

Yesterday, when I was young...: A comparative study into beginning and experienced Health and Physical Education teachers' attitudes to work

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Abstract

Beginning (n=22) and experienced (n=11) Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers were found to have different priorities, concerns and orientations to their work in a qualitative study on the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of HPE teachers from government and non-government schools. More specifically, factors such as the relative importance of home life, working with more academically able students, role models, students' well-being, autonomy and authority, and staff relationships will be compared from the different perspectives.

The analysis will borrow from a number of theoretical foundations including teacher socialization and Foucault's work on surveillance. Data suggests that experienced teachers are more satisfied with their work than beginning teachers. This raises questions with respect to: who enters the teaching profession? with what expectations? into what particular working conditions? to fulfill what goals?

"Yesterday, when I was young, the taste of life was sweet...

The words of this song would lead us to suggest that exuberance, discovery and expectation lie in the hands of beginning teachers. This paper will suggest otherwise. It will focus on the perspectives of experienced physical education teachers, all of whom have been teaching for more than 15 years, and most of whom are totally committed to their work and approach it with a great deal of enthusiasm. Their perspectives and working conditions contrast those of 22 beginning physical educators, over half of whom were intent on leaving the

teaching profession within five years.

The scant statistical information available on teacher attrition suggests that fifty percent or more of physical education teachers plan to leave the profession early in their careers. In a study by Carre et al., 1980 reported in Lawson (1983), 62% of secondary physical education teachers planned to leave the profession within five years of commencement. Evans and Williams (1989) projected that 40% of female and 80% of male physical education teachers were looking for work outside physical education. Macdonald, Hutchins and Madden (1994) reported that approximately 55% of the graduates from a university program over a period of five years had chosen to leave physical education teaching.

Data from an affiliated study of workplace satisfaction amongst 22 beginning physical education teachers suggested that issues which had a strong influence were the: status of the subject, nature of physical education teachers' work, degree of authority and autonomy within the school and the school system, balance between teachers' public and private lives, collegiality and staffroom culture, and interactions with students (Macdonald, 1995). It was concluded that these teachers' early phases of socialization reflected the trend of proletarianization rather than professionalization.

Shaw's (1987) model of professionalization within the socialization process outlines how knowledge, skills, and social and personal qualities are prerequisites for workplace autonomy which in turn safeguard the professionals' working conditions and freedom from close control. Rather than experiencing this process, most of the beginning teachers experienced some or all of the ill-effects of the division of labour and routinization of work, separation of conception and execution of tasks, increased controls, and overwhelming volume and intensification of work, factors indicative of proletarianization (Braverman, 1974; Densmore, 1987; Hargreaves, 1994).

Embedded in the proletarianization process of the beginning teachers' work was the blurring of their personal and professional identities. By positioning teachers' work in cultural and social contexts (Lawson & Stroot, 1993; Schempp & Graber, 1992), noting in particular the conditions associated with working in small towns, Foucauldian (1977) notions of surveillance emerged. Through both overt and covert surveillance and regulation, in line with the communities' expectations of what it means to be a physical education teacher, the teachers' behaviour in school plus their lifestyle and physicality were subject to social control (Macdonald & Kirk, in press).

Given these trends in beginning teachers' work, the conventional life cycle of a teacher as represented in the literature was questioned.

Huberman (1989) analysed the trends in the literature on teachers' career socialization upon entry to schools. After three years survival and discovery, and stabilization between four to six years, there follows a period of engagement and experimentation or, for some, self-doubt in the period of seven to 18 years teaching. Between 19 and 30 years teacher might experience serenity, or position themselves as distanced and conservative. Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985), also looking at the teacher's life cycle, did so using the teachers' age as points of reference. Until the age of 30 teachers engage in initial experiences to establish basic pedagogical skills, when at that point, many demonstrate a concern for their career, particularly men. Between the ages of 30 - 40 is a "settling down" phase when many teachers are aspiring to more senior positions while others are disillusioned with wavering commitment (p. 228). Between 40 and 50/55, following a possible "mid life crisis", some teachers may simply coast, while most are:

settling for what is; an increasingly parental role towards pupils, and now indeed younger teachers; a general recognition of their own knowledge and experience, qualifying them to be considered among the "ancients" of the school, staunch upholders of standards and tradition; and a relaxation, now they have reached this plateau, and are respected and proficient. (Sikes et al., 1985, p. 229)

In order to work within particular contexts and/or under particular conditions during their teaching careers, literature suggests that teachers' coping mechanisms come into play. Lacey (1977) identified three strategies: (a) strategic compliance in which the individual has

reservations but chooses to reflect privately; (b) internalised adjustment in which the individual conforms with the institutional constraints; (c) strategic redefinition in which the individual rejects the situation and actively tries to create change.

