, following the constant comparative logic recommended for scoping reviews (Levac et al., 2010): the principal finding of each study was summarized, similar findings were grouped into descriptive categories, and the categories were compared across studies, phases, populations, and contexts until recurring themes could be defined. The coding process was iterative, and the coding rules were clarified when new situations emerged. Because the four reviewers charted jointly rather than independently, inter-rater agreement was not calculated. The review reports what studies found and what recurs across them. Because the corpus is dominated by qualitative, cross-sectional, and small-sample designs and no appraisal of study

quality was undertaken, associations are not treated as evidence of effect size or causal mechanism, and the language of the review reflects this.

Results

The sixty-three studies were published between 2019 and 2026, with annual output rising from two studies in 2019 to between ten and eleven per year from 2023 onward, including ten studies published in 2026 at the time of the search. This indicates sustained research activity since Richards et al.'s (2019) review. The characteristics of each included study are charted in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of included studies

Author(s) & Year	Country	OST Phase	Population (N)	Design/Method	Key Finding
			Acculturation		
Merrem & Curtner-Smith (2019)	Germany	Acc.	PPETs (n=10)	Interviews	Acculturation shaped conservative or progressive professional orientations through family background, youth sport participation, and the apprenticeship of observation.
Gaudreault et al. (2023)	USA	Acc.	Preservice (n=1)	Life history	A Latino immigrant teacher's search for belonging structured his socialization trajectory; race, ethnicity, and cultural identity emerged as key variables shaping recruitment and retention in PETE.
Golding & Keyworth (2025)	UK	Acc.	PE teachers	Tree of Life narrative	PE identities rooted in acculturative experiences are continuously reconstructed through ongoing negotiation between community belonging and professional context, highlighting identity as a fluid, lifelong process.
Curtner-Smith et al. (2025)	UK	Acc.	PPETs (n=6)	Formal interviews	Aspirations to teach secondary PE and preferences for traditional curricula were explained by accumulated apprenticeships of observation during childhood, reinforcing the durability of acculturative experiences.
Sprake et al. (2026)	UK	Acc.	Secondary pupils (N=62)	Focus groups	Acculturation profoundly shaped ideological preconceptions; prospective recruits developed fixed ideas about PE teaching before entering PETE. The concept of 'reflection-in-acculturation' captures how ideological formation occurs through ongoing reflection on lived sporting experience.
Lin (2026)	Taiwan	Acc.	Preservice (N=41)	IPA	Service-learning in rural contexts challenged acculturative preconceptions and acted as a catalyst for professional identity development, suggesting that structured community engagement can disrupt traditional socialization patterns.
Flemons et al. (2024)	UK	Acc.	PE teachers	Qualitative	Informal recruitment practices and resistance to change allowed preconceptions accumulated during acculturation to perpetuate traditional PE models, with students' physical competence, effort, and enthusiasm determining their acceptance into an "inner sanctum" that encouraged self-selection into teaching.
			Acculturation + Professional Socialization		
Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2019)	Spain	Acc.+Prof.	PE teachers (n=3)	Ethnographic	Prior sport history and professional socialization jointly shaped identity and reinforced traditional gender relations. Despite critical discourse, pedagogical actions reproduced gender inequities; however, a critical-reflective approach enabled transformation toward more participatory, coeducational practices.
Zhang (2022)	China	Acc.+Prof.	PPETs (N=238)	Survey + interviews	Acculturation critically conditioned subsequent professional socialization; limited field experience reduced PPETs' confidence and readiness to teach, highlighting the interdependence between phases and the need for authentic early experiences.
Dillon et al. (2021)	USA	Acc.+Prof.	Preservice (N=12)	Multi-site interviews	Prior experiences with students with disabilities were linked to early inclusive practices during professional socialization, suggesting that acculturation shapes receptivity to inclusive pedagogies and that field experiences can build on these foundations.
Li (2025)	China	Acc.+Prof.	PPETs (N=25)	Grounded theory	PPETs' belief systems were organized around professional cognition, emotional experience, and behavioral disposition, evolving across socialization phases in a complex, non-linear manner shaped by both acculturative and professional experiences.
O'Leary et al. (2020)	UK	Acc.+Org.	In-service (n=1)	Case study	A male PE teacher's high-performance sport background, higher education, and school policies collectively configured an emotionally resilient, student-centered approach to teaching games to pupils with social, emotional, and mental health issues, prioritizing welfare over technical performance.

