

PHYSICAL EDUCATION, TEACHERS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: THE CONTEXT OF TEACHERS' DECISIONS

RUI NEVES

Department of Education
University of Aveiro
Portugal**ABSTRACT**

The decisions of teachers on Physical Education (PE) in elementary school are influenced by multiple factors involving personal and professional lives of teachers. Thus, regularity, quality and sustainability of PE provided to students varies widely, depending on a few factors more than others according to the perception of teachers. Data were collected with a questionnaire applied to a stratified group of 150 elementary teachers (21 male and 129 female), divided into groups of 30 as to teaching experience – less than 5, between 6 - 10, 11 - 15, 16 - 21, and more than 21. Data presented here result from answers to one question, 21 traces that influence the decisions about PE practices. The results identify two sets of traces of the personal and professional lives of teachers that influence decisions in PE: personal characteristics (attitudes, beliefs, tastes, teaching satisfaction and experience), institutional nature (professional association/union), school organization (school inspector, school coordinator) and of social impact (image next to peers).

Keywords: physical education, decisions, elementary teachers.

INTRODUCTION

All teachers grow to observe teachers in action, consciously and unconsciously recording everything live. Before being teachers, while students spend more than 15,000 hours between preschool and 12th grade to observe and participate in classes (Lortie, 1975). Throughout his experience as students receive positive and negative examples that will help structure their future professional references. As several authors refer (Lortie, 1975; Lawson, 1989), this is "learning by observation" in the case of Physical Education (PE) based on classes held in school, in training and competitions at the club, as well as in social and culturally dominant ideas in the area of sports and physical activities (SPA), in which PE teachers specimens among their peers, can influence the development of positive attitudes to the PE (Hicks et al., 2004).

The quantity and quality of sports and motor experiences underlie our process of growth, maturation and development. Thus, the practices of SPA which a logic of culture motor (Crum, 1993), each individual has the opportunity to enjoy during their childhood and adolescence, influence their larger or smaller bindings to sports when it reaches the adult state, not only in terms of the amount of experienced sports practices, but its meaning staff leaving ties to the afterlife. We even noted that the insights derived from experiences in the school context, and especially in PE, correlate significantly with sports participation for girls (Fox, 1988), while PE quality programs contribute to the maintenance of perceptions positive by students (Trudeau and Shepard, 2005)

The life of the teachers is built from personal and professional experience and from more or less experiences, in the case of the teachers' relationships with the universe of SPA and particularly PE itself, which can condition their pedagogical decisions at the curricular level. It is the nature of the potential influence of a wider set of traces of personal and professional life at her level of the PE decision-making process that we aim to evaluate.

METHOD

A questionnaire was applied to a stratified group of 150 elementary teachers (21 male and 129 female), divided into groups of 30 as to teaching experience – less than 5, between 6 - 10, 11 - 15, 16 - 21, and more than 21. Data presented here result from answers to one question - 21 traces that influence the decisions about PE practices, based on Broadfoot & Osborn's (1993) questionnaire. The data were treated in terms of descriptive statistics (sums, mean and standard deviation).

RESULTS

The trace "my pupils" is the most influential, with higher total reference values (751), mean (5.1), followed by "my preference" and "satisfaction in the practice of sports and physical activities (688 – 4.8), "my professional ideology" (666) but with a higher mean (4.7), close to the fourth trace "my satisfaction and professional development" which, although higher (668), has a lower mean value (4.671).

The fifth most influential trace is "my professional teaching experience" (670 - 4.5), followed by "my perception of pedagogical efficacy in PE (630 - 4.5). These last two traces present, from the most influential traces, the lowest standard deviation values, which account for a lower variation of the traces as influencing teachers' decisions in PE. On the opposite side the trace "my professional association and/or union" stands out with less hits (229) and lower mean (1.7) and standard deviation (1.0), followed by "my school inspector" (252). This is followed by "my professional image next to my peers" (326), and a fourth trace "my school coordinator" (338). The trace "my family history" (391) is placed as the fifth least influential, along with "pupils' parents" and "my pupils" exactly with the same total values and means.

CONCLUSIONS

Results identify two sets of traces of the personal and professional lives of teachers that influence decisions in PE: one that shows that teachers recognize their own personal characteristics (attitudes, beliefs, tastes, teaching satisfaction and experience) and those of their pupils as more influential; another centered around the traces associated to structures of a more institutional nature (professional association/union), of school organization (school inspector, school coordinator) and of social impact (image next to peers).

The global crisis of PE accentuates on the elementary school because it is the weakest link in their field of affirmation in terms of education level. And here it must be said that we cannot claim an universal PE as sometimes the official texts seem to believe, while today thinking about teacher knowledge implies thinking in various parts of their stories life, considering their own life contexts. (Clandinin and Huber, 2005)

Table 1 Traces of influence – sums, average and standard deviation

	Traces of influence	Σ	Average \pm sd
1	My pupils	751	5.109 \pm 1.439
2	Satisfaction in the practice of SPA	688	4.845 \pm 1.385
3	My professional ideology	666	4.757 \pm 1.493
4	My satisfaction and development professional	668	4.671 \pm 1.255
5	My professional teaching experience	670	4.589 \pm 1.219
6	My perception of pedagogical efficacy in PE	630	4.532 \pm 1.315
7	My pedagogical value of the area for other	559	4.141 \pm 1.334
8	My reading and self-study	587	4.076 \pm 1.258
9	My initial training	595	4.020 \pm 1.593
10	My perception of the material conditions of teaching	506	3.748 \pm 1.459
11	My participation in in-service training	504	3.733 \pm 1.805
12	My experience in specialized courses	517	3.693 \pm 1.904
13	My perception of SPA through the media	497	3.576 \pm 1.404
14	My participation in extracurricular activities	483	3.475 \pm 1.767
15	My schoolmates	506	3.466 \pm 1.568
16	Pupils' parents	391	2.773 \pm 1.614
17	My family history	391	2.773 \pm 1.713
18	My school coordinator	338	2.467 \pm 1.481
19	My professional image next to my peers	326	2.451 \pm 1.438
20	My inspector	252	1.867 \pm 1.315
21	My professional association and / or union	229	1.709 \pm 1.032

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