In taking action, Sikes et al. (1985) contrast private and public strategies. While public strategies refer to "those that involve a group of teachers acting together to gain their aims" (p.95), private strategies "are employed by individual teachers to gain their own ends or cope with whatever is in front of them" (p.72). Sikes et al. (1985) concluded that in the British context, teachers were increasingly willing to engage in public strategies, and that the strategies employed varied according to the historical conditions in which they found themselves together with their own phase in their career life cycle.

Method

Participants

Teachers approached to participate in this study were known to: (a) be

experienced teachers in that they had taught HPE for at least 15 years; (b) have taught across different school systems and in different geographic locations; (c) have had administrative responsibilities such as Head of Department or Subject Co-ordinator; and (d) represent male and female teachers working in different school systems. The decision to contact teachers of more than 15 years experience was drawn from literature which suggests that: (a) the median age for teachers is approximately 37 years (McKenzie, 1991), thereby putting the participants as older than the majority of their colleagues; (b) most teachers opportunities for promotion arise after 6 years of teaching (Maclean, 1992); and (c) that in the lifecycle of a teacher, between seven and 18 years of teaching there may be experimentation and activism (Huberman, 1989) and "calmer waters" for teachers after the age of 40 (Sikes et al., 1985, p. 229). Eighteen teachers accessible to the researcher were written to outlining the goals of the project and requesting an in depth interview. The 11 teachers who responded affirmatively are profiled as follows: seven males (four in state and three in independent schools) and four females (two in state and two in independent schools).

All the participants were known to the researcher through professional associations and school practicum supervision. Those who declined to be involved cited time as a barrier. The lower numbers of women are consistent with the state-wide percentages of women remaining in physical education teaching and holding administrative responsibilities. For example, state department of education statistics reveal that while female teachers constitute 43% of physical education teachers in secondary schools, they number only 13.5% of heads of department.

Data collection and analysis

Interviews with the participants took place in their homes or at their schools at times convenient for the participants. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews of approximately two hours duration. A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to guide the discussion (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The questions were derived from research on teachers' careers (e.g., Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1991; Maclean, 1992; Templin & Schempp, 1991) and beginning HPE teachers' experiences (e.g., Macdonald, 1995; Stroot, Faucette & Schwager, 1993; Williamson, 1993).

Interviews were audio-taped with permission from the teachers and transcribed for analysis. They proceeded in an open and seemingly honest manner. Content analysis proceeded through a process of coding, recoding and categorization by the researcher according to emerging dominant themes (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Pseudonyms have been used to ensure anonymity. Drafts of this paper will be returned to the

participants for checking and feedback as a means of establishing trustworthiness of interpretations. Also in the interpretation of data it was recognized that the participants' reflections were unique to their biography and the contexts in which they had worked and were currently working.

Subject Status

Subject status was an issue for the experienced teachers but their approach was different to the beginning teachers in that the experienced teachers used their seniority and influence to both address and try to alleviate any ill-effects of a lowly status. In this sense they were involved in continual strategic redefinition whereas the beginning teachers responded more so with strategic compliance (Lacey, 1977).

Some schools were confident of the support for and status of physical education, both in state high schools:

Frank: The support comes from the administration, the support in this school is unbelievable.

Steven: I think we're pretty well thought of here. We're a pretty high profile group within the school. And we get involved in other areas too. Margaret's involved in everything that bloody moves...

and in the private system:

Olivia: I was a new kid with a new headmistress and immediately was taken under the wing and I haven't left that position, which again puts me in a very strong position, it fluctuates but essentially I'm there.... We're perceived as just as important as any other subject ..., which is great, so you don't have that chip on the shoulder, which immediately puts you in a position of strength. You know you're not going around with your arm up and defending yourself all the time, you're getting on with the next thing, you're getting on with the next idea, you're getting on with the next promotion, you're getting on with the next success. So it's all kind of positive cyclical stuff.

Nevertheless, in some schools physical education was perceived to hold a lowly status in the eyes of the school community and students:

Michael: I've spent a lot of time in my career, and it's unfortunate that you've got to do it is this subject, showing other subject areas and teachers that you are a teacher, and as I said to the 12's "You're not jocks, you don't just go out and run and play games. That's not what the subject's about."

Anne: And also it's a lot easier teaching maths than it is even phys. ed. theory because students probably place more value on maths than

they do on phys. ed., and therefore they're easier to teach, they're easier to motivate. It's easier to get students to do their maths homework than it is to get them to do their health and phys. ed. homework....