			Professional Socialization		
Adamakis & Dania (2020)	Greece	Prof.	PPETs (N=373)	Questionnaire	Methods modules had a positive but incomplete impact on beliefs; reinforcement of existing beliefs was more common than transformation, indicating that professional socialization modulates rather than fundamentally reclassifies curricular commitments.
Ferry & Romar (2020)	Sweden	Prof.	PPETs (n=60)	Questionnaire	Perceptions of a 'good teacher' remained stable during PETE, while perceptions of a 'good lesson' developed through practical application, suggesting that professional socialization selectively influences different dimensions of professional knowledge.
Shiver et al. (2020)	USA	Prof.	Preservice (n=12)	Phenomenological	Three themes emerged: (a) getting to know the public, (b) acknowledgment of cultural distance, and (c) learning from students and building relationships. OST explains PPETs' receptivity to culturally relevant PE and TPSR, with acculturation influencing openness to social justice pedagogies.
Gawrisch et al. (2020)	USA	Prof.	Preservice PETE	Qualitative	Prior beliefs about technology, formed during acculturation, mediated technology adoption during professional socialization, suggesting that PETE programs must address pre-existing beliefs to facilitate meaningful pedagogical change.
Legrain et al. (2021)	France	Prof.	Preservice PETE	Pre-experimental	Structured training in cooperative learning produced pedagogical persistence, supporting sustained implementation in PE when training is intensive, practical, and supported by ongoing reflection and feedback.
Baxter & Sinelnikov (2022)	USA	Prof.	Preservice PETE	Qualitative	Electronic teaching portfolio (eTPE) supported wash-in by promoting formative assessment practices in emerging teachers, suggesting that authentic, structured assessment tasks can facilitate transfer of PETE-learned practices.
Maher et al. (2022)	UK	Prof.	Preservice (n=26)	Focus groups	Placement in a special school setting prepared preservice teachers for inclusive teaching through adaptation of activities, small-group instruction, repetition, and non-verbal communication; persistence of atypical learning practices was observed.
Sato et al. (2022)	Japan	Prof.	APE grad students (n=7)	Case study	APE practicum developed inclusive competencies but exposed inadequate preparation for students with severe and complex disabilities, highlighting the need for more comprehensive training in adapted physical education.
Stephenson et al. (2022)	USA	Prof.	Preservice (n=3)	Phenomenological	Three themes emerged: (a) assessment 'disappeared' in actual teaching; (b) PSTs valued assessment; (c) PSTs' socialization impacted assessment practices. Despite valuing assessment, PSTs struggled to implement it, with socialization influencing this disconnect.
Baker (2023)	Canada	Prof.	Preservice (n=9)	Deductive qualitative	Prior occupational socialization conditioned receptivity to mindfulness-based pedagogy (MBP) during PETE, suggesting that acculturative experiences shape openness to innovative pedagogical approaches and that PPETs' subjective warrants act as filters for new learning.
Hodges et al. (2023)	USA	Prof.	PPETs (n=14)	Phenomenological	PPETs showed strong focus on classroom management and questioned the importance of planning, attributable to university-school misalignment during practicum, highlighting the tension between PETE ideals and school-based realities.
McEntyre & Richards (2023)	USA	Prof.	Preservice PETE	Qualitative	Applied OST insights to redesign teacher preparation experiences, suggesting intentional, theory-driven application of occupational socialization research to influence preservice teachers' subjective theories and practices.
Moura et al. (2023)	Portugal	Prof.	Preservice (n=8)	Interviews + reflections	Practical and critical pedagogical approaches enabled preservice teachers to question and revise their assessment conceptions, with persistence supported by structured scaffolding, suggesting that assessment literacy develops through supported practice.
Virta et al. (2023)	Finland	Prof.	Practicum students (n=20)	Interviews	Informal learning contexts contributed to professional identity through complementary, reconstructive, or disconnected relationships with formal PETE, highlighting the complexity of identity formation across multiple learning environments.
Brennan et al. (2024)	Ireland	Prof.	Specialist graduates	Qualitative	Conceptions of 'quality in PE' among specialist graduates were durably shaped by initial teacher education, persisting into professional practice and suggesting that professional socialization establishes lasting frameworks for understanding quality.
Starck et al. (2024)	USA	Prof.	Preservice (N=41)	Interviews	Intentions to use assessment were influenced by PETE preparation but largely related to acculturation experiences, highlighting interpenetration between OST phases: assessment intentions were mediated more by prior acculturation than by formal preparation.
Wickens & Parker (2024)	USA	Prof.	PETE candidates	Qualitative case	Three insights emerged: (a) literacy integration should support PE objectives, (b) it can be easily implemented in multiple ways, and (c) it can improve student learning. Three factors

