Physical Education Teacher Education Students' Perceptions of Their Own Teaching

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Abstract

This study examined an aspect of the professional socialization of physical education teacher education (PETE) students. In particular the focus was on PETE students' perceptions of their own teaching during early field experiences (EFEs), as well their capstone experiences of student teaching or graduate-level teaching internships. Data were collected by tape-recording PETE students and university supervisors' conferences after an observed teaching lesson by the students. The beginning of each conference began with the supervisor asking the student how they felt their lesson went. Transcripts of the conferences were analyzed inductively by determining emerging themes that related to the students' responses regarding their lessons. Results revealed that PETE students felt much better about their lessons taught as they progressed from EFEs to the beginning and then the end of their capstone experiences. The focus of perceived success was on issues related to pupils (not on PETE students themselves), and changed over time from pupils being active and enjoying the lesson in the first EFE, to pupil learning in the capstone experiences.

Keywords: teaching success, supervision, student teaching

1. Introduction

Teacher socialization has been an area of interest and research for over 40 years (Templin & Richards, 2014). Research in this area became prevalent in physical education (PE) in the 1980s (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). According to Lawson (1986) occupational teacher socialization has three distinct phases. The first has been referred to as anticipatory socialization, and pertains to the recruitment of people who are interested in becoming physical education teachers. The second phase, and the focus of this study, is known as professional socialization. This phase has to do with the education recruits receive when enrolled in their physical education teacher education (PETE) programs.

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Many researchers have found that in particular, "early field experiences," (EFEs), often know as practicum experiences in the U.S., and student teaching (ST) are very valuable and powerful socializing experiences for PETE students during this phase of socialization (Richards, et al., 2014). There is a third phase of teacher socialization (organizational), that examines issues pertinent to workplace conditions of physical educators, however, the focus of this paper will reside within professional socialization in general, and specifically with EFEs and ST.

1.1 PETE Students' Perceptions of Teaching

One area of study pertaining to PETE students who have been engaged in EFEs and ST relates to their perceptions of teaching – both successful and unsuccessful. Much of this research stems from a landmark study done by Placek (1983), in which she summarized that PETE students (and in-service PE teachers) were mostly concerned about keeping pupils busy, happy and good – to the detriment of concerns for learning. As part of her study, 29 PETE participants (who had taught pupils in PE classes) were asked to recall a specific critical incident of success and one of nonsuccess in their teaching. The leading themes regarding successful teaching were student enjoyment (48%), followed by student learning (44%), and finally high participation levels (31%). Some participants gave more than one answer so the total was above 100%. When these responses were categorized by the source, the vast majority (83%) focused on pupils, with the remaining responses focused on the participants' (PETE students') own actions. For incidences of nonsuccess, the two themes were circumstances beyond the control of the participant (65%), such as "it was the day before Halloween" (p. 52), and subjects blaming themselves (35%), often for an issue related to student discipline.

Placek followed this study up with a similar, but much larger critical incident study that involved 195 undergraduate teacher education students (Placek & Dodds, 1988). The majority of success responses were again pupil-centered (55.9%), with the main themes being pupil success (learning or task completion) at 16%, pupil enjoyment (15.3), motivated pupils (8.5%), active participation (8%), and compliant pupils (6.2%). The remainder of success responses were teacher-centered (29.2%), learning task-centered (13.9) or environment-centered (1.0%). The most nonsuccess responses were also pupil-centered (49.8%), and focused mainly on pupil noncompliance. Teacher-centered (33%), learning task-centered (7%), environment (6.3%) and prior conditions (3.9%) completed the nonsuccess responses.

Schempp (1985) employed critical incidents as well to determine how 20 student teachers defined becoming a better teacher, or conversely realizing no progress in their teaching. Results determined that these PETE students defined progress or lack of progress on how well their pupils behaved during the classes they taught. Critical incidents were filled out toward the beginning, middle and end of ST, and Schempp determined there was no change in participants' responses over time.