All teachers, however, recognized that the status could be precarious and that they should remain vigilant:

Olivia: So I've probably got some fairly powerful allies outside the department.... And I think they've got to be cultivated, because otherwise, particularly with PE, you get swept under the carpet and if you don't have the ear your views aren't heard, the things you want to implement aren't listened to, you get the last piece of cake, and you don't have any influence, you don't have any pull with your staff. They've got to perceive you as a power-broker and that's important too.

Ian: Always had to fight (for recognition). But it's been funny, quite often at the end of the fight when things were starting to get better, I've often left.... When I left Gympie, they were building a gym as I was leaving..., but you know all that petitioning had gone on beforehand and P&C meetings and whatever. So there's always had to be a fight, yeah....

The standards of facilities and the improvement in facilities were important to the teachers as an indicator of status and where facilities were poor the teachers recalled campaigning in order for improvements to be made.

Anne: So if you look at a place like here..., we don't have a hall or anything like that ...

Lynn: Also in the time that I've been here we have gone from having two bitumen tennis netball courts and a little oval and a carpeted area we could sometimes use, to having a full sized gym, my own office, my own teaching classroom, a pool, and just recently two new courts and an oval. So all the way along, my physical surroundings that are so important in teaching phys. ed. have improved enormously.

Identification with teaching the "Board" tertiary-entrance subject Health and Physical Education was also seen to be important to the area's and teacher's status.

Lynn: It's (Health and Physical Education) gone from being 6 or 8 kids doing it... to two classes of 19 in year 11 and 12. So I think there's obviously been some sort of change in the school; in the hierarchy's attitude toward it as a subject which isn't a soft option which you do if you can't really find anything else to do.

Michael: What the senior "Board" course has allowed me to develop are

those academic teaching skills so that I can now sit in a meeting with every other subject and say well I'm teaching "compare and contrast" this way. I will have always done it, but I can talk the language to them educationally. It's not justifying that the subject exists, it's showing that we do those things in our subject area.

The beginning teachers also positioned the teaching of Board Health and Physical Education as a status issue. However, rather than feel comfortable about the university-entrance status and the discourses which accompany this, the beginning teachers were frustrated that the subject attracted lower academic achievers. Possible explanations for these differing perspectives are that the beginning teachers: (a) had no sense of development of the Health and Physical Education subject and the cognitive challenges it has introduced to the field over the last 23 years; and (b) have a strong sense of their own academic worth given their own high university entrance scores and thus feel frustrated by "their field" associated with some students of lower academic ability in the senior years.

While both beginning and experienced teachers understood that as teachers of the subject they could be subject to ridicule, the groups seemed to cope differently. Experienced teachers were able to rationalize and dismiss the provocation with a level of self-confidence:

Frank: We've always been looked on as the dumb jock. People have that concept now about us, they've got no understanding of our subject, and again it might be my fault for not actually going out and publicising what we do. But they've got no understanding of what we do, the same as I've got no real understanding of what happens in year 9 maths, but they believe us to be sports teachers, we believe them to be number counting. I mean it's not an issue.

Ian: I think phys eds have a certain culture which sets them apart from other staff members. They often cop a lot of, not so much rubbish, but a lot of jibes about being rougher or rough around the edges or less educated or, you know, sweaty and things like that... The jock thing, I've never had a chip about that, the thing of "Okay, you're a phys. ed., you haven't got any brains." I know some phys. ed.s who get very upset about that, but it's never worried me.

It may be that maturity and self-confidence dilutes the experienced teachers' irritation but perhaps, more importantly, it is the belief in the importance of their work with students that provides a strong foundation for their work in physical education.

Nature of the Work

Routine and repetitive work has been cited as reasons for discontent amongst physical educators (O'Sullivan, 1989; Sparkes, Templin & Schempp, 1993; Templin, 1989). Beginning and experienced teachers recognized the potential for teaching physical education to be boring, but Lynn, an experienced teacher rationalized:

And yeh... there are days when it's incredibly boring at school for me because ... I could count up and say this is the 730th biomechanics lesson... but hey... I don't think there's any job that anybody does that doesn't have its boring times.

However, of the experienced teachers, only one felt they were bored with their work. The remainder listed the love of physical activity, working with their students, the intellectual stimulation of teaching the "Board" course, and their extra-curricula and administrative roles as challenging foci. The enjoyment and appreciation of students and their achievements was a strong message emanating from the experienced teachers which was not strong amongst beginning teachers.

Anne:I basically like teaching, I like the interaction with students and I love sport. That's probably why I went into it and despite all the disadvantages that seem to be increasing as years go by, I still enjoy what I am doing.