					shifted subjective theories: movement-oriented literacy activities, reflection, and experiential applications.
Zhang et al. (2024)	China	Prof.	PPETs (N=56)	Mixed methods	PCK significantly predicted occupational socialization outcomes; methods courses were the most important resource for developing both PCK and professional identity, suggesting that content-focused instruction has dual benefits.
Amorim & Silva (2025)	Portugal	Prof.	Preservice (n=6)	Interviews	School placement had residual impact on professional identity; beliefs about teaching were already consolidated before practicum, highlighting the enduring influence of acculturation and the limited transformative power of field experience alone.
Cruickshank et al. (2026b)	Australia	Prof.	Preservice (N=52 surv.; n=20 int.)	Mixed methods	Wash-in was only partial: content delivery, classroom behavior management, and co-teaching constraints limited Game Sense Approach implementation, indicating contextual erosion and the importance of aligned practicum environments.
Engelhardt & Hapke-König (2025)	Germany	Prof.	Preservice (N=41; 4 stages)	Focus groups	Cognitive activation increased across PETE stages; however, fear of reducing physical activity time persisted, reflecting the anticipatory influence of school culture and the durability of acculturative beliefs.
Gray et al. (2026)	USA	Prof.	Preservice (N=9)	Longitudinal (4 semesters)	PPETs entered PETE without sociopolitical awareness; field experience was the primary source of knowledge about marginality and underserved populations, suggesting that placement experiences are critical for developing social justice orientations.
Barros et al. (2026)	Portugal	Prof. (long.)	Preservice (n=11)	Longitudinal (2 years)	Non-linear belief trajectory: constructivist orientations eroded in year one and were partially reconstructed in year two, suggesting that professional socialization is not monotonic but oscillates between erosion and recovery.
Bergentoft & Kougioumtzis (2026)	Sweden	Prof.	Preservice (n=9)	Interviews + Bernstein	Preservice teachers negotiated curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment across university and school contexts; the study integrates OST with Bernstein's pedagogic discourse to model how contradictory messages are negotiated.
Cruickshank et al. (2026a)	Australia	Prof.	Preservice (N=52)	Mixed methods	Peer feedback functioned as a second apprenticeship of observation, exerting a positive influence on professional development within PETE, suggesting that structured peer interactions can reinforce PETE-learned practices.
Liu et al. (2026)	USA	Prof.	PPETs (n=11)	Qualitative	Four themes regarding PPETs' subjective theories of assessment were identified: (a) understanding the purposes of assessment, (b) challenges in implementing assessment, (c) self-referential interpretation of assessment, and (d) critical perspectives on assessment data.
Moy & Rossi (2026)	Australia	Prof.	Preservice (n=36)	Reflections + focus groups	CLA learned in an authentic, well-supported environment transferred successfully to practice, consistent with robust wash-in and suggesting that sustained support during practicum is critical for pedagogical transfer.
			Multiple Phases / Longitudinal		
Backman et al. (2023)	Sweden	Multiple (long.)	Preservice→in-servicePreservice →in-service	Longitudinal; stimulated recall	Proposes the concept of 'pedagogic fabrication' to trace the transformation of assessment practices between PETE and school settings, challenging the notion of simple transfer and highlighting continuous reconstruction.
			Organizational Socialization		
Prior & Curtner-Smith (2020a)	USA	Org.	In-service, elementary (N=10)	Qualitative	Three teacher profiles were identified (non-teachers, custodians, progressives); curriculum orientations were directly aligned to each socialization profile, suggesting that organizational socialization mediates the expression of professional identities.
Prior & Curtner-Smith (2020b)	USA	Org.	In-service, secondary (N=10)	Qualitative	The typology of teacher profiles was confirmed in secondary settings, serving as a direct antecedent to the elementary study and suggesting that socialization effects are consistent across educational levels.
Millar et al. (2021)	New Zealand	Org.	In-service (2 depts.)	Focus groups	Collaborative professional development enabled a durable shift from technical to student-centered approaches, sustained by organizational support and suggesting that department-wide engagement facilitates lasting pedagogical change.
Beddoes et al. (2022)	USA	Org.	PE teachers (n=3) + principal (n=1)	Instrumental case	PLC participation increased PE teachers' status and visibility in the school community, opening leadership opportunities and countering marginalization, suggesting that PLCs can serve as sites of organizational socialization and professional empowerment.
Lee et al. (2022)	South Korea	Org.	Novice teachers (Korean N)	Psychometric	Validated a Korean-language OST instrument for novice teachers, enabling cross-cultural adaptation and measurement of occupational socialization in non-Western contexts.
Westerlund & Eliasson (2022)	Sweden	Org.	Novice in-service (n=8)	Single case study	Novice teachers faced reality shock upon entering the profession; formal organizational support was decisive for successful induction and professional adaptation, highlighting the critical role of structured induction programs.
Kinder et al. (2023)	USA	Org.	PETE faculty (multi-N)	Survey	Perceived organizational support, marginalization, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction were interrelated among PETE