Byra (1991) also used critical incidents to determine PETE students' perceptions of success and nonsuccess in their teaching. His sample included a total of 92 sophomores, juniors and seniors. Overall, he found that pupils were the source of "more than half" (p.16) of the responses pertaining to successful and unsuccessful teaching. The category breakdown of these responses were: pupil compliance (35.7%), learning, including task attainment (34.6%), enjoyment (16.2%), and active participation (9%). The second largest success and nonsuccess responses pertained to the teacher (the participants), with a 40.4% total. More than half of these had to do with the participants' own teaching behaviors. Byra did not find evidence of more experienced PETE students perceiving success and nonsuccess differently than their younger peers, except that the "seniors and juniors perceived the students to be the source of success more frequently than the sophomores" (p. 17).

Researchers in two PETE programs in Australian universities also examined students' perceptions of teaching. Their data revealed that participants were concerned mostly with issues surrounding classroom management and not pupils' learning (Glover & Macdonald, 1997). Chow and Fry (1999) engaged in a cross-cultural perspective, examining ST from the perspective of PETE students in Hong Kong, as well as Australia. The results confirmed that incidences of success and nonsuccess in the participants' teaching focused mainly on pupils (62%), although there were examples of Australian students attributing success to "personal attributes, such as a 'gain in confidence'" (p. 43). The authors concluded that the PETE students in both countries "equate success with active pupil enjoyment . . . (which) do not tend to be in much association with pupil learning, as in skill development" (p. 43). Curtner-Smith (1996) employed the critical incident technique to collect data on PETE students to determine the impact of an EFE on their conceptions of the teaching-learning process. He determined that unlike the previous studies alluded to above, his participants "were concerned with pupil learning or elements of teaching related to student learning" (p. 224).

Similarly, Ingersoll, Jenkins and Lux (2014) found that a single PETE student progressed from being concerned about delivering lessons to focusing on student improvement and learning over the course of three EFEs.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

All of the studies mentioned in this paper used data collection techniques of critical incidents, questionnaires, and/or interviews to determine PETE students' perceptions of teaching. We decided to examine this issue from a different perspective. When PETE students experience EFEs and ST, a typical feature is for students to do some autonomous teaching that is observed by a university supervisor (US). A model often used during this process is referred to as clinical supervision (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2009). The most important features of this model include a US observing a lesson taught by a PETE student, and then holding a post-lesson observation conference with the student. One of the purposes of this study was to not ask students to recall a critical incident related to their teaching, but rather to ask them directly after a teaching episode to respond to a singular question: How do you think your lesson went? We did not ask them directly to answer what their successes or nonsuccesses were, but rather gave them an open-ended opportunity to discuss their perceptions of the lesson they had just taught. The vast majority of the studies mentioned above, looked at ST or an EFE experience. Another purpose of this study was to extend this type of research, as we examined our majors' perceptions of teaching after two different EFEs, as well as toward the beginning and end of their capstone experience.

The overall question that guided this study was what were the participants' perceptions of their teaching from a first practicum to a capstone experience? Did their perceptions change over time? Were the majority of responses regarding their teaching pupil-centered or participant-centered? What were the positive and negative themes that emanated from the PETE students in this study?

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

A total of 58 participants from a public university in the Northeast of the U.S. took part in this study.

The breakdown consisted of 55% male and 45% female, ranging in age from 19 to 31 years old. The population was overwhelmingly White (93%), and also included three African-Americans and one Asian-American. There were 16 elementary practicum (EP) students, 16 secondary practicum (SP), 12 student teachers (STs) and 14 interns.

2.2 Placement Procedures

In our PETE program, students have two "early field experiences" that are called practicums. The first one (EP) is typically taken in a student's second year of a four-year degree program. The second one (SP) is usually taken in a student's third year. For both practicums, students are required to spend 60 hours in a local school, observing and assisting an experienced, cooperating teacher. Students eventually teach autonomous lessons (usually about six), collaborating on the planning with their cooperating teacher. A university supervisor (US) observes one of these lessons, and then engages in a post-lesson conference with the PETE student. These conferences were the focus of this study. When the US was not present, cooperating teachers participated in post-lesson conferences, when time permitted.

