Original Article

Physical education teachers teaching in a multicultural setting: A case study of teacher knowledge and practice

WONSEOK CHOI, PHD¹, ROSE CHEPYATOR-THOMSON, PHD²

¹College of Physical Education, Keimyung University, SOUTH KOREA

²Department of Kinesiology, The University of Georgia, USA

Published online: December 25, 2012

(Accepted for publication November 15, 2012)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2012.04065;

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine physical education teachers' knowledge and practice in teaching culturally diverse students in elementary schools. Three in-service teachers were purposefully selected and data collection involved interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Grounded theory was used in the analysis of the data. The findings of the study revealed the participants to be aware of student diversity in terms of cultural background and behavior, and to have positive attitude toward student differences. However, the teachers had limited incorporation of ethnic and cultural diversity in their curricular activities. A final finding from this study was the teachers' use of varied disciplinary practices to manage student behavior, with some practices appearing problematic. Implications from this study include the need for the teacher education programs to prepare pre-service teachers with culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum, and to offer teachers' workshops or seminars to augment in-service teachers' knowledge and practice working with culturally diverse student population.

Key Words: Elementary physical education; multicultural education; physical education curriculum; teacher knowledge; teacher practice; case study.

Introduction

Increasingly in the United States, there are drastic cultural differences between teachers and the students they teach. Trends in schools show predominantly white teachers to work with students from mostly underrepresented populations (African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and North American Indians) in U. S. public schools (Aud, Hussar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, et al., 2010). Attesting to this trend are several scholars in the area of physical education teacher education who point out the widening gap between the cultural and ethnic diversity of school children and their teachers (Burden, Hodge, & Harrison, 2004; Griffin, 1985). In fact according to the U.S. Department of Education statistics, the percentage of public school students taught by White teachers decreased from 68 to 55 percent between 1988 and 2008, while the percentage of Hispanic student population doubled from 11 to 22 percent (Aud et al.). The mismatch between teachers and students in terms of background characteristics, could hamper the extent to which students gainfully learn new knowledge in schools. Research studies indicate a close association between school demographics such as racial and socio-economic status of students and discipline practices (McLoyd, 1998), which influences the "ability of children to achieve the academic and social gains essential for success in the 21st century (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, & Tobin, 2011, p. 85). With this trend, Gay (2002) indicates that the majority of teachers need to be prepared with multicultural education knowledge and pedagogical skills to allow for adequate preparedness in teaching diverse students.

With evident-based figures pointing to increases in student diversity in U.S. public schools, and the problems that arise from teachers varying to teacher diversity in schools dissimilar to their upbringing, there is a need to consider multicultural education in physical education teacher education. The goal of multicultural education is to provide prepare teachers to teach to diversity with principles of democracy and equality, which allows for the advancement of learning responsive to all students. In Banks (2008) advocate, teachers ought to develop curricular activities and generate pedagogical strategies responsive to student diversity. Teachers knowledgeable of diversity are influential in the area of multicultural education and tend to have a firm understanding of all cultures, which helps to ensure that each student receives an equal opportunity in educational environments (Sparks, Butt, & Pahnos, 1996). Although there are likely many factors in the school setting that account for differential achievement levels of culturally diverse students, teachers' knowledge and practice are integral to student success in education (Stanley, 1996).

Research studies on multicultural education stimulate discussions on diversity in mainstream academic arena. Further they initiate development of culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum, embracing the apparent wide range of experiences within ethnically, racially and culturally diverse groups (Bank, 2008;

Gay, 2002; Hill & Cleven, 2006; Laura, 2011). Educational agencies in physical education advocate for increased consideration of multicultural education through policy initiatives. For instance the standards-based reform in physical education (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2003) addressed multicultural education through development of a standard that emphasizes the importance of respect for self and others in physical activity settings.

In physical education, a number of research studies examined in-service physical education teachers' knowledge, attitude, and practice in teaching to diversity in schools (Chepyator-Thomson, You, and Russel, 2000; Colum, Foley, and Lytle, 2010; Griffin, 1985; Harrison, Carson, & Burden, 2010; McCaughy, Barnard, Martin, Shen, & Kulinna, 2006; Sparks et al., 1996; Sparks & Wayman, 1993; Tabb & Joonkoo, 2005). Chepyator-Thomson et al. (2000) found physical education teachers to have limited knowledge and training experience with diversity, attributing the failure to teacher preparation programs as well as in-service teacher education that failed to adequately prepare teachers for diversity in schools. Two research studies specifically investigated physical education teachers' knowledge and skills (Sparks et al., 1996; Sparks & Wayman, 1993). In these research studies, urban teachers and rural teachers had different understandings of ethnic diversity, and the in-service physical education teachers had high knowledge levels and positive attitudes toward multicultural education. However, these teachers did not have specific plans for the development or promotion of multiculturalism within the school physical education program.