James:The longer I've gone on the more I've enjoyed it... Love it! I love anything to do with kids and activity, and I get great pleasure just out of... getting kids doing things and teaching them just to move. I mean that's just the way it is.

Michael:Farm kids... that was an experience I still cherish as the highlight of my teaching time because they were children who loved physical activity and that was a part of their life and linked with the

sporting activity as well which was community based. The results that we achieved there from our phys. ed. program...

Michael continued:

I enjoy the satisfaction of seeing a smile on any kid's face when they achieve something... I believe that the subject intrinsically develops human nature in people through the physical activity, the actual self esteem... And that gives you great rewards to see students developing as people.

Ted:I get most enjoyment..., not so much from the phys. ed. teaching these days, more from the interaction with the kids in a pastoral care way as a house master.

Steven:I love teaching phys ed. Out there in the open, getting skin cancer, with kids who generally speaking want to be out there too. And you can build on that enthusiasm. But I just like being with kids I

think. I like playing with kids. And basically that's very often what we do. We do it in a more sophisticated way and we give it terminology and we have outcomes and we've got to have reasons for doing it. Looking at what the kids are supposed to be learning more than what I'm supposed to be teaching.

Kaye: I said to myself what do I enjoy most and, for me the longer I've been teaching the more I think I discovered I really enjoy being with the kids.... I'm still involved in administrative work when it comes to organising championships and things like that, and I don't mind that part, but I really enjoy the teaching and the coaching of course.

Kaye went on to articulate the important social role of teaching and meeting the needs of individual students:

I really think that your influence as a teacher is something that you really develop a belief in and you can channel your energies into making sure that what you are doing is a very, very important... It's a job and it's a career, but it's a very, very important link in our society. We all go to school and the things we learn from school play a powerful influence on us... for the rest of our lives.... It's all (these) challenges that to me mean teaching is never boring. There are always kids with something about them, either because they're gifted and talented or they come from the most horrendous backgrounds.

While beginning teachers usually mentioned the satisfaction of working with students, their focus was not so strong. They appeared not to "see" individual differences and needs to the extent of experienced teachers and therefore did not have the same challenges.

Alongside the enjoyment the experienced teachers derived from working with the general student body was the intellectual challenge of working with the continually evolving "Board" Health and Physical Education subject.

Ian: I'm very comfortable, I find the job challenging, I don't feel I'm in a rut. Phys. ed.'s changing so much that at the moment I'm not bored with it and there is so much going on. There's so much reading to do, and the nature of the course is changing so much that I find it very exciting, and I feel that I'm learning all the time.... I think the "Board" is what is moving forward at the greatest rate into what I'm enjoying at the moment, and I think if we lost that ("Board" HPE) the bottom would fall out of phys. ed.. I know I think I'd suffer and I would enjoy it less.

James: The part that I've found most rewarding is teaching the 11's and

12's because you're teaching at a higher level. I think I find that rewarding. In the secondary school when "Board" HPE was brought in, I

though it was a bit of a breath of fresh air, and found that I've had to change the whole time with that, I find that challenging. My main disappointment was that I really didn't keep up my reading of journals.... I think you need that intellectual challenge, and I've found that by being on the SAC (central "Board" committee for Health and Physical Education) you're keeping abreast of what's happening. You can be innovative and you can sort of also set a standard and show other schools the sorts of things that can happen.

Ted, as with several of the teachers, recognized the need for intellectual challenge to remain motivated.

Ted:I was forced to adapt my teaching. I still continually change it to address the higher order process skills. There are times when I find it difficult to do but the academic level that's required I've found challenging and I think that's good, I think you do need the challenge.

James:I have a fear of getting very stayed in what I do, one of my biggest fears is if I'm teaching the same stuff year after year and don't find it stimulating to me, the more I repeat stuff the more I leave stuff out. In every school I've been at I've had to re-write or write new programs and that's actually been good for me because I've had to re-learn and that also keeps me sort of involved I think.

Beginning teachers also spoke of a "fear" when they had "everything under control" but in contrast to experienced teachers by virtue of: (a) their junior status; and (b) the demands of detailed lesson planning they were not in the position to teach the rewarding "Board" Health and Physical Education nor become involved with committee work associated with the subject.

However, as with the beginning teachers, the experienced teachers were also looking to other aspects of schooling which they would find challenging and worthwhile.

Cam:When I look at in more detail, if it's not a change within my own teaching approach, it would be a change in something within my involvement in the school that would maintain the interest.