					faculty, suggesting that organizational socialization operates at the university level analogously to school-based socialization.
Merica et al. (2022)	USA	Org.	PE teachers	Survey	Socialization experiences and teacher self-confidence were positively associated with CSPAP implementation, suggesting that occupational socialization shapes teachers' readiness to assume expanded professional roles.
Vasquez & Wallhead (2023)	Not specified	Org.	In-service (N=65)	Correlational survey	PETE was the only significant predictor of Sport Education use; student-centered features were least implemented, indicating selective erosion and the vulnerability of complex pedagogical practices to organizational constraints.
Arroyo-Rojas et al. (2025)	Chile	Org.	In-service (N=9)	Experiential qualitative	First Latin American OST study in special schools, filling a significant geographic gap in the literature and suggesting that organizational socialization operates similarly in non-Anglophone, special education contexts.
Baek & Curtner-Smith (2024)	South Korea	Org.	Korean in-service teachers	Qualitative	Cultural socialization shaped interpretation of the Hanaro model; pedagogical models were filtered through prior occupational socialization, suggesting that national culture interacts with OST to shape model implementation.
Baek & Curtner-Smith (2025)	Multiple (USA/Asia/Europe)	Org.	Mid-career PETE faculty	Qualitative	Secondary organizational socialization shaped mid-career PETE faculty across three regions, with notable geographic variation in intensity and form, suggesting that institutional context and national culture moderate socialization effects.
Dennis et al. (2024)	Multiple (USA/Asia/Europe)	Org.	Novice PETE faculty (multi-N)	Qualitative	Secondary organizational socialization shaped novice PETE faculty across three regions, with meaningful geographic variation in outcomes, highlighting the importance of national and institutional context for faculty socialization.
Malinowski et al. (2024)	USA	Org.	PE teachers	Qualitative	Occupational socialization influenced the selective adoption of instructional models; models aligned with prior socialization were most likely to persist, suggesting that organizational support must align with teachers' socialization histories to be effective.
Peterson et al. (2024)	USA	Org.	Novice in-service (n=2)	Interviews	Professional and secondary socialization, combined with supportive school cultures, enabled successful professional adaptation during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the buffering role of organizational support during crises.
Richards et al. (2024)	USA	Org.	PE teachers (Midwest)	Qualitative	COVID-19 disrupted organizational socialization processes among Midwest PE teachers, revealing the pandemic's impact on teacher identity and practice and highlighting the vulnerability of socialization to external shocks.
Wei et al. (2024)	USA	Org.	PE teachers	Qualitative	Two themes emerged: (a) socialization experiences influence teachers' perceptions and behaviors regarding bullying, and (b) teachers have developed strategies but face significant challenges, suggesting that OST shapes responses to complex social issues.
Kern & Palmer (2025)	USA	Org.	School principals (n=11)	Interviews	Principals' K-12 sport and PE experiences influenced their perceptions of PE's educational value; sustained interactions with PE teachers had the potential to modify those perceptions, highlighting the role of organizational leaders in shaping PE's status.
Merica et al. (2025)	USA	Org.	PE teachers (CSPAP)	Survey	Expanded role self-efficacy for CSPAP was associated with occupational socialization experiences and organizational determinants, suggesting that both professional preparation and current work context shape teachers' confidence for expanded roles.
Brooks & Brunsdon (2026)	USA	Org.	PETE faculty (philos.)	Qualitative	Institutional context substantially shaped PETE faculty philosophies; OST operated as a persistent influence on teacher educators' professional formation, suggesting that the theory applies to university-based as well as school-based professionals.
Brooks et al. (2026)	USA	Org.	PETE faculty (case)	Case study	A longitudinal case study illustrated how becoming and being a PE teacher educator involves continuous occupational socialization within program structures, highlighting the recursive nature of socialization across career stages.
Patton & Parker (2026)	USA	Org.	PETE faculty	Qualitative	Learning to become a PE teacher educator was a process of continuous professional socialization, shaped by institutional context and prior experience, suggesting that faculty development requires intentional, scaffolded learning experiences.
Professional + Organizational Socialization					
Mulhearn et al. (2023)	USA	Prof.+Org.	PETE graduates (N=67)	Mixed methods	All 67 graduates included some expanded PA programming. Positive correlations were found between perception of CSPAP as an innovation, year of graduation, and memory of PETE programming. Students exposed to CSPAP during PETE implemented more components in schools, highlighting professional socialization's positive potential to influence graduates' practices.

Classified by primary phase, professional socialization was the most heavily represented category, accounting for twenty-seven studies (42.9%), followed by organizational socialization with twenty-two studies (34.9%), acculturation with seven studies (11.1%), combined-phase studies with six (9.5%), and a single multiple-phase longitudinal design (1.6%). This distribution is consistent with the emphasis on professional and organizational socialization relative to acculturation described by Richards et al. (2019).

Geographically, the corpus drew on data from eighteen national contexts, plus two multinational designs and one study without a specified national context. The United States was the most represented (*n* = 27, 42.9%), followed by the United Kingdom (*n* = 6) and Sweden (*n* = 4); China, Portugal, and Australia contributed three studies each. Single studies extended the theory's reach into Chile (Arroyo-Rojas et al., 2025), Taiwan (Lin, 2026), and Japan (Sato et al., 2022), and two studies were conducted in South Korea (Baek & Curtner-Smith, 2024; Lee et al., 2022). Anglophone systems accounted for thirty-nine studies (61.9%).

Methodologically, the corpus was predominantly qualitative (*n* = 50, 79.4%), with quantitative or psychometric approaches (*n* = 8, 12.7%) and mixed-methods designs (*n* = 5, 7.9%). Designs capable of estimating the magnitude of socialization effects, the gap identified by Richards et al. (2019), therefore remained scarce.

By population, preservice teachers and recent graduates were the most frequent participants (*n* = 34, 54.0%), followed by in-service teachers (*n* = 20, 31.7%) and PETE faculty (*n* = 6, 9.5%); one study each involved secondary pupils, a cohort followed from preservice to in-service teaching, and school principals.

Acculturation

Across the seven acculturation studies (Curtner-Smith et al., 2025; Flemons et al., 2024; Gaudreault et al., 2023; Golding & Keyworth, 2025; Lin, 2026; Merrem & Curtner-Smith, 2019; Sprake et al., 2026) and the combined-phase studies that included acculturation (Dillon et al., 2021; Li, 2025; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019; Zhang, 2022), participants reported curricular preferences and pedagogical orientations that they traced to childhood and youth experiences of sport and schooling. These orientations were described as persisting into preparation in samples from the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Spain, and the United States, although in Lin's (2026) study service-learning challenged acculturative preconceptions. These findings are consistent with a Bourdieusian reading of the subjective warrant, although none of the studies tested that reading against alternative explanations.