Further Colum et al. (2010) discovered physical education teachers to value cultural diversity in general but struggled to implement culturally responsive pedagogy. Another study examined physical education teachers' attitudes and knowledge levels about working with Mexican American students (Tabb & Joonkoo, 2005). The results showed participants to have positive attitudes and moderately high knowledge levels about Mexican American culture. Most recently, Harrison et al. (2010) evaluated the common assumption that teachers of color are more culturally competent than White teachers by assessing physical education teachers' cultural competency. Possible differences between the cultural competence levels of White teachers in diverse school settings and those in more racially homogenous schools were ascertained. The results indicated significant differences, with teachers of color scoring higher in both multicultural teaching knowledge and skills than White teachers. Results also indicated White teachers in city school settings to score significantly higher in multicultural teaching knowledge than those from more rural schools.

In conclusion previous studies found in-service physical education teachers to have high knowledge levels and positive attitudes toward multicultural education; however, they did not have specific plans for the development or promotion of multiculturalism within the physical education program. Besides, the research studies revealed challenges school physical education teachers face in teaching to student diversity in public schools. In the last past several decades many teacher education programs started to prepare their students with the use of multicultural education curriculum and diverse instructional models and multicultural materials (Chepyator-Thomson et al., 2000; Sparks et al., 1996). However, there needs to be a much deeper understanding of teachers that teach culturally diverse students in physical education, particularly in terms of knowledge and practice. The present study sought a deeper understanding of in-service physical education teachers' knowledge and practice, as well as their comprehension of issues related to teaching culturally diverse students in elementary schools. The purpose of the current study was to examine physical education teachers' knowledge and practice in teaching culturally diverse students in elementary schools. The two questions that guided this research investigation included: (1) What types of knowledge and practice do in-service teachers use to teach to diversity in elementary school? (2) What curricular activities and instructional strategies do in-service teachers use to teach diverse student population?

Situated Cognition

Situated cognition theoretical framework (Lave, 1988) guided data collection and analysis, as well as the interpretation of the findings of this study. Lave (1988) spearheaded a view of learning recognized as 'situated cognition.' According to Robbins and Aydede (2009), three perspectives make up situated cognition and they include: embodiment, embedding, and extension, with embodiment referring to cognitive activity that relies on the body, embedding concerning cognitive processes that advance social action within an in-situ or natural environment, and extension taking boundaries of cognition beyond the body. Teachers take an active role in constructing the environment in which they live, attaching themselves to the environment through actions and practices (Weick, 2009). An understanding of a phenomenon depends on the connection made between the human mind, the environment one finds herself or himself, and the situation in question, which indicates that the way teachers develop school curriculum would resonates with their mental constructions.

The link between a teacher's cognition and practice is grounded in a teacher's place of work and teaching practices used, defining situated cognition in this study. Situated cognition is a production of declarative and procedural knowledge and defines 'what a teacher knows and does' in educational environments. The aim of this study was to ascertain what types of knowledge and practice defined the work teachers who were employed to teach in culturally diverse elementary schools. While in specific terms declarative knowledge refers to what curricular activities teachers select, procedural knowledge defines etching and refers to the instructional strategies thought most useful in transmitting knowledge to students. In specific terms, teaching as used here

refers to the “intentional actions of a teacher” that promote student learning (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 32). In the context of this study, teachers as “individuals represent knowledge in the form of narratives (stories) that represent assemblages of situated knowledge” (Kim & Hannifin, 2007, p. 1838) derived from their teaching environments and informed by cultures and society in which they exist, resulting in situated meanings.

Research Design

When researchers are interested in new insights, interpretations or a case as opposed to testing a hypothesis, they use qualitative case studies (Merriam, 1998). Focusing on a single entity (the case) enables researchers to reveal “the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Yin (1989) also maintained that researchers would use the case study design when they want to explore contextual conditions and believe that contextual conditions are highly relevant to the phenomenon of study. Because the researchers were interested in in-service physical education teachers teaching in a context of a culturally diverse school, a case study design was suitable. In addition, a case study design was appropriate in that it would provide the insights and new information that answers the research questions of the study.

