Distinctive Teachers' Personal Qualities, Perceptions of Teacher Education and the Realities of Teaching

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Physical education teaching is rarely recognized as noteworthy. Teacher educators presume, however, that they prepare students to perform a different and better quality of teaching than that typically observed in schools (Locke, 1973). Even where that assumption merits acceptance, most graduates soon abandon the teaching practices promoted during teacher preparation in favor of practices which conform to the existing customs of the school system in which they are employed. In too many cases, the temporary impact of preservice teacher education is even less observable as the experienced teacher loses enthusiasm for teaching and gradually fulfills the prophecy suggested by Locke (1975):

It is not bad teaching which bedevils us. It is non-teaching, mindless teaching. How to keep that teacher alive and struggling with teaching is now, and will continue to be, the issue on which our first great leap forward will rest. Until we can break the dysfunctional cycle of events between training programs and school reality, better methods will not yield significantly better results. (n.p.)

There have been many studies of classroom teachers which have examined intervening factors in the "real world of teaching" as deterrents to inservice performance (Dreeben, 1970; Good and Brophy, 1973; Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1971; Smith and Geoffrey, 1968; Waller, 1932). Locke (1977) noted that few investigations of these problems have been conducted with respect to physical education teaching. Burlingame, an education professor, described socialization constructs in a 1972 issue of Quest. Factors which have "incapacitated efforts to map empirically how it is that people become teachers, how teaching affects teachers, or why it is that some teachers persevere while others perish" were discussed (p. 41). In closing, Burlingame (1972) admonished teacher educators and researchers to consider the role and impact of socialization processes in the education of teachers.

It seems evident that much of what has been said or written about the teaching of teachers is embarrassing... because much that has been pondered really is imponderable and much that was assumed was unassumable. By all too frequently fixing upon what ought to be going on in the training of teachers, educators have ignored what really is or isn't going on in people seeking to become teachers. It is not that educators have failed or succeeded — frequently educators have not even been in the field of play for which such terms are meaningful. If socialization theory provides any purchase on the problem of teaching teachers, socialization suggests that much of the typical literature in education indicates that educators have not studied — worse, have not even thought intelligently about — teaching teachers. (p. 55)

Templin (1978) examined the socialization of physical educators into a custodial pupil control orientation in spite of the ideals professed in teacher preparation. Locke and Massengale (1978) studied the role conflict of being...
a teacher and coach but only began to address the effect of the dual role on physical education instruction. Berg's (1975) discussion of the physical education teacher's problems in maintaining enthusiasm in teaching lacked supportive documentation. From his research in Europe, Pieron (1981) suggested that the key difference between effective and ineffective teachers may be the intention and commitment to helping students learn.

**Purpose**

A desire to comprehend the preceding phenomena more fully stimulated the development of this investigation. Carpenter's (1954) advice to avoid repeating the trend of conducting educational research backwards was heeded. He appealed for descriptive research to obtain some notion of significant variables before undertaking experimentation. Research on physical education teaching has only recently begun to generate a descriptive base. Locke (1974) alluded to the need for studies of outstanding persistent teachers when he noted

\[ \ldots \] the fact that some teachers not only survive, but seem to flourish and thrive on the very adversities which destroy others. These teachers at once fascinate and puzzle. \[ \ldots \] Patient scrutiny has revealed little dependable information about the common qualities of these singularly uncommon teachers. (p. 48)

This research utilized a heuristic approach to gain insights regarding distinctive junior high and middle school teachers. Case studies of teachers explored the: (a) personal qualities of distinctive teachers, (b) the positive and negative teaching realities perceived by distinctive physical educators, and (c) ideas for teacher education which distinctive teachers believe could make a difference in other teachers if implemented. More specifically, the descriptive research sought to gather information with regard to the following questions:

1. What personal qualities characterize these teachers?
2. To what extent do these teachers believe that the experiences encountered and qualities developed prior to professional preparation contributed to their eventual persistence and success in teaching?
3. What are the satisfying and dissatisfying aspects of employment as a teacher of junior high and middle school physical education?
4. What aspects of the inservice situation do distinctive teachers find to be particularly helpful in maintaining their distinctiveness?
5. What, if anything, do distinctive physical educators think should be done in professional preparation and/or inservice education to increase the likelihood that more teachers will continually strive for high quality teaching?

**Method**

For the purpose of this investigation, a distinctive teacher was defined as a teacher who stands out from the majority of colleagues with respect to: (a) sincere interest and enthusiasm in teaching, (b) genuine concern for pupils, and (c) self-study and continued striving to improve as a teacher. This definition is not purported to be the sole way of defining teacher distinctiveness. It is a directional statement which serves a descriptive purpose for this study. The value position reflected by this definition should be kept in mind as the reader makes personal interpretations of the findings.

**Design and Rationale**

The current state of the art in physical education research on teaching