Kaye:If I was teaching straight core phys. ed. and nothing else, I think I'd get bored. You need to have your own intellectual challenges and you can get them from being involved in more than one teaching area and being involved in the school, in the whole school community, not just arrive at school every day and see yourself doing one thing and going home in the afternoon thank you very much.

Some of the pressures or negative aspects to the teachers' work revolved around the pressure of time in conjunction with their multiple roles and this concern was also shared by the beginning teachers.

James: I think it would be more rewarding if I really did have time to prepare my actual lessons properly.

Olivia: A bit more time to reflect, time to be able to sit back and say, "Okay, hang on, I'm going to have time out here. Let's just unpack what we did and what was good about it and what was bad about it. Now let's try and reconstruct it...."

Cam: To keep up with things and make sure you're going in the right direction and make sure that everything's happening the way you want it

to, it takes a lot more effort and a lot more time which I find very hard to find, with a young family. It's not easy finding the time when you need it.

Ian: Deadlines I suppose, unnecessary things are put on. I think teachers are being asked to do more and more every year, little incidental jobs that make the job a lot harder, time management wise than 10 years ago.... just the administration and keeping records and keeping assessment things and attendance procedures, all these little things that were less important 10 years ago and more important today.

However, Frank, the experienced teacher who was dissatisfied, despite being involved in major curriculum development projects, was bored.

Guy: I have been applying (for Deputy Principal jobs) ever since the day I was appointed at this school.... I feel that... I'm bored (and in) the tasks that I do, I don't feel challenged. When I was promoted in '85 it was my ninth year. Nothing has changed. The only thing that has changed in this position is obviously the curriculum in the phys. ed.. Everything else is the same. I mean once you establish a routine for things like getting "Board" matters out of the way it's just a process. It's there.

Frank's outlook resounded with many of the beginning physical educators although the time frames are very different. It is as though the beginning teachers had a sense of urgency, or perhaps impatience, with their work and the system in which they work. For Frank, the frustration was a lack of vertical career mobility into his specialized field, outdoor education, rather than generalized frustration with teachers' work.

Power

Power, whether it be in terms of authority or influence, was very important to both beginning and experienced teachers. In the work with beginning teachers it was argued that a perceived lack of power over their working lives was a great source of dissatisfaction (Macdonald, 1995). Beginning teachers spoke of the education system being "top down

to the max." (Doug), their appointments to schools as "just a numbers game" (Sally), and having a school administration "who have to do it their way" (Russell). For the experienced teachers, nine of whom were Heads of Department, power to make decisions and shape the "team" and the direction of their area was extremely important to them. As with beginning teachers, they were irritated by the bureaucratization of schooling and the intensification of their work. However, the nature of power varied according to their individual school contexts although a pattern can be seen separating issues for government and non-government schools.

Criticism of the systemic constraints and impositions was common to both beginning and experienced teachers, particularly those in the state schooling system.

Kaye: The morale in teaching is I think, as a generalisation... very low at the moment, and I think a lot of that has to do with what's been happening from the top down, in the public system this is.

Anne: So I've teaching 15 years then, (and) I suppose the biggest one (change) is the amount of work that doesn't directly relate to the interaction with your students, to actually teaching. There seems to be so many other things you need to do and it seems to be increasing every year. Things that have been imposed on us from above that require

change... and a lot of time and effort on our part (and) we don't necessarily see a purpose in doing it.

Frank and Michael also doubted the validity of many of systemic requirements that were being imposed.

Frank: There's so many things coming through. There's a lot of cyclical changes and we're forever being given new initiatives to follow..., but they're all the same ideas.... Things like the safety manual, I mean you have a written document that basically says you can't do things the way you would like to do them because somebody somewhere has made a mistake, and you lose a lot of what I would call your professional judgement. Now you're not given that, it's taken away from you, you have to now teach in a certain way in a certain structured style..., even though you know you could do it just as well in a different way and that it will be just as safe.

Michael: At this stage the older you get, the more you want to leave teaching (but it) is not because it's teaching itself, it's the external factors that are now built into the system... such as the policy making, decision making. It's the actual controlling factors of the (state) departmental structure.... In the last 2 to 3 years life has changed dramatically for teaching.... And I thought why should I go home and spend until 11 o'clock at night doing organisational paperwork,

policy making, writing, sitting on a computer? Wouldn't it be just great to walk out and teach?

Michael: We're moving away from "we are teachers and we're teaching students"... to being (within) this bureaucratic management very much robots. You're being told do this do that, policies on this and policies on that, policies on social justice and inclusive curriculum ascertainment. All these things which five to six years ago the teacher just walked out and taught. Now in their mind are all these things about legal liabilities and legislation. Am I doing this right? Can I do this and I'm legally covered by that? That's all stressful upon a person.