Participant Selection and Field Entry

The SG school district (pseudonym) is one of three school districts in Borego (pseudonym) area of southeastern region of the United States. Three physical education teachers that taught at culturally diverse elementary schools within the same school district were interviewed and observed for this study. The researchers selected participants using purposeful sampling to identify teachers who had substantive experience working with culturally diverse students (Patton, 2002). There were three criteria used to select potential participants for this study: 1) The participants had to have at least five years of teaching experience to gain sufficient experiences from working with culturally diverse students; 2) participants had to have taught physical education in elementary schools in the same school district in the last five years of service; and 3) the participants had to provide an expressed interest in expanding their knowledge and experiences working with diverse student population in their school and community. The University's Human Subject Office approved this research study prior to data collection. The participants were provided with an informed consent form before the data collection commenced and were assured that their participation would remain confidential.

The School District's Description. Borego has a population of 101,489 according to the 2000 census. Although the median family income in 2005 was estimated to be \$46,033, almost 30% of the residents live below the poverty line. Borego has a sizable underrepresented population, with almost 35% of residents identifying themselves as non-white. Based on its website, SG school district has 14 elementary, 4 middle, and 4 high schools that serve 11,854 students in grades Pre-K through twelve. The district spends \$10,010 per pupil in current expenditures. The school district had a grade 9-12 dropout rate of 9% in 2005 (the national grade 9-12 dropout rate was 3.9% in 2005). In the SG county school district, 15% of students have an IEP (Individualized Education Program). An IEP is a written plan for students eligible for special needs services. The district serves 11% English Language Learners (ELL), who are in the process of acquiring and learning English language skills. About 80% of the student population are racially diverse including Asian (2%), African-American (53%), Hispanic (20%), and Multi-racial (4%).

Brief Profiles of the Participants. Three physical education teachers were chosen to participate in this study: Lisa Miller, James Hawes, and Amy Kelly. Lisa was in her twenty-fifth year of teaching physical education and was currently teaching at Woodland Elementary School, where she had taught for fifteen years. Before she went there, she taught math and secondary physical education in other schools in a different school district. James Hawes was in his eighth year of teaching at Westwood Elementary School, the only school in his teaching career that he had taught. Amy Kelly had fifteen years of teaching, all of which were at Kenwood Elementary School. All three schools were in an urban county in the southeastern region of the United States.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of evidence were used in data collection, and they included interviews, participant observations, and document analysis.

Interviews. Three interviews were conducted with each participant. The interviews focused on each participant's knowledge and practice teaching culturally diverse students, as well as on their personal beliefs and values on cultural diversity. The interview with each participant followed the process of Seidman's model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing (2006). Seidman explained that the model involves conducting a series of three separate interviews with each participant. Based on these guidelines, the participants were asked to talk about their experiences using primarily open-ended and structured questions. Each semi-structured interview session lasted approximately an hour; however, the interviews varied in length depending on how much detail the participants shared, as well as on the circumstances surrounding the interview. The information gathered from the initial interview provided baseline data helping to direct the researcher into designing and choosing appropriate questions for the follow-up interviews. Furthermore, observations provided a rich resource used in generating additional questions for interviews. In this way, the researcher was able to pinpoint particular areas of

concern specific to each participant, while also allowing themes to emerge that were common amongst all of the participants.

Participant Observations. While interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone's perspective, observation enabled the researcher to draw inferences about this perspective that the researcher could not obtain by relying exclusively on interview data (Maxwell, 2005). Observation provided the researcher with opportunities to learn things that participants were either unconscious of or unwilling to discuss. Merriam (1998) suggested observing the following things: the setting, the participants, activities and interactions, frequency and duration, and subtle factors such as nonverbal communication, and symbolic meanings of words. Based on this guideline and according to the purpose of the study, observations allowed the researcher to focus on the context of each participant's teaching activity and environment. Furthermore, observing what they taught and how they interacted with students in their teaching provided a tacit understanding of their actual views about teaching culturally diverse students. Questions arising from the observation were added to the next interview guide so that the researcher could ask for more detailed information or explanations. Field notes from the observation were organized by day, time, and location.

Document Analysis. Documents obtained from the website of the school district were used to determine the school demographics and the school's background information. National, state, and district physical education standards and curriculum guide were analyzed as pertinent information to teachers' practices. Additional documents from the participants such as class schedule, handouts, and letters to parents were also acquired and analyzed.