Sprake et al. (2026) introduced the concept of "reflection in acculturation," reporting that secondary pupils aspiring to teach PE had already developed fixed ideological preconceptions before formal preparation. A smaller subset extended the construct to populations diverging from the competitive, able-bodied norm, including a Latino immigrant preservice teacher whose acculturation was structured by a search for belonging rather than by sport (Gaudreault et al., 2023). Flemons et al. (2024) reported that informal recruitment practices allowed traditional models of PE to be perpetuated.

Professional Socialization

Professional socialization constituted the largest cluster (twenty-seven studies), which were methodologically and geographically varied. A substantial subset examined the fate of pedagogical models, such as cooperative learning and the Game Sense Approach, as they moved from university to field placement, reporting partial transfer in some studies and successful transfer where support was sustained (Cruickshank et al., 2026b; Legrain et al., 2021; Moy & Rossi, 2026).

Barros et al. (2026) documented a non-linear trajectory in which Portuguese preservice teachers' constructivist beliefs eroded in year one and were partially reconstructed in year two.

A second cluster examined program architecture. Adamakis and Dania (2020) reported that methods modules had a positive but incomplete impact on beliefs, with reinforcement of existing beliefs more common than transformation. Ferry and Romar (2020) and Hodges et al. (2023) likewise reported selective rather than wholesale change in preservice teachers' views.

Distinct subsets examined populations diverging from the mainstream, including preservice teachers preparing to teach students with disabilities (Dillon et al., 2021; Maher et al., 2022; Sato et al., 2022), whose inclusive practice was described as shaped by direct field experience as well as coursework, and those engaging with culturally relevant and socially just pedagogy (Gray et al., 2026; Shiver et al., 2020). Gray et al. (2026) reported that sociopolitical awareness, where acquired, developed primarily through placement rather than university-based instruction.

Organizational Socialization

Prior and Curtner-Smith's (2020a, 2020b) paired studies identified a typology of three occupational profiles (non-teachers, custodians, and progressives) in which teachers' curricular practice aligned with their organizational socialization history rather than with their initial preparation. Millar et al. (2021) reported that collaborative professional development was associated with lasting shifts from technical to student-centered approaches.

Westerlund and Eliasson (2022) reported that formal organizational support during induction distinguished successful adaptation among Swedish novice teachers. Beddoes et al. (2022) reported that participation in a professional learning community was associated with greater teacher status and legitimacy. Peterson et al. (2024) described how supportive school cultures accompanied the successful adaptation of two novice teachers during the pandemic. These studies describe organizational socialization as a site of both erosion and change.

Vasquez and Wallhead (2023) reported, in a correlational survey, that prior teacher preparation was the only significant predictor of continued Sport Education use and that student-centered features were implemented less often than structural ones.

A geographically significant subset extended the theory to previously absent contexts. Arroyo-Rojas et al. (2025) reported the first OST application to Chilean special school teachers. Baek and Curtner-Smith (2024) examined how South Korean teachers interpreted the Hanaro Teaching model, and Baek and Curtner-Smith (2025) examined secondary organizational socialization among mid-career PETE faculty in European, Asian, and North American institutions. Lee et al. (2022) validated a Korean version of an OST instrument.

Cross-Phase and Emergent Themes

Two themes cut across the phase-based categories. First, secondary organizational socialization of PETE faculty is documented across a growing cluster of studies examining doctoral preparation, institutional type, and career stage (Baek & Curtner-Smith, 2025; Brooks & Brunsdon, 2026; Brooks et al., 2026; Dennis et al., 2024; Kinder et al., 2023; Patton & Parker, 2026). Kinder et al. (2023) found perceived organizational support, marginalization, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction to be interrelated among PETE faculty.

Second, studies explicitly hybridized OST with adjacent theoretical frameworks to model non-linearity and phase overlap. Bergentoft and Kougioumtzis (2026) integrated Bernstein's pedagogic device to examine how preservice teachers negotiate contradictory messages from university coursework and school placement, and Backman et al. (2023) proposed the concept of pedagogic fabrication to trace how assessment practices are reconstructed between preparation and practice. Barros et al. (2026), described above, reported a non-linear belief trajectory over two years.

Patterns Across Populations and Contexts

Table 3 cross-tabulates the primary phase with the populations and contexts studied. Population was closely tied to phase. All twenty-seven professional socialization studies involved preservice teachers or recent graduates; fifteen of the twenty-two organizational socialization studies involved in-service teachers, six involved PETE faculty, and one involved school principals; and acculturation was studied mainly in preservice teachers (n = 4), with two studies of in-service teachers and one of secondary pupils.

Table 3. Primary phase by population and context of the included studies

Primary phase	Studies, n (%)	Population (n)	Context (n)
Acculturation	7 (11.1)	Preservice teachers (4); in-service teachers (2); secondary pupils (1)	Anglophone (5); continental Europe (1); East Asia (1)
Professional socialization	27 (42.9)	Preservice teachers and recent graduates (27)	Anglophone (16); continental Europe (9); East Asia (2)
Organizational socialization	22 (34.9)	In-service teachers (15); PETE faculty (6); school principals (1)	Anglophone (15); multinational or unspecified (3); East Asia (2); continental Europe (1); Latin America (1)
Combined phases	6 (9.5)	Preservice teachers (3); in-service teachers (3)	Anglophone (3); East Asia (2); continental Europe (1)
Multiple phases (longitudinal)	1 (1.6)	Cohort followed from preservice to in-service teaching (1)	Continental Europe (1)
Total	63 (100)	Preservice teachers and recent graduates (34); in-service teachers (20); PETE faculty (6); secondary pupils (1); preservice-to-in-service cohort (1); school principals (1)	Anglophone (39); continental Europe (13); East Asia (7); multinational or unspecified (3); Latin America (1)

Note. Phases follow the primary classification in Table 2. Anglophone = United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Percentages refer to the 63 included studies.