Students in our program have the option of completing the teaching certification process as part of their undergraduate degree, in which case they typically student teach in the last semester of their fourth and/or final year. Student teaching requires eight full weeks in an elementary school placement and then another eight full weeks in a secondary school. PETE students, however, have the option to forego student teaching in their final year if they have a cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0 out of 4.0, and wish to enroll in a graduate program. This would result in students obtaining a Master's of Arts in Teaching. These students are known as interns and they spend a full semester (16 weeks) in an elementary placement and then another 16-week semester in a secondary school. They then apply for teaching certification at the end of this program.

All STs and interns were required to be in their placement schools all day, every day school was in session. Each was assigned a cooperating teacher in their placement sites to work closely with on a daily basis. USs were also assigned to each ST or intern and were required to make three official visits to observe the PETE students' teaching. USs used an observation instrument (See Appendix) that all parties were familiar with, as it was also used for the practicum experiences.

This instrument was constructed using criteria suggested by the national standards for beginning physical education teachers (NAPSE, 2008), and included topics such as planning, lesson development and classroom management. A large blank section is also part of the instrument, which provides space for USs to write questions and comments that later help with the facilitation of the post-lesson conferences. The three USs who participated in this study averaged almost 15 years in this role, and they had supervised, on average, over 150 PETE students each. One of these supervisors worked with the EP students and the elementary STs. She had extensive experience as a US (14 years) and as an elementary physical education teacher (15 years). Another US worked with SP students and secondary STs. He had been a US for 22 years and a secondary physical education teacher for 11 years. The third US had seven years of experience in this role and was a retired physical education teacher with 34 years of experience teaching at elementary and secondary levels. She supervised the interns in the Master's degree program.

2.3 Research Protocols

The university's IRB committee approved this study before any data collection occurred. The participants were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study. It was also explained to them that it would be volunteer participation and anonymity would be ensured. Understanding that the three researchers were also the three USs in this study, assurance was given that grades for each of the placement experiences would not be impacted in any way by their participation (or lack thereof). For each of the two practicums, 20% of a student's grade was based on the observed lesson at their placement site and both student teaching and the internship were graded as pass/fail. An assessment grade for each PETE student was given on the observation instrument before the conference began, and was never changed as a result of a conference. PETE students were also informed that the conferences would be done in private and audio-recorded by the US. Furthermore, research assistants would transcribe the interviews and no names would be typed in the transcripts. Ultimately, all but one PETE student decided to participate.

2.4 Data Collection

Each practicum student was observed once, toward the end of his or her placements, and the post-lesson observation conferences were audio-recorded by the US. There were a total of 16 EP transcripts and 16 SP transcripts produced.

The STs and interns were observed three times but only the first and the last of the post-lesson observation conferences were audio-recorded for transcription and analysis. Therefore, 14 interns were recorded twice for a total of 28 transcripts. These all took place in their first placement. STs on the other hand were recorded twice during their elementary placement and again twice in their secondary placement. As a result, 12 student teachers produced 48 total transcripts and there was a total for all participants of 108 transcripts.

2.5 Data Analysis

Each post-lesson observation conference started with a US asking a participant how they felt the lesson they just taught went. For the purposes of this study, the participants' initial responses as read via the transcripts were coded through an inductive process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). When phrases/codes such as "students were active" or "students enjoyed the activity" were present in more than 10% of all the transcripts, they were considered emerging themes. Once the themes were determined they were ultimately placed in categories that included: Student-Centered Positive, Student-Centered Negative, Participant-Centered Positive or Participant-Centered Negative. Each conference was coded as either N – all negative, MN – mixed but mostly negative, MIX – evenly mixed between negative and positive, MP – mixed but mostly positive, or P – all positive.

Each coding was given a number designation as follows:

N = -2, MN= -1, MIX= 0, MP= +1, P= +2. Therefore, hypothetically, if 12 STs all had MPs it would total 12x1 = 12. The average score would be 12 divided by 12 STs, which would equal a mean score of 1.

When a participant's conference transcript was coded MIX, MP or P, they gave at least one reason that was coded for what was positive about the lesson, and sometimes more than one. For example, one theme was that students were active, or at times participants said their students were active and enjoyed the lesson (two themes). Themes for all the answers were totaled and then given a percentage for each that was positive. This process was repeated for any negative response.