Data Analysis

In this study, the grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) method was used to analyze the data. Grounded theory process according to Charmaz includes gathering rich data, coding that includes initial coding and focused coding, memo-writing, theoretical sampling, saturation, and sorting, and constructing grounded theory. During the initial coding process, the researcher used line-by-line coding, which center on "naming each line of written data" (Charmaz, p. 50). This strategy allowed the researcher to remain open to the data and to see the subtleties that emerged. Furthermore, performing line-by-line coding early in the data collection process helped the researcher to inform and refocus future interviews. The next step after completing the line-by-line coding was creating focused codes. Focused coding refers to the use of "the most significant and frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Memo-writing was used to analyze data and to develop codes early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, it provided a space to become actively engaged in the materials, to develop ideas, and to fine-tune subsequent data-gathering methods. Once the researcher saturated the categories with data, a subsequent development was to sort out and/or diagram patterns of theory integration emerging from the findings. Theoretical sampling was attempted in the current study by repeated interviews and observations.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness of a study involves the concepts of credibility, transferability, and confirmability. First, credibility deals with the issue of compatibility between the researcher's constructions and informants' reality. This study used triangulation by collecting multiple sources of data through multiple methods to establish credibility (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Second, transferability is concerned with the degree to which a study's findings can be applied to other contexts or with other participants. Because qualitative research is intended to provide deep understandings about the phenomenon being studied rather than to generalize to many situations, hence in this study attempts were made to describe the findings in as rich and as thick terms as possible (Glesne, 2006). Third, to ensure credibility of the researcher's interpretations, member checks and peer examination were used (Merriam, 1998).

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine physical education teachers' knowledge and practice in teaching culturally diverse students in elementary schools. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the data: (a) awareness and attitude toward student diversity, (b) diversification of curriculum in physical education, and (c) the importance of discipline in working culturally diverse schools.

Awareness of and Attitude toward Student Diversity

The participants demonstrated an awareness and understanding of cultural diversity that students bring to school. For them, diversity meant students with differences in terms of race, language, gender, socio-economic status, or special needs. The participants considered it challenging to teach different types of children in one class. Some of the culturally diverse students were observed to have different reactions to certain activities in physical education such as traditional dances. The participants thought students with a language barrier were not a problem, but there were some class activities that made them apprehensive or possibly nervous or scared. Amy thought her school had extremes of cultural diversity in terms of race, culture, and social class, and besides it was not unusual for her to be assigned students who could not speak English. The following interview excerpt describes complex diversity from Amy's viewpoint.

„I'll have a classroom that has students that are multicultural which means they are mixed. Whether they're racially mixed or culturally mixed, they're not one or the other. You've got a Hispanic, Asian, Black and White

culture. And then you'll have students from both high and low socio-economic backgrounds, and in that class you'll also have perhaps some special education students. And then you'll have some students that are from the Caucasian, White culture, but they may be living in the African American culture. And you'll see certain behaviors and actions. So you have all of those types of children in one class and then you're expected to teach across the board, all those different children. And I think Borego is like a melting pot".

James also acknowledged diversity of student population in the school. But he saw common things and similar behavior patterns among the diverse students, and he believed elementary school children were not aware of differences among themselves. James expressed:

„You need to recognize it...cultural diversity, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity. However no matter where they're from or whatever else; they're similar to one another. I didn't know that I was going to get a job here but I think it's really good. If you can teach here, whether it's student teaching or whatever else, it gives you that outlet to kind of see how different kids act".

When James acknowledged similarities among students, he was relating them to their neighborhood characteristics. Thus, he believed that although students' racial backgrounds were different, their neighborhood characteristics were significantly related to their socio-economic background. However, throughout their teaching experiences, teachers learned a different perspective. They developed an acceptance of children from other countries. Amy shared an interesting story with two Asian boys whom she had in her first year of teaching.

„I say, I need you to look at me when I'm talking to you. And come to find out that culturally, where they came from, it was a sign of disrespect for a child to look at a teacher in the eye, [pause], that blew my mind. And, that there are children that come here from other countries that to them, teachers are way up here on the level of respect. Not in this country! Not in this country! And so I've grown to learn so much more about my value as a professional or just the part that I play in this world from students from other countries and other cultures. I don't know if it will ever change in this country, but we (teachers) are definitely not up here, we're way down there".

The participants had positive attitudes towards cultural diversity. They thought that having people from many different backgrounds is great for the students. The following excerpt shows how Lisa perceived student cultural diversity:

„It doesn't matter their skin color or their gender. Every child can learn. Every child is different. Every child has a different personality. We do have a diverse school and I am glad about that. It makes it more fun. It does encourage students to be more tolerant of others, even if they have a different culture or a different upbringing. I've never been nervous or uptight about being in a situation where there's diversity."

Furthermore, the participants were well aware of great difficulties that students from different countries or cultures had. So, providing a class environment where these students felt comfortable was important. For example, Lisa said: "simple but one way to make them comfortable is to say Hispanic students' name by how they wanted to say it. I try to find out how to pronounce their names, and then I'll try to make them feel comfortable and say as many words as I know in Spanish."