Added to this frustration driven by policy initiatives, Frank perceived that state system also constrained program opportunities.

Frank: For example compare us to a top of the range private school. I mean their scope for development in their area is just unbelievable, whereas I feel ours is so narrow, and we can only change and challenge within the constraints we've been given, and they're set constraints, they're givens - the length of the period, the number of students you get, the number of teachers you have, the resources, the budget you get, the building you have, the oval you get, they're all givens, and you have to develop within that.

On several occasions the experienced and beginning teachers used exactly the same language (e.g. "not because of the teaching itself... it's the external factors"). Both groups felt powerless within and imposed upon by the state bureaucracy. However, Kaye's perspective on this issue should be mentioned. She experienced the changes to and devolution in policy as empowering in her school context rather than constraining:

Kaye: I enjoy the challenge of the different sorts of issues that have come up in education that have changed over 19 years... They're challenges for you in terms of having an input into the curriculum, but the challenges of a school now where you're much more in charge of your own destiny as a school can make you a much more vibrant kind of a

staff member I guess, and I enjoy all of that.

An added concern for the beginning teachers was that they felt themselves as pawns in a bureaucratic transfer system which took little notice of their private lives and aspirations, and rendered any continuity in living and working conditions serendipitous. As an experienced teacher recognized the potential negative effects of the transfer system:

Kaye: That's got to affect the way people work. It's got to affect their

performance at work if they're unsure all the time of where their future is going to be. "Where will I be this time next year?"

while in contrast, Ian was quite pragmatic:

Ian: I wouldn't like to (be transferred), but as far as I'm concerned you make your own friends and you start again and that's the way you go about it. I mean if you get transferred you get transferred.

The experienced teachers, all of whom had worked or were working in the state system, spent their early years teaching when teacher and student numbers were lower and the teachers were personally known to the Physical Education Branch which was responsible for teacher appointments. As experienced teachers they now have a choice with any potential transfer and as Heads of Department apply for vacancies only in which they are interested. Michael explained that:

In those days you could do things like talk to Phys. Ed. Branch and say to George Hay, "I'll teach in Brisbane but after my two years or after we're married, I'm willing to go anywhere in Queensland." And that was a personal thing. And so I had that arrangement.

Teachers in the non-government school systems appreciated that they made made choices for their employment and they valued this.

Lynn: See I'm in the enviable position of having chosen my job and I choose to stay there, whereas probably 80% of the people in phys. ed. jobs have been sent and haven't made any choices.... If I put myself at the local high school I'm sure that I wouldn't have the same job satisfaction. I certainly wouldn't have the same rewards and I know I wouldn't have the same conditions.

Nevertheless, the potential to choose the degree of involvement in school life was seen as a freedom for those in the state system.

Anne: While you're in a state school you would basically choose how much of a commitment you'd have to extracurricular activities, and I imagine in the private school that wouldn't be always a case of choosing, you would probably be expected to do....

There were also incidents and structures which curtailed the authority of the experienced teachers in the non-government schools and that caused them irritation.

James: Initially when I came here I said I wanted more authority to be able to run my own program without being told from the head, the administration here, what to do or how to do it. And I had a few arguments on how to structure timetables and what I wanted in courses and things like that. So I would have liked to have been more independent. And maybe that's a private school thing, I don't know.

Olivia: I suppose a critical time has come this year with the new

building (and building manager) and being disempowered and that's been an interesting experience because I've had to work through losing power that I've come to accept for the last 18 years and just expect and realise that it's all very transient, as in any bureaucracy I suppose, and try and deal with that.

Heads of Departments generally expressed enormous satisfaction with their decision-making roles and had very clear ideas on the nature and mechanisms of their authority and influence.

Olivia: I enjoy autonomy, I enjoy being in control, I enjoy being able to teach my staff things and impart my experiences to them. I enjoy watching them grow, get great delight out of that. I enjoy being able to make policies and implementing those policies and seeing things come to fruition. I enjoy having ideas that can be put into motion because you don't have to go through any other way, you can just do it.

I like I suppose being in control, I'm that sort of person. However having said that, I like protecting my staff and nurturing them and looking after them, solving their problems, which to some extent's created problems for me this year because I haven't been able to solve problems for them this year and they can't work out why, because I have been able to up to this point and it kills me.

Frank: Oh undoubtedly I enjoy it (HOD status). It's being able to have the time to interact with people, being made to make decisions that require being made... and then stand by them.

Cam: Maybe it's having some sort of power as well that makes you feel as though it's worthwhile, although normally I wouldn't say I'd be the sort of person who was interested in that. But being able to have a say and seeing the decisions means something makes a difference.