Total percentages for positive responses/themes, therefore, typically came to more than 100%, as participants often gave more than one reason for why the lesson went as it did. Conversely, not all participants gave negative responses, so the totals for each placement did not usually come up to 100% for negative themes.

2.5.1 Trustworthiness

Two of the authors coded a representative sample of the same transcripts to determine emerging themes and overall categories, as a way to ensure qualitative trustworthiness (Lincoln & Buba, 1985). There was 100% agreement pertaining to the resulting themes and categories.

3. Results

The reporting of results will start with an overall view for how participants thought the lesson they just taught went, for each placement experience. Discussion will then focus on student quotes so that the results can be expressed through their reflections and perceptions of their teaching. The average scores for each placement can be see in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant Scores for Each Placement

Placement	Score
Elementary Practicum	.44
Secondary Practicum	.87
Intern (1st)	.93
Elementary ST (1st)	1.00
Secondary ST (1st)	1.25
Intern (2nd)	1.43
Elementary (2nd)	1.34
Secondary (2nd)	1.58

3.1 Teaching Confidence Levels

There is an obvious trend here, with participants barely feeling positive about their first (elementary) practicum teaching experience, and then feeling better about their lesson taught in each subsequent placement.

For interns and STs, they felt more positive about their lesson taught toward the end than the beginning of their placement.

Only two of the 108 conference transcripts were coded as "all negative," and they were both from the EP. As one of the participants commented:

> I thought I could have done much better. I think overall, the things I tried were just too advanced for this kindergarten class - like the tag game where they were crawling on the floor. No one could tag each other so I pretty much had to tag everyone myself – not good. If I had it to do over again, I would not have them work on striking with racquets, because I think this was over their heads. I think working on kicking skills would have been more appropriate. (EP-15)

There were also only a few (3 from the first intern) conferences coded as "mostly negative." An example is as follows:

> I think the lesson could have gone a lot better. We have a few kids who have some body control issues.
> There were some times when I felt that kids were just kind of going everywhere. We tend to be lenient with some of them, as we know they need to wander even when we give instructions, but I think they are listening. I think they understand what we are telling them. I also did not explain that last kicking activity very well. Once I realized they were not doing it correctly, I stopped them and reiterated what I wanted them to do. It went a little better after that. I find it hard though, to do soccer-type activities inside, with only half a gym, especially with a bunch of wild second graders. (I-1-13)

The following portion of a secondary practicum conference will illustrate a "mixed" perspective on a lesson. There were a total of 11 coded in this category.

> I don't know, I think the lesson went okay. I've had difficulty during the practicum because I only come out to this school once a week for six hours, and then I only see the kids every other week so I feel like I don't really know them. It is hard to plan lessons this way and I find it difficult to discipline kids when I don't even know their names.

Having said that, I think the lesson went all right. The kids were very active, and all their heart rate monitors were working and I think they understood why we are using them. (SP-3)

The most frequent coding of a lesson (61 times) was in the "mostly positive" category, particularly for the interns and student teachers at the beginning of their placements. An elementary student teacher commented that:

I thought the lesson went well overall. I thought the activities were developmentally appropriate for my students and they were successful completing them. I was a little frustrated with some of their behavior though. I felt like I had to keep repeating myself to some of them. I thought the activities were good though, and the students had a lot of practice time. For the most part my students accomplished what I wanted them to, even though there were some behavior problems. (ELEM ST-1-9)

Toward the end of the placements for interns and student teachers in particular, coded lessons that were "all positive" were prevalent in 31 instances. This can be seen from the transcript of an elementary student teacher finishing up their placement.

Um, I thought the class went really well. It was a small class so it was easier to keep them on task and get more done. I think I was hesitant to do a dance unit at first when we started this last week, because of the boys. I wasn't sure if they would want to participate or not. We tried to make it fun and introduce some unconventional dance moves. We also let them have the freedom to create their own dance, which I think drew in a lot of the boys. So, participation was great today and I think everyone really enjoyed it. (ELEM ST-2-6)

In this next section of results, we will examine more closely the themes that were derived from the conferences of the participants. These will include positive and negative themes that were mostly centered around student outcomes, as most of the participants mentioned themes related to their students when commenting on how their lessons went. Responses coded as positive student-centered themes came to an overwhelming 97%, whereas participant-centered were only 3%.