Management of Student Behavior

Setting rules in the gym provides safety for students. The participants expressed a common belief that the main purpose of discipline is to ensure safety in physical education. They recognized the importance of enforcing a set of rules in order to prevent injuries. Furthermore, discipline not only was used to ensure safety in the gym, but also it saved time. Because of limited time for physical education in elementary school, the participants thought that it important to use time efficiently. For example, Amy did not want to waste physical education time, which was 45 minutes or 35 minutes once a week. She expected students to follow her direction and did not want to spend too much time on students' off-task behavior.

Even though the teachers described themselves as flexible and generous, they did have strict disciplinary methods. According to the participants, disciplinary methods included the following: Setting up rules and routines early in the school year, having high expectations for students' behavior, and providing appropriate punishment when necessary. For example, James briefly described his discipline style:

„I think major...importance, spending the whole first part of the year, several weeks with each class, getting them to really know what the rules and the procedures are in the gym, what's expected of them. And working on those procedures, taking the time to practice them. And that makes the rest of your year go so smoothly. I feel like my personality is kind and loving and generous. But I still am firm. I'm strict for certain rules. And if they do misbehave or if they're not being safe, they usually sit out for a few minutes, and then I try to get them to come back to participate."

As mentioned above, several disciplinary practices were used to manage student behavior in physical education and the use of a sit-out system was one of them. It makes a student to sit outside during the class activity for certain amount of time. The participants used it when it was necessary; for example when the students had bad attitudes or showed some unsafe behavior. But as long as the students had a good behavior they could come back in. However, interestingly, among the students from the various racial backgrounds, I saw more African-American students sit out during the class time than others. The most extreme case that I observed was an African-American boy named Michael (pseudonym) in Amy's kindergarten class. He began misbehaving at

the beginning of the class and continued to be a problem throughout the class. Although Amy made him sit out a couple of times and warned him to follow the rules or else he would go to the office, Michael continued to misbehave. Also, I saw four other Black students sit out during this class. Later, Amy called the office and Michael was taken out of the class by another teacher; then the rest of the students had physical education for about 10 minutes. After class, I asked Amy about Michael. She looked a little bit stressed and nervous and said, "He couldn't take his medicine this morning and that's why he acted like that." This indicated to me that he had been prescribed medicine for some reason. To Amy and other teachers, it was just behavior that required special medication. I was curious about this happening and also about the pattern that Black students sitting out. So, I asked the participants at an appropriate time during the interview and Lisa shared her perspective with me. Lisa thought that lack of pre-school experience was the reason why Black students in lower grades were struggling at school. Because they tended not to demonstrate types of behavior that school-teachers wanted them to follow in classes. She said:

„They (Black students) just don't have the discipline, I guess. They don't have the skills for school maybe. Now some of the Black students do not have the preschool education experience that the Whites have. There are a lot of young kids in preschool early now, and it just seems by the time they get in Pre-K or kindergarten, the White students are already ahead of the Black students... and I imagine the Hispanic students. Just because they have been in school more. They have probably been read to more. They have heard the language more. They've had more interaction with adults and other children. They just know the routine and they've had more practices and experiences. And sometimes we hear the child has not had any school experience until they walk in that Pre-K class. And it's usually from pre-k, K, and one. They're very immature. Some of them are young. Some of them have to repeat a grade, not just for academic reasons but for behavior reasons. And it does seem to get better by 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade and then hopefully on up to middle school and high school.”

Diversification of Curriculum in Physical Education

The participants' school curriculum in physical education was well aligned with State standards, along with their teaching philosophy, neighborhood characteristics, and student interests. For example, the participants acknowledged most of the students did not have much space at home or in their neighborhoods to play sport; they lacked big yards and public spaces. Also they thought that some students could not play outside because of their neighborhood characteristics; they considered the students' places of residence as too dangerous. However, their physical education curriculum emphasized movement concepts, sports skills, and physical fitness, with the curriculum implementation completed through the use of a variety of sports and modified games. Observations of the classes indicated curricular activities to include dance, basketball, T-ball, soccer, volleyball, field hockey, golf and roller-skating. Usually the participants set up types of equipment and created stations early in the morning, which were used for the whole day with some modifications of equipment and activities depending on students' grade level and skill level.

