

e d i t o r i a l

Enhancing physical education pre-service teachers' experiences in physical education teacher education (PETE) programmes

I have been asked to provide an editorial that focuses on some of my work on exploring how, as physical education teacher educators, we can enhance physical education pre-service teachers' experiences in their physical education teacher education (PETE) programme. I have chosen to focus on two studies that examine 'teacher as change agents' and 'delivering instructional alignment' respectively.

The focus of the first study (MacPhail & Tannehill, 2012) was to consider the relationship between 'structure' and 'agency,' teachers as 'change agents' and 'workplace learning' and examine the extent to which the social structure of the school and the teaching profession, and / or the capacity of the individual to act independently, ultimately determines a teacher's behaviour in reaction to teaching expectations. We were interested as PETE faculty in how we (1) strive to help pre-service teachers examine and reframe assumptions about themselves as teachers and change agents, and (2) examine taken-for-granted school practices and processes. We shared three critical incidents that portrayed experiences across a sample of beginning teachers in response to their workplace conditions; transitioning from PETE to teaching in a school, isolation as a (un)welcomed form of autonomy, and the legitimacy of physical education in the school. A short commentary follows each critical incident before sharing ways in which PETE programs could strive towards encouraging the agency of the pre-service teacher and in particular, the relationship between initial teacher education and induction. For example, we suggest that one way in which to ease the critical incident of transitioning from a PETE programme to beginning to teach in a school is the development of a professional portfolio to include evidence of their preparation to teach including, (1) a teaching metaphor analysed, revisited, and revised that reflects their philosophy of teaching, (2) a professional development plan to guide their first year of teaching, (3) planning for physical education advocacy in their teaching practice school, and (4) a response/reaction to recent developments in school physical education. The professional development plan would be expected to be the most obvious requirement of the portfolio linked to the 'bridge building' between initial teacher education and induction. In compiling their professional development plan, pre-service teachers could be asked to identify at least three areas in which they would like to improve during their first year of teaching, design at least one goal for each of these areas, identify strategies they intend to use to assist them in reaching each goal, and identify a timeline to achieve the goal.

The second study (MacPhail, Tannehill & Goc Karp, 2013) explored the extent to which the constructivist pedagogies (e.g., interactive community discussions, problem solving, group challenges) employed by teacher educators through the implementation of a rich task assisted pre-service teachers in their understanding and construction of knowledge about instructional alignment. The rich task presents substantive, real problems for the students to solve, based on a range of learning outcomes, and may be used as an organisational framework for the design of a unit of work. The task is deemed to be 'rich' when it

is authentic for the student and relevant to the learning outcomes in question. It should also contain 1) transparent criteria and standards, 2) encompass more than one learning outcome, 3) involve acquiring, applying and evaluating knowledge, and 4) provide opportunities for students to demonstrate subject knowledge, skills and understanding. Results revealed that pre-service teachers varied in their articulation of the various elements of instructional alignment that were captured in the rich task. Results aligned with three constructs; (1) how the coursework undertaken by pre-service teachers and the constructivist pedagogies employed in teacher education influenced pre-service teachers' learning to teach, (2) the challenges constructive pedagogies posed for pre-service teachers and suggestions from pre-service teachers on refining and extending constructive pedagogies and (3) how pre-service teachers experienced and viewed instructional alignment in practice, and the extent to which they were able to use their developing skill in designing worthwhile and enduring knowledge that would be viewed as realistic to young people. Through the use of such constructivist strategies as problem solving, group discussions, and critical friends, pre-service teachers understood and valued the process of instructional alignment as they moved from feelings of fear and apprehension to being confident in their own development. Areas of strength and deficiency that were noted in the pre-service teachers' attempts to design instructionally aligned lessons guided the teacher educators in revising program components and their own practice.

It is imperative that we identify what we know about effective PETE and what we need to focus our energies on in identifying how to be effective physical education teacher educators. There is a plethora of empirically-based research topics that would be considered worthwhile for physical education teacher educators to engage with in a bid to identify and measure the effectiveness of physical education teacher educators and in turn PETE programmes. Both of the studies shared here were conducted with such a concern in mind.

Ann MacPhail

Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences
University of Limerick

References

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- MacPhail, A., Tannehill, D., & Goc Karp, G. (2013). Preparing physical education preservice teachers to design instructionally aligned lessons through constructivist pedagogical practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 33, 100-112.