Context also varied by phase. Anglophone systems contributed 16 of the 27 professional socialization studies (59.3%) and 15 of the 22 organizational socialization studies (68.2%), and three further organizational socialization studies were multinational or did not specify a national context. Non-Anglophone single-country evidence on organizational socialization therefore consisted of four studies, from Sweden (Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022), South Korea (Baek & Curtner-Smith, 2024; Lee et al., 2022), and Chile (Arroyo-Rojas et al., 2025), whereas eleven non-Anglophone studies addressed professional socialization. All six studies of PETE faculty were conducted in the United States or in multiregional samples that included North American faculty.

Where comparisons across contexts were possible, the direction of findings was similar for some themes and diverged for others. Durable orientations acquired before preparation were reported in samples from the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Spain, and the United States (see Acculturation). Findings on the effect of preparation itself differed: studies from Greece, Portugal, Germany, and Australia described partial or limited effects (Adamakis & Dania, 2020; Amorim & Silva, 2025; Cruickshank et al., 2026b; Engelhardt & Hapke-König, 2025), whereas studies from France, Australia, and Ireland reported persistence when training was intensive, practical, and supported, or durable shaping of later conceptions (Brennan et al., 2024; Legrain et al., 2021; Moy & Rossi, 2026). Because these studies also differ in design, pedagogical content, and population, the contrasts cannot be attributed to national context.

Discussion

The present review mapped sixty-three empirical studies employing occupational socialization theory in physical education published between 2019 and 2026, situating this literature against Richards et al.'s (2019) synthesis. Because mapping a field is not in itself a theoretical contribution, this section separates what the review describes from what it allows us to say about the theory. Given the predominance of qualitative, cross-sectional, and small-sample studies and the absence of quality appraisal, the patterns discussed below are associations that recur in the literature and not demonstrated effects.

First, the methodological composition of the field has changed little. Qualitative designs continue to dominate, as they did in Richards et al. (2019), and the call for designs capable of estimating the magnitude of socialization effects remains largely unanswered. This persistence may reflect the interpretive, biographically embedded orientation of occupational socialization theory. Nevertheless, the small cluster of quantitative and psychometric studies, exemplified by the Korean adaptation of the occupational socialization scale (Lee et al., 2022) and by the survey instruments employed by Merica et al. (2022, 2025) and Vasquez and Wallhead (2023), indicates that the field is beginning to address this gap. If the field continues to rely exclusively on designs that establish only the presence of socialization effects, it will remain unable to say which socializing influences matter most, for which populations, and under which conditions.

Second, the geographic concentration persists: Anglophone systems account for 61.9% of the studies and the United States alone for 42.9%. Diversification has nonetheless occurred at the margins, with studies in Chile (Arroyo-Rojas et al., 2025), South Korea (Baek & Curtner-Smith, 2024; Lee et al., 2022), Taiwan (Lin, 2026), China (Li, 2025; Zhang, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024), Japan (Sato et al., 2022), and several European contexts (Adamakis & Dania, 2020; Bergentoft & Kougioumtzis, 2026; Legrain et al., 2021). Baek and Curtner-Smith's (2024) study of the Hanaro Teaching model is consistent with the application of the framework to a Korean teaching context, but a single application does not amount to cross-cultural validation.

The heterogeneity of the corpus matters for how far the findings can be generalized (Table 3). Evidence on organizational socialization, the phase in which wash-out and wash-in are ultimately tested, comes mainly from Anglophone school systems, whereas most non-Anglophone evidence concerns professional socialization. Claims about the durability of preparation in the school workplace, and about faculty socialization, therefore rest on a narrower set of systems than claims about preparation itself. The evidence does not allow us to say whether acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization carry the same meaning and operate in the same way in different systems, and the presence of studies in many countries should not be read as validation of the model across cultures. Systems in which teacher preparation and the institutional position of teacher educators are organized differently, such as those described in Chile (Caniuqueo-Vargas et al., 2023) and Peru (Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024), remain largely unexamined through OST. Because those studies were not framed in OST, they are cited here only as context. They suggest, for example, that the identity of university instructors can be constructed within hierarchical arrangements that are experienced as externally imposed (Maquera-Maquera et al., 2024), a condition that may alter what organizational socialization means for faculty outside the settings in which the theory was developed.

Third, the review identifies two directions in which the theory is being extended beyond its original scope. The extension to secondary organizational socialization applies dialectical logic to university-based academics and has been documented in studies of doctoral preparation, institutional type, and career stage (Baek & Curtner-Smith, 2025; Brooks & Brunsdon, 2026; Brooks et al., 2026; Dennis et al., 2024; Kinder et al., 2023; Patton & Parker, 2026). Kinder et al. (2023) found perceived organizational support, marginalization, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction to be interrelated among faculty, which resembles the marginalization dynamics reported among schoolteachers (Beddoes et al., 2022). This raises whether the two socialization processes are parallel instances of a general mechanism or a single recursive, multi-generational process in which faculty subjective warrants are partly constituted by their earlier socialization as schoolteachers. No study in the corpus has directly tested this, and it remains the most significant unanswered theoretical question about the extension.