The participants recognized students' racial backgrounds and noted how they influenced their interests in particular sports. However they believed important to teach different kinds of sports so that students could experience different sports and not be limited to their preferred sports. Lisa mentioned that teaching the origins of the activities and sports was important in physical education because many of the students came from different countries. Both James and Amy described the different interests of students from different racial backgrounds and the importance of opening them up to different sports. James said:

„Many Hispanic kids: they love and they know soccer. And that's the one thing they do. But then again, when we play baseball or something else, they end up loving it. Some kids here have so many opportunities in football, basketball and baseball, but then when you open them up to different kinds of things, I enjoy seeing their reaction to how they enjoy different things. Especially things they didn't think they would do maybe.”

Amy also expressed the following:

„But when it comes to P.E. for me, I think I try to teach mostly where their interests would be. But also I think I've found that some of my students are Hispanic students, they can relate to soccer. A lot of them are extremely athletic. A lot of the students are, they can, if they're really good at soccer, they may be really good at basketball or football. They've just never tried it before. And so it's introducing something different without...I have this saying, it's called contempt prior to investigation. Nah, I ain't playing that, I ain't playing soccer. Soccer's for the Spanish-speaking students; how do you know, you've never played. So instead of being ugly and judgmental, try it”.

One day, I observed Lisa had a 5th grade Black boy that was complaining about somebody in his group and it happened to be a Hispanic boy who did not have soccer skills. He did not know how to play and the Black boy said, "Well, that boy should know how to play soccer because he's Mexican." And so she really thought that was interesting and said, "Well, he might think you should be a great basketball player because you're Black." So then Lisa had a teaching moment with those two students that you don't just look at the color of their skin or where they're from and think they're great in that sport. Or a sport that traditionally is from that culture or that country. And when asking Lisa about this teaching episode, she said:

„I want every sport to be for everybody and try not to teach students that certain sports are for girls or boys; or Hispanics, Blacks or Whites. I want our students to try to play everything well or learn the skills at least. When I

was in school, there were definitely girl sports, boy sports, Black sports, and White sports. We had Cubans in my high school and I don't think we even had soccer. And it was very culturally, what's the word? Certain sports for certain cultures! I hate to say it, one reason I didn't play basketball in high school, because only Blacks played it at my high school. And that is sad. It really is... I feel like now we've made a lot of progress in that area."

So the participants understood students' diverse backgrounds and interests and tried to reflect on them in curricular implementation. Even though certain sports could be an outlet for certain groups of students, teachers did not want them to focus on a certain sport because of their cultural backgrounds. They believed that their practices in this case were critical to reduction prejudice and negative perceptions among students. However their curriculum mainly focused on traditional physical education concepts such as movement themes, fitness concepts, and skill themes, which emphasize Eurocentric perspectives of the sports and physical education.

Utilization of Standards

The participants in this study followed the school district's curriculum guidelines for teaching in physical education which is based on the national physical education standards. This helps them to develop "physically-educated individuals" who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful physical activity. Based on these guidelines, the participants in this study should be regarded as successful and effective physical education teachers. There is no doubt that they promoted all of the aspects that national standards require successful physical education teachers to demonstrate. However, unless teachers perceive the standards as less culturally relevant to them and to their culturally diverse students, their teaching may remain the same. In other words, race and ethnic differences are merely stated in the national physical education standards. Based on the document analysis of the school district curriculum guide, it clearly excluded aspects of multicultural education which means there is a great possibility for physical education teachers to disregard racial and ethnic diversity in their practices because the standards and local guideline are not specific enough to guarantee successful multicultural education through physical education. Hence, to maximize the potential of physical education teachers to use multicultural education, perhaps the standards could be more elaborated than currently written to put more emphasis on multiculturalism in physical education. In other words, without advocacy of multiculturalism in public policy through development of standards that are culturally relevant and specifically stated, it may be unrealistic to expect teachers to actually develop knowledge and practices that assist them to teach to diversity in schools.

In summary, the participants in this study were well aware of the different attitudes and behaviors of students from different cultural backgrounds, and they also had a positive attitude towards cultural diversity. Although the participants had some challenges when dealing with diverse students' language barriers, perceptions about other races, and attitude and behavior issues, they had their own strategies to minimize these challenges. Discipline was perceived to be an important avenue in teaching culturally diverse students as well. However, the curriculum that each participant followed in the current study seemed to be based on the traditional physical education curriculum that did not reflect any ethnic and cultural values and traditions of the students