Negative student-centered themes (75%), also outweighed participant-centered (25%) in a convincing manner. The major focus was on how or what the students were doing and not on how or what the participants were doing. The table below shows figures often that total more than 100% - as participants typically gave more than one answer (such as the EP subjects), and in the case of intern 2 subjects, less than 100% when there were some participant-centered answers. See Table 2 for results.

Table 2: Student-Related Positive Themes

Placement Site	Active	Fun	Learning	Good Behavior
Elementary practicum	75%*	50%	----	----
Secondary practicum	50%*	----	44%	31%
Internship (1)	21%	14%	57%*	21%
Elementary Student Teaching (1)	33%	17%	50%*	33%
Secondary Student Teaching (1)	25%	25%	58%*	25%
Internship (2)	7%	----	79%*	----
Elementary Student Teaching (2)	25%	8%	58%*	25%
Secondary Student Teaching (2)	25%	8%	58%*	25%

Note. * = Most prevalent theme for each group

3.2 Student-Centered Positive Themes

3.2.1 Students Being Active

Participants who commented that a positive thing about their lesson was that students were "active," was the most prevalent answer for EP (75%) and SP (50%) practicum students. As a secondary practicum student mentioned: "A major goal for me today was that I wanted them [students] to be active, and I think they were pretty active the whole time" (SP-10). The percentage of responses mentioning being active decreased quite a bit for interns and student teachers, however (from 33%, down to 7%).

3.2.2 Student Enjoyment

Another prevalent, positive theme for EP students (50%) was that their students "enjoyed" their lesson. "I was happy that the fitness stations worked out because you could tell that the students really enjoyed working at each one of them" (EP-7). This enjoyment theme, nonetheless, was not as much of a factor for students in other placements (from 25% to being non-existent at times).

3.2.3 Student Learning

The positive theme that dominated as the most prevalent for interns and student teachers, and typically increased from their first to their second post-observation conferences, was that of increased student skill development. As a high school student teacher stated:

I think my lesson went really well. I have seen a lot of improvement the past couple of days with this class. Students were actually bumping and setting the ball, using good technique. They were really moving their feet to get underneath the balls. The first day balls were flying all over the place, so today was much better. (SEC ST-1-1)

Most of the comments regarding student learning were similar to the one above, and focused on the physical domain (88%). On occasion though, the focus shifted to the cognitive (7%) or the affective domain (5%) as well. An example of a cognitive-related quote was as follows: We were climbing the wall today, which is very serious, and I'm dealing with middle school kids here. So, my main objective was that they know the spotter contract and the climber contract. They have to be really confident when they shout out commands or their partner will not trust them. They focused and knew what they were talking about, so I was happy. (I-1-4)

An example of an affective domain-related comment by an intern is below.

It was nice to see this class understand the concept of working as a team, because we talked about it - and then have them actually doing it. Being able to work as a team is so important, especially playing a sit-volleyball game, as opposed to a regular, standing volleyball game. It's a little different and it takes a little more teamwork and communication, which sometimes this class has lacked in the past.

It was nice to see some of the students who usually have some trouble, actually be successful with it today. (I-2-3)

3.2.4 Good Student Behavior

The final positive student-centered theme regarding a lesson taught by participants was that of good student behavior. While this was never the most prevalent theme of any of the placements, it was commented on in most of them, and ranged from 33% to 21% of student-based positive comments, such as the following:

> I think the class went really well. The kids really listened to me when I was giving directions. I think I had good control as far as gaining their attention, not having them play with the equipment. Even though I had to remind them a couple of times, it still worked a lot better than in the past. I think that most of them were on-task all of the time. I think it went well. (SEC ST-1-4)

3.3 Student-Centered Negative Themes

While there were more student-centered positive themes that emerged from the 108 transcripts, there was one major negative theme that emerged as well regarding students. This theme pertained to inappropriate student behavior (56% of the time) that adversely affected a lesson, in the opinion/reflections of participants. Another negative theme emerged, and that was regarding time (25%). While this was not a student-centered issue per se, it ultimately affected the students participating in the lesson.