The second extension concerns non-linearity. Where Richards et al. (2019) described three phases without extensively theorizing their interaction, a meaningful subset of studies treats phase overlap and contradiction as the primary object of theoretical interest. Bergentoft and Kougioumtzis (2026) hybridize occupational socialization theory with Bernstein's pedagogic device to model contradictory messages from university and school placement. Backman et al. (2023) reach a similar conclusion through pedagogic fabrication, tracing the continuous reconstruction of assessment practices. Barros et al. (2026) document a non-linear trajectory in which constructivist beliefs eroded in year one and were partially reconstructed in year two, which suggests that cross-sectional designs may miss this fluidity. The cumulative evidence is consistent with a dynamic understanding in which the three phases are pressures to be continually negotiated and not stages to be passed through.

What, then, do these patterns allow us to conclude about the theory? Three of its propositions can be assessed against the recent evidence. The first is that orientations acquired before formal preparation act as a durable filter for later socialization. The recent acculturation studies are consistent with this proposition, including in populations that the original model did not foreground, such as secondary pupils and a Latino immigrant preservice teacher whose acculturation was structured by belonging rather than by competitive sport (Gaudreault et al., 2023; Sprake et al., 2026). This consistency is informative but not new: it is what sociological accounts of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and of incorporated dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990) would lead us to expect, and because the studies did not test OST against an alternative, it cannot count as evidence that OST explains more. The evidence on

non-competitive pathways does, however, call into question the assumption that acculturation is organized primarily around competitive sport, and it suggests that the content of the subjective warrant varies with who enters the profession and from where.

The second proposition is that preparation is washed out by the school workplace. The evidence suggests that it should be reformulated as conditional and selective. Wash-in was partial when the practicum environment did not support the taught practice (Cruickshank et al., 2026b), was reported as successful where support was authentic and sustained (Moy & Rossi, 2026), and, in a correlational survey, student-centered features were implemented less often than structural ones (Vasquez & Wallhead, 2023). Together with the typology of Prior and Curtner-Smith (2020a, 2020b), in which practice is aligned with organizational rather than preparation history, these studies indicate that the receiving organizational context is associated with whether preparation is sustained. They do not establish that it determines it, since organizational conditions were rarely measured independently of teachers' biographies. Wash-out and wash-in are better read as poles of a graded, feature-specific process than as alternative outcomes.

The third proposition concerns the sequence of phases. Recent studies show the phases overlapping, recurring, and contradicting one another (Backman et al., 2023; Barros et al., 2026; Bergentoft & Kougioumtzis, 2026), and this can be read in two ways. On one reading it extends the model, because the framework was dialectical from the outset (Schempp & Graber, 1992) and the new studies specify how contradictory pressures are negotiated. On the other it exposes a limit of its structure: if professional and organizational pressures act simultaneously on the same person, the phases cease to be stages with a temporal order and become analytic dimensions, and the claim that earlier phases condition later ones loses its temporal anchor. The studies reviewed lean toward the second reading, since those that document non-linearity most explicitly drew on concepts from outside the theory (Backman et al., 2023; Bergentoft & Kougioumtzis, 2026), and a rhizomatic account of placement experience points in the same direction (Hordvik et al., 2019). We therefore suggest that the three phases be retained as analytic dimensions of the pressures on teachers and not as a sequence, which is a reformulation of the model and not only an extension of it.

What does OST add to habitus, field, and capital? The recent evidence supports a modest and specific answer. Several of its central findings can be restated in Bourdieusian terms: durable, early-acquired dispositions (habitus), their interaction with the structure of the settings in which teachers work (field), and the unequal resources that those settings offer for enacting ambitious practice (capital; Bourdieu, 1986, 1990). Wash-out, for instance, can be read as a mismatch between dispositions acquired in preparation and the field of the school, and the marginalization reported among PE teachers and faculty (Beddoes et al., 2022; Kinder et al., 2023) as a problem of position and recognition within that field. What OST provides that these general concepts do not is an occupation-specific specification of the institutions that socialize a teacher, in a recognizable order, together with a vocabulary (the subjective warrant, teachers' role orientations, wash-out, and wash-in; Lawson, 1983a, 1983b) that has allowed researchers to ask comparable questions across more than sixty studies. Its limitation is that, as used in this corpus, it is rarely set against alternatives, so whether it explains more than a habitus-based account remains untested.

The review therefore contributes in three ways beyond mapping the field. It shows where the evidence is thin, namely organizational and faculty socialization outside Anglophone systems and designs that can estimate effects. It reformulates two propositions of the theory, treating wash-out as conditional and feature-specific and the phases as concurrent analytic dimensions. And it specifies the test that would show whether OST adds explanatory power: studies that compare predictions derived from OST with predictions derived from habitus-based accounts for the same populations, or that follow the same teachers across phases in more than one system.