Discussion

Within the scope of the case study we have reported, our analysis of the available data suggest that teaching diverse students in elementary school influenced physical education teachers abilities to do the difficult work of designing, organizing, and managing physical education classes and activities. Many scholars describe knowledge and positive attitude towards multiculturalism as key characteristics of successful and effective teachers (Banks, 2008; Gay, 2002). Examination of the data used to evaluate the outcomes of the case study provided evidence pertinent to the assertion that physical education teachers were well aware of the different attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors of students from different cultural backgrounds. This study provided evidence to support the proposition that contexts and environments contribute to these teachers' understanding of the complexities of teaching physical education (Lave, 1988). They acknowledged differences among their students and tried to teach and provide equal learning opportunities among all students, exhibiting no favoritism in teaching and student interactions. They believed they did not have any major problems in teaching to the diversity of students, although they generally agreed it was different from teaching students from the same background. These perspectives support the findings from previous research studies: Sparks and Wayman (1990), Sparks et al. (1996), Chepyator-Thomson et al. (2000), Tabb and Joonkoo (2005), and Columna et al. (2010). Harrison et al. (2010) reported members of ethnic minority groups acquire and retain their multicultural knowledge as part of lived experiences. Although the participants in this study were not ethnic minorities, they had been exposed to cultural differences from interacting with culturally diverse students throughout their professional careers. But they did not have specific training or education in multicultural education, meaning most of their knowledge and practices came from teaching experiences at the schools (Weick, 2009).

Probably, the most interesting term heard from the interviews with the participants was "discipline." Responses to interview questions on perspectives about teaching culturally diverse students indicated discipline to be an important aspect of teaching. The participant's use of discipline seemed to be an important means to achieve Standard 5 of National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2003) which was used mainly to ensure safety and promote ethical behavior among students. One method of managing students was

through the practice of "time-out" type of discipline. From observations of the participants, a pattern was discovered: most of the time it was Black students who sat outside the activity area. Perhaps teachers did not recognize that behavior could possibly be culturally influenced and this might seem to reinforce a racial prejudice that Black students tend to need discipline. However based on the works of Skiba et al. (2011), this could point to a "cultural mismatch or racial stereotyping" (p. 87), resulting from stark background characteristics between teachers and students. From this research study the scholars point in particular that African American students at the elementary school level have twice the odds of receiving office discipline referrals compared to White students (Skiba et al., 2011, p. 101). Laura's work (2011) point out that Black youth, boys in particular, "are unevenly punished" (p. 94) and are more likely than any other group in the United States to be punished in schools, typically through some form of exclusion" (Laura, 2011, p. 91). In light of these scholar's work and results from the current study, further research investigation is warranted to ascertain ways to promote culturally responsive student behavior and culturally appropriate pedagogy and discipline that is not limited to the teacher's own perspective of "appropriateness."

Given national growing diversity, there is a need to ascertain meaningful and relevant ways to successfully prepare prospective teachers to work in culturally diverse of schools in the United States, a "significant challenge facing teacher education programs today" (Domangue & Carson, 2008, p. 347). Teachers need to obtain cultural competency, which concerns the teacher's "ability to understand and constructively relate to the uniqueness of each [student in context] of the diverse cultures that influence each person's perspectives" (Stuart, 2004, p. 6), as well as have the desire to gain knowledge of diversity through professional or in-service education. However in order for teachers to become change agents and cultural mediators in schools, it is important that they understand how to design curricula reflective of ethnic and cultural traditions (Banks, 2008), not only in terms of curriculum but also pedagogy. The curriculum that each participant followed in the current study centered on traditional physical education curriculum, which emphasizes fitness and skill development. Although some studies have investigated multiculturalism in the physical education curriculum (Kinchin & O'Sullivan, 2003), there does not seem to be a specific plan for the development of multicultural content within the physical education program. Sparks et al. (1996) asserted that physical education teachers often struggle with finding ways to integrate what they learn about diversity within teacher education programs into their actual daily practice. The current study found a similar pattern: the participants did not incorporate multicultural content in their curriculum. This finding also support what Stanley (1996) discovered in research study: teachers respected and valued cultural diversity but their actions did not indicate implementation of culturally sensitive pedagogical practices. The development of units of instruction in multicultural education in physical education should foster well-informed, and non-prejudicial curricula and teaching practices (Chepyator-Thomson et al., 2000). According to Sparks et al. (1996) emphasizing multicultural content within physical education is not to neglect other critical goals such as fitness and skill development in physical education programs. As they mentioned, these goals still remain important. But, there needs to be a development of specific content and units of education appropriate for teaching in a multicultural school context to enable physical education teachers to be more successful and competent in working with diverse students. In addition the school environment needs to be culturally responsive to teacher's teaching to diversity if teachers are to feel safe in exploring different strategies that promote student learning. It was beyond the scope of this study to determine if the schools' administrators embraced diversity, or even what kinds of diversity were embraced at the schools outside of what was gathered from in-service teachers interviews and observations.