Ian: I enjoy the responsibility, but I don't operate my staffroom as me as boss. It's sort of a collegial thing where we discuss something and quite often I get outvoted and I go their way... I don't see it as an authority thing at all. I see it as more a responsibility thing and managing people, not being in charge of them dictating what they do.

These teachers clearly "got a buzz" out of their decision-making capacity. It was not unlike the reflections of some of the beginning teachers who were, in a sense, one person departments in isolated schools. Most teachers resented when school or system level bureaucracy impinged on their work.

Heads of Department were very sensitive to the need for all teachers to maintain some authority and aimed to run their departments accordingly.

Olivia: So I think ownership is very important, and particularly for teachers who are so often disempowered, I mean even down to the fact that they fight over their carpark, I mean I always find that extraordinary, I mean I've done it myself... because you have so few things that are perceived as yours. It's all so transitory....

Professional and Personal Space

While teaching has generally been considered as a potentially private and isolated undertaking within the bounds of an individual teacher's classroom, it can be argued that much of the work of physical educators is open to public scrutiny. Furthermore, in particular localities, such as small communities, teachers private lives can equally be the subject of scrutiny by the school administration and the general public. Macdonald and Kirk (in press) use the Foucauldian notion of

surveillance, to describe the situation of beginning physical educators who, through the symbolic categories of sport and health, were the objects of both subtle and overt gaze. The experienced teachers in this study were not located in the small communities (usually because such communities have school populations which do not carry Heads of Department positions) but nevertheless also spoke of the pressures of separating their professional and private lives and those arising from the public and symbolic nature of their work.

James: I actually say that to my phys. ed. staff that, "We're in public all the time and whether you like it or not we're constantly criticised, probably unfairly, because we are in the public eye, teachers, students, whatever see us all the time. Just be aware of it, things are going to happen, but you've got to be aware of it, and you've got to wear it." But I think that makes us just a bit more accountable. I don't think it's a big problem.

Michael: I've told young teachers before when you're out on the oval teaching they're (classroom teachers) standing in their buildings looking at you..., "Oh there's so and so, look what they're doing, they're just down there playing a game. Look at me I'm in here having to work." So I've spent a lot of time developing my teaching skills and showing other people that I'm a teacher.

However, the appraisal of their teaching was not such an issue as was the pressure of conforming to the image of a physical education teacher, or rather, adopting a social identity consistent with the public category of "physical education teacher" (Macdonald & Kirk, in press). As with the beginning teachers, the response to this pressure was different for men and women.

The experienced male teachers were concerned that they exude high

levels of energy that being a physical educator was seen to require.

James: There are physical challenges now I think. Like I've just been on camp for three days sort of non-stop and you know that catches up with you and you've got to front up tomorrow and be bright and breezy, and I think phys. ed teachers have to be... not a false energetic type person, but someone who is very enthusiastic. I think kids have to see a model who has enthusiasm and a bit of brightness about them, that sort of stuff. I'm not saying that that comes from me all the time, but that's part of the job I think, energy.

Ted: You have to be a little bit extrovert to be a successful teacher I think. Even if you don't have the profile of extroversion I think you've got to be able to act as though you're extrovert. You've got to be outward going, you've got to have patience, you've got to be well organised.

Three experienced female physical educators also talked about the image of the physical educator but did so in relation to their physical appearance and competencies. The female beginning teachers found that their physical appearance became an object for sexist discussion and gaze and they found this oppressive. The experienced teachers were clearly wrestling with internalized beliefs about an appropriate image in keeping with dominant masculine and healthist notions of appearance and skill as they aged.

Lynn: Not a stress, but I'm sure that's part of the job, yes. I feel that more so than anyone you're a role model and I think there is that you're on show.

Olivia: I perceive it's probably more acceptable (for men to be health and PE teachers at 60), and that's pretty terrible isn't it, I mean it's linked up with that whole female image thing...

I think it's self-imposed pressure to some extent. My perception of what a phys. ed. person should be is someone who is vital, not necessarily trim, taught, and terrific, but at least who appears to be an exponent of the principles and philosophies that they're espousing.

Kaye also talked of retiring when:

When I feel that I can't... get in there and be a really good role model for them as a phys. ed. teacher, which doesn't mean I demonstrate everything or anything like that, but for the kids sake that I wasn't... 45 and looked 60 and... terribly out of condition (and) no connection whatsoever with a "PE teacher's" image. I don't know what that image should be, but I mean it oughtn't be on the other end of the spectrum from the body beautiful, you know what I mean.