This shift has practical implications. If professional and organizational socialization operate as simultaneous and sometimes contradictory pressures, support may need to be conceived as continuous and structurally integrated across the transition and not only as an extension of preparation into early career. Induction support programs (Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022) and sustained peer feedback structures (Cruickshank et al., 2026a) are examples of arrangements that the reviewed studies associate with favorable trajectories, and collaborative professional development involving university instructors and practicing teachers (Nieva Boza et al., 2024), although not framed in OST, points in the same direction.

The boundary between preparation and induction, which has structured research and practice, may be analytically misleading.

The wash-out and wash-in distinction has implications for how programs select and prepare placement sites and cooperating teachers. The studies reviewed, from Vasquez and Wallhead's (2023) finding that student-centered features were implemented less often than structural ones to Moy and Rossi's (2026) report that authentic organizational support sustained ambitious pedagogies, are consistent with the view that the receiving organizational context, and not university-based instruction alone, is associated with whether preparation survives contact with practice. This is reinforced by organizational socialization studies that point to school cultures, peer relationships, and administrative support as mediators (Peterson et al., 2024; Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020a, 2020b; Westerlund & Eliasson, 2022). If these associations reflect causal relationships, which the predominantly qualitative and cross-sectional evidence cannot establish, durable change in preservice teachers' practice would require investment in cultivating supportive placement environments and preparing cooperating teachers, comparable to investment in on-campus coursework.

The review also identifies persistent gaps. The geographical gap is the most evident: while the corpus includes studies from eighteen national contexts, representation from Latin America, Africa, and South Asia is limited, with a single study from Latin America and none from the other two regions. Core concepts may have cultural translations that are not equivalent across educational systems with different histories and material conditions. The methodological gap is equally persistent: qualitative, cross-sectional, small-sample designs remain the norm, limiting the ability to estimate socialization effect magnitudes or trace extended trajectories. The theoretical articulation gap refers to limited integration with complementary frameworks such as capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), social practice theory (Giddens, 1984), activity theory (Engeström, 1987), or epistemic justice approaches (Fricker, 2007), and to the absence of comparative tests of OST against habitus-based accounts. While Bergentoft and Kougioumtzis (2026) have begun this work, systematic theoretical integration remains underdeveloped.

Conclusions

This scoping review mapped sixty-three empirical studies applying occupational socialization theory to physical education, published between 2019 and 2026. The field remains predominantly qualitative (79.4%), concentrated in Anglophone systems (61.9%), and weighted toward professional and organizational socialization relative to acculturation. Beyond this mapping, the review supports three cautious conclusions about the theory. First, recent evidence is consistent with the durability of orientations acquired before preparation, but it does not show that OST explains this more fully than habitus-based accounts, because the two have not been compared. Second, wash-out and wash-in are better understood as conditional and feature-specific processes associated with the organizational context than as alternative outcomes. Third, the phases appear to overlap and recur, which suggests treating them as analytic dimensions and not as a sequence. The extension of the theory to teacher educators is promising but rests on a limited set of systems, and evidence on organizational socialization outside Anglophone systems remains scarce, so cross-cultural validity cannot yet be claimed. Future research should test OST against alternative frameworks, use designs that can estimate effects, and examine under-represented systems, including those of Latin America.

Limitations of the review

Several methodological limitations warrant consideration when interpreting the findings of this scoping review. First, while the search was conducted across three databases (Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO), the restriction to publications in English may have underrepresented scholarship published in other languages. The exclusion of Portuguese-language journals may have omitted relevant Brazilian studies, and the exclusion of French, German, and Scandinavian-language publications may have overlooked important work from European contexts where OST research is emerging. The restriction to English may also have excluded Spanish-language research from Spain and Latin America, which is relevant to the limited representation of Latin America noted in the Discussion. This language restriction is particularly consequential given that several Scandinavian studies identified in the final corpus were

published in English-language journals, suggesting that important work published in national languages may have been systematically overlooked.

Second, the decision to exclude grey literature, book chapters, and doctoral theses, while methodologically defensible for scoping reviews focused on peer-reviewed evidence, may have introduced a publication bias toward findings that are more readily accepted by mainstream journals. Doctoral theses, in particular, often contain longitudinal and negative-case data that are underrepresented in published studies.

Third, the absence of methodological quality assessment, consistent with scoping review methodology (Peters et al., 2020), means that studies with weak designs received the same analytical weight as methodologically robust studies. While this is a standard feature of scoping reviews, it limits the capacity to draw causal inferences from the synthesized evidence.

Fourth, the sample of sixty-three studies, while comprehensive relative to the post-2019 period, represents a focused corpus of evidence. The limited number of studies from non-Anglophone contexts constrains the generalizability of findings to non-Western educational systems. This limitation is not a failure of the review but a reflection of the field's structural bias, which the present review deliberately highlights as a priority for future research.

Fifth, while the review included studies examining PETE faculty socialization, the relatively small number of such studies (n = 6) limits the generalizability of findings specifically to this population, particularly across different institutional types and national contexts. Future research should continue to expand the empirical base on faculty socialization to enable more robust comparative analyses.

Sixth, the classification of studies by phase, population, and context required interpretation, and the context categories group systems that differ internally (for example, the Anglophone group includes the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia). The cross-tabulations are descriptive, and cells with very few studies should not be over-read.

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