Conclusions

It is generally believed that the major focus and goal of physical education is to teach students movement concepts, physical activities, and sport skills to help them to promote or maintain a physically active lifestyle throughout their lives. In addition to this, physical education teachers should have a training program and guideline to teach to diversity in ways that provide cultural understandings and promote positive social interactions among culturally diverse students. Thus, we need to advocate for the importance of multiculturalism in physical education for the purposes of providing quality education about cultural differences and meeting social welfare goals in regard to promotion of social cohesion, as well as meeting individual health welfare objectives; hence helping to eliminate prejudices and stereotypes. Physical education fulfills an important role in schools and society at large: it promotes the development of skilled and socially and culturally aware individuals, who are knowledgeable and possess positive socio-cultural relations leading to a socially cohesive society.

References

- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, M., et al. (2010). *The condition of education 2010*. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.
- Banks, J. A. (2008). *An introduction to multicultural education* (4rd ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Burden, Jr., Hodge, S., & Harrison Jr, L. (2004). From colorblindness to intercultural sensitivity: Infusing diversity training in PETE programs. *Quest*, 56(2), 17.

- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London ; Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Chepyator-Thomson, J. R., You, J., & Russell, J. (2000). In-service physical education teachers: Background and understanding of multicultural education. *Journal of In-service Education*, 26(3), 557-568.
- Columna, L., Foley, J. T., & Lytle, R. K. (2010). Physical education teachers' and teacher candidates' attitudes toward cultural pluralism. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 29(3), 295-311.
- Domangue, E., & Carson, R. L. (2008). Preparing culturally competent teachers: Service-learning and physical education teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education Physical Education*, 27, 347-367.
- Fielding, N., & Fielding, J. L. (1986). *Linking data*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Flory, S. B., & McCaughtry, N. (2011). Culturally relevant physical education in urban schools: Reflecting cultural knowledge. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 82(1), 49-60
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Griffin, P. S. (1985). Teaching in an urban, multiracial physical education program: The power of context. *Quest*, 37(2), 154-165.
- Harrison Jr, L., Carson, R. L., & Burden Jr, J. (2010). Physical education teachers' cultural competency. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 29(2), 184-198.
- Hill, G. M., & Cleven, B. (2006). A comparison of students' choices of 9th grade physical education activities by ethnicity. *High School Journal*, 89(2), 16-23.
- Hoffman, J., & Pearson, P. (2000). Reading teacher education in the next millennium: What your grandmother's teacher didn't know that your granddaughter's teacher should. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(1), 28-44.
- Kim, H., Hannafin, M. J. (2007). Situated case-based knowledge: An emerging framework for prospective teaching learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 1838-1845.
- Kinchin, G. D., & O' Sullivan, M. (2003). Incidences of student support for and resistance to a curricular innovation in high school physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 22(3), 245-260.
- Laura, C. T. (2011). Reflections on the racial web of discipline. *Monthly Review*, July-August, 87-95
- Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics, and culture in everyday life*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McCaughtry, N. Barnard, S., Martin, J., Shen, B., & Kulinna, P. H. (2006). Teacher's perspectives on the challenges of teaching physical education in urban schools. The student emotional filter. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 77, 486-497.
- McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist*, 53, 185-204.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (2003). *Moving into the future: National standards for physical education* (2nd ed.). Reston, VA: Author.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Robbins, P., & Aydede, M. (2009). A short primer on situated cognition. In P. Robbins & M. Aydede (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of situated cognition* (pp. 3-10). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Skiba, R.J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C-G., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino Disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, 40(1), 85-107.
- Sparks, W., & Wayman, L. (1993). Multicultural understanding in physical education: A comparison of urban and rural perspectives. *The Physical Educator*, 50, 58-58.
- Sparks, W., Butt, K., & Pahnos, M. (1996). Multicultural education in physical education: A study of knowledges, attitudes and experiences. *The Physical Educator*, 53, 73-86.
- Stanley, L. S. (1996). The development and validation of an instrument to assess attitudes toward cultural diversity and pluralism among preservice physical educators. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 56, 891-897.
- Stuart, R. (2004). Twelve practical suggestions for achieving multicultural competence. *Professional Psychology, Research and Practice*, 35, 3-9.
- Tabb, J. K., & Joonkoo, Y. (2005). Physical educators' attitudes and knowledge about working with Mexican Americans. *ICHPER-SD Journal of Research*, 41(3), 16-21.
- Weick, K. (2009). Enacting an environment: The infrastructure of organizing. In R. Westwood and S. Clegg (Eds.), *Debating organization: Point-counterpoint in organizational studies*. London, UK: Blackwell.