3.3.1 Inappropriate Student Behavior

Regarding themes that were coded as negative student-centered ones, inappropriate student behavior was the only one that emerged. The percentages tended to decrease from the two practicums, however, into the first and then the second conferences of interns and STs (See Table 3). The figures for each placement were often below a totaled 100%, due to the fact that not all subjects gave comments that were coded as a negative theme.

Table 3: Student and Participant-Related Negative Themes

Placement Site	Student Behavior	Time	Participant Concern
Elementary practicum	50%*	25%	25%
Secondary practicum	50%*	25%	12%
Internship (1)	36%*	21%	14%
Elementary Student Teaching (1)	33%*	17%	0%
Secondary Student Teaching (1)	50%*	8%	8%
Internship (2)	29%*	0%	29%*
Elementary Student Teaching (2)	33%*	25%	0%
Secondary Student Teaching (2)	17%*	8%	8%

Note. * = Most prevalent theme for each group

At times, the mention of inappropriate student behavior tended to focus on a large portion, if not all of the class. An elementary student teacher in the early stage of their placement stated that:

> I thought the class had a lot of trouble listening, which frustrated me a little bit. I wasn't sure how long to wait for them all to listen. I had a lot of activities planned, but I also didn't want to give instructions while half the class wasn't listening to the safety instructions. Ultimately, I did not get everything in that I wanted to because of the behavioral problems. It was frustrating but now I know. With this class I think I need to keep the instructions very basic so it will be easier for the kids to understand. I feel like it can and will get better with this class. (ELEM ST-1-8)

Some participants mentioned that misbehavior on the part of one student had an impact on their lesson. The first conference with an elementary intern contained this perspective:

> I think the class went pretty well for the most part. One student was quite a handful though. I'm sure you saw that, but he always has been, even for my cooperating teacher.

> It is difficult because he can be quite defiant. I hate to get into a power struggle with him, but his behavior affects the whole class. I felt bad that he missed out on some learning opportunities, but I could not see another way of going about it. I was at least happy that my cooperating teacher agreed with how I handled him. (I-1-7)

3.3.2 Time Issues

The inability of participants to complete all that they planned to do in a lesson was at times affected by something outside of their control, as exemplified by an intern completing their high school placement.

> As you saw, two minutes into our warm up, the fire drill happened. This cost me 15 minutes of class time, so as you can see on my lesson plan, I did not get to some things I had planned to at the end of the lesson. I will have to pick up there, next time I see this group" (I-2-5).

The time issue also took place because of circumstances that occurred during the teaching of a lesson as this secondary practicum student mentioned:

> I wasn't sure how the timing of my lesson was going to go. I knew that they had done some ultimate-type games before, but I didn't realize, or take into consideration, how difficult it really is to throw a Frisbee when there is a lot of wind. So, I took more time on throwing than I wanted to and therefore I did not get to the small-sided game at the end of my lesson plan. (SP-6)

While most of the themes surrounding positive and negative aspects of a given lesson were focused on the students in classes, on occasion a participant commented on something they did that was coded as positive or negative. Regarding negative themes, participant-centered ones occurred 19% of the overall total.

3.4 Negative Participant-Centered Themes

3.4.1 Feeling Nervous

Some participants mentioned that they were nervous when commenting on how the class went (for different reasons).

Of the total number of negative comments that were participant-centered, being nervous accounted for: EP – 40%; SP – 25%; and SEC ST (1) – 8%

EP students were not used to being observed, particularly by their US, as this quote will attest to.

I was a little nervous at the start, but once the lesson began I settled down. It felt similar to playing a competitive game of basketball where you feel some nerves before it starts" ["Why were you nervous"?] Because I had my professor watching me, as well as my cooperating teacher – I was on my own. (EP-9)

Another example of a practicum student being nervous about a supervisory visit was this comment.

Last week we introduced heart rate monitors to this class and it was a lot of trouble-shooting, and therefore not as much activity time as I would have liked. So, I was a little bit nervous for my supervisor to come in and be like-where is the activity time? Thankfully, there were no problems with the monitors today though." (SP-5)

Some practicum students took some time to get used to speaking in front of a group.

"When giving instructions, I tend to get really nervous, so it kind of messes up my mind a little bit." [Can you expand on this thought a bit more?"] "Public speaking has always scared me, but I am getting used to it now, so it is getting better for me" (EP-2). After the elementary and secondary practicum experiences, students did not comment about being nervous for their culminating experience, except for one student teacher who stated: "I was kind of nervous because it was the first day of teaching basketball. I felt the students would want to just play a game and I had planned to do skill development work. Thankfully, they did not complain" (ST-1-3).

3.4.2 Mixture of Negative Responses

There were a total of only 13 other comments, besides being nervous, that were coded as participant-centered negative responses.

The most prevalent of these (5) were regarding perceived poor classroom management. The responses pertained to not dealing well with inappropriate behavior such as this comment: "I know some kids were talking when I was giving instructions in the beginning of class. I should have stopped and waited for them to listen to me, but I am always so anxious to get kids moving" (EP-6). Four participants also spoke about not giving good enough instructions.

> There was some confusion regarding using the task cards. The kids have been exposed to them before and I assumed they knew how to use them, but clearly they did not, and that was my fault. I need to give clear, very specific instructions every time. (I-1-12)

The four remaining negative comments were regarding poor planning (2), failure to modify an activity and poor use of language. "I must have said guys a hundred times, I was awful with inclusive language and I know I need to work on that" (SEC ST-1-11).

Overall, there were very few comments from participants that focused on what they did well. There were single comments whereby participants felt they did well regarding organization, instructions, planning and giving feedback. "I thought I did a lot better with giving specific feedback and not just general feedback during this class" (SEC ST-2-10).

4. Discussion

This section will begin by addressing how participants' perceptions of their teaching varied from one year to next, as they gained teaching experience in schools. The focus will then shift to student-centered positive themes and then to negative themes pertaining to students, time and participant-centered concerns.

4.1 Perception of Teaching over Time

The result demonstrated in Table 1, that participants in this study felt more positive about their teaching as they had more experience teaching in local schools, from an overall mean score of .44 (on a scale of -2 to +2) for first EFE subjects, to 1.58 for secondary STs toward the end of their placement was not unexpected. All PETE higher education faculty would hope and expect such improvement.

This result, however, is not something that has been found in our review of literature regarding similar students, as all the studies alluded to in the introduction of this paper did not look at results across the spectrum of two practicum experiences and two separate points in time during the capstone experience. The one study that attempted to examine student perceptions of teaching over three separate years did not find any real difference in those perceptions (Byra, 1991), other than older PETE students focused on students more than themselves when it came to perceptions of successful teaching. All of the studies examined in the review of literature revealed that PETE students focused more on their pupils than themselves, when writing on incidences of successful teaching. Our study's result pertaining to this concept was similar, although our participants' focus on pupils' rate (97%) was greater than any other study mentioned, as they ranged from 83%, down to 56%. We are unclear as to why this percentage was so high, and is certainly worthy of further study.

4.2 Student-Centered Positive Themes

Going beyond the mean score for each placement, interesting trends occurred regarding PETE students' perceptions of their teaching with regard to student-related positive themes.

Sticking with the busy, happy and good (Placek, 1983) theme that so many of our reviewed studies have referenced, the focus of participants in the first practicum (EP) was on pupils being active (busy) (75%) and enjoying (happy) the lesson (50%). There was no mention at all of pupil learning with participants at this stage of their development as teachers. The second practicum (SP) still had the response of pupils being active or busy (50%) as the PETE students' primary reason for feeling that their lesson was successful, however, in second place we see pupil learning (44%) featured for the first time. The results of these first two EFEs fall in line with all but two of the studies mentioned earlier in this paper (Byra, 1991; Chow & Fry, 1999; Glover & Macdonald, 1997; Placek, 1983; Placek & Dodds, 1988; Schempp, 1985), that found that pupil learning took a backseat to pupils being busy, happy and/or good. Starting with the capstone experience of either the internship or ST, however, the most prevalent theme toward the beginning or the end of the capstone experience was in pupil learning. The results show that the percentages ranged from 50% for participants in the beginning of their elementary ST placement, to a high of 79% toward the end of the interns' placement.

Interestingly, the next highest percentage theme for any of the capstone participants was elementary STs toward the beginning of their placement responding that pupils being active (busy) (33%), or compliant (good) (33%) were indicative of successful teaching. This is strong evidence that the majority of capstone experience participants felt that pupil learning was the greatest indication of successful teaching. One study reviewed earlier that found PETE students' perception of successful teaching was focused on pupil learning (Curtner-Smith, 1996), recommended that at least one methods course should focus heavily on "the knowledge base on effective teaching" (p.224). That is a concept we embrace in our elementary and secondary methods courses, and something that is heavily stressed during seminars when students are doing their ST or their internship. Perhaps this helps to explain why the participants of this study, when discussing teaching success stressed pupil learning. It does not, however, explain why a lack of pupil learning did not surface as a negative theme related to nonsuccess in participants' teaching.

4.3 Student-Centered Negative Themes

Student-centered negative themes were less prevalent than positive ones – in fact only one surfaced - that of pupils being noncompliant, or in other words, mis-behaving. This result is similar to earlier mentioned studies (Byra, 1991; Chow & Fry, 1999; Glover & Macdonald, 1997; Placek, 1983; Placek & Dodds, 1988; Schempp, 1985), which all found that PETE students' perceptions of nonsuccess in teaching had the main theme of pupil noncompliance. Perhaps the negative consequences of pupil noncompliance are so strong that it is hard for PETE students to focus on other student-centered aspects of the lesson when it occurs.

4.4 Participant-Centered Negative Themes

A total of 25% of all negative themes were directed inward towards the participants themselves. This was a little low compared to earlier alluded to research that had participant-centered negative themes ranging anywhere from 33% (Placek & Dodds, 1988) to 43% (Byra, 1991). Similar to these other studies, participants in this study had some concerns regarding their classroom management, being a little nervous, and/or giving clear instructions.

5. Conclusions

This study adds to and extends the PETE students' perceptions of teaching research base, as it collected and analyzed data from post-lesson observation conferences between students and USs, as opposed to earlier studies that used the critical incident, survey and/or interview techniques. This study also examined students engaged in different placements, ranging from two EFEs to two separate occasions during their capstone experiences. Results reveal that participants felt much better about their teaching as they gained experience and the focus of perceived teaching success changed over time.

Placek's (1983) conclusion stated in part that, "It tells us that our goals as teacher educators to produce teachers who are concerned not only with student enjoyment, but also student learning, may be fantasy" (p. 55). We found that the PETE students in this study went beyond the busy and happy themes that emerged early on in the first practicum and focused predominately on student learning as a measure of successful teaching in their capstone experiences. Importantly, some researchers (Byra, 1991; Placek, 1983) have noted that the concept of busy, happy and good may be just a means to an end (as these conditions should be considered prerequisites for learning) and therefore their presence is not necessarily a bad thing. If they are a means to an end then perhaps the ultimate goal is student learning, which we think all PETE faculty can agree should be the goal of all educators, whether in professional or occupational socialization.

5.1 Limitations and Further Studies

It must be stated that there are limitations to this study. The researchers engaged in this study were also the USs. Care was taken to assure participants that their participation was voluntary and that they were assured anonymity due to researcher assistant transcription of conferences. PETE students were also reassured that their grades in these courses/placements would not be affected by their participation, or lack thereof. It must be acknowledged, however, that students are not above telling teachers what they think they want to hear, a concept referred to as "studentship" (Graber, 1991). This concept was addressed to all of the participants and we are hopeful that their conference responses were sincere. Given that the participants all came from the same university, this study is not generalizable to other programs.

This fact lends itself to the premise that additional research in this area is certainly warranted. It would be enlightening to have similar studies conducted in other regions of the U.S., as well as globally. This particular study left questions for us as researchers as to why our participants did not focus more on themselves when describing what went well in their lessons, or why they did not focus on a lack of pupil learning to describe nonsuccess in their teaching. Doing follow-up interviews, either individually or via focus groups would give a better understanding of why participants focused on what they did when describing their perceptions of their teaching. The more PETE faculty can understand what and why PETE students are thinking regarding their own teaching, the better positioned we will be to determine if what we are teaching is being processed by our students. Will professional socialization be strong enough to impact our recruits' strong biographies? We all know what the answer needs to be.

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