The surveillance of female beginning teachers was manifest more overtly in public comments about their behaviour and dress, whereas experienced teachers had internalized the social identity they believed they should fulfill. This clearly has strong implications for the question of why so few female Heads of Department.

Another factor which potentially shapes the women's work were their family commitments. Women in particular, if they choose to stay teaching, have dual careers of paid employment in teaching and unpaid domestic commitments (Evans & Williams, 1989; Sikes et al., 1985). Two of the four women had children and had found different support systems which allowed them to continue with their careers. However, as Olivia mentions shortly, the tensions for women with dual careers are ever present.

The division between the personal and the social, and the private and professional, was particularly difficult for teachers working in non-government schools and, in many respects, it was not unlike the beginning teachers living in state government accommodation adjacent to their schools. Olivia, who lived on the premises of a private school, remarked that her private and professional life was:

so merged because of the way we live..., I mean you don't know where one starts and the other one ends... I think for your mental health it can be (difficult)... Living on the premises it's more of a problem than it would normally be if you lived off the premises... The bad things are when your 7 year old says you're not going to another meeting or you're always cross with us mummy, why is that? I mean that's where I have problems. And (my husband) reminding me that (my) first commitment's to our family. You know, little guilt trips like, "You're looking after everyone else's child (but) you're not going to see your own child play her own sport."

John, also working in a private school, was aware of demands upon his time. After an angry parent phoned him at home, "the Headmaster virtually said I was wrong and teachers are on duty 24 hours a day...." Another teacher in a similar school context said, "I think I enjoy this place, it's part of me now."

There was also blurring of the private and the professional by some teachers in state high schools.

Steven: I go home on Friday afternoons and just stay at home all weekend

and read and play with the kids. I think about the school. I'm up here 2 or 3 times a weekend. And I just feel I can't get away from the place.

One teacher could recall the pressure of having his private life

observed when living as a teacher in a small community, as did the beginning teachers.

Frank:When I was in Roma I wasn't happy to go shopping because you bump into the kids, you bump into parents all the time, and you're on show all the time. They might not consider it to be, but I felt I was.

Since that appointment Frank has strategically, "lived deliberately miles away from school, so where possible I live out of the community where I teach. To me that's the only solution." Other teachers were careful to reserve their private time and had developed strategies to do so which was not so consciously articulated by the beginning teachers. For John, he could "escape at home." Others talked of keeping their professional life "in perspective":

Michael:Kingston taught me to switch off. You have to be able to switch off. In other words when you walk out... you (might) subconsciously think about (work) but you don't go and carry it with you.

Lynn:This is my whole adage in life. My job's great, I've done it for years, I obviously enjoy it, but it's not my whole life.

and setting themselves reasonable goals:

Ian:My philosophy is if I don't get it done, the school will still go on tomorrow. The kids aren't going to not be given a senior certificate if I don't make a deadline, as long as you've got confidence that if you work to your ability to get it done you will, and that if you work to your ability and you don't get it done it's not the end of the world, there's always tomorrow.

Macdonald (1995), Sikes et al. (1985) and Sparkes and Templin (1993) found evidence that all teachers' professional and personal lives were very much entwined due to factors such as their geographical location, commitment to an image of their role, and identification with the students.

However, patterns of difference emerge with respect to the teachers' sex, the location of their school, and the coping mechanisms employed.

Collegiality

Beginning and experienced teachers all expressed the centrality of collegial relationships in their workplace satisfaction. However, for many of the beginning teachers who were in one or two person departments in non-metropolitan schools, the potential for collegiality and support from a department with a critical mass was not part of their experience. Given their isolation, neither did the beginning teachers experience significant role models who were frequently mentioned by the experienced teachers as decisive in their socialization. Several teachers clearly mentioned role models in

response to questions about critical incidents in their careers.

Michael: My advisory teacher at the time was XXX who was still teaching and I suppose you do get images of people and you saw a role that he was playing and he was very important to me because he was always visiting me. He had ideas, he was holding meetings, I could talk to somebody as a primary phys. ed.. He was on the circuit running around

schools, and I thought that looked a pretty good job....

Anne: I just think I was so lucky, because after the three years that I was there (first placement), I left the place... thinking I know everything, and (with) the right attitude as well.... He was just an ideal model to spend your first three years teaching with. And the programs and the facilities were very good there, so we did everything. It was a good learning experience.

James: I had also some very good role models when I first started teaching.... When I first came across him he was about 35 and he was what I saw as being a really, really good subject master at the time. Very protective, very supportive, very encouraging, never really sort of put you down on your teaching, always sort of building you up, but at the same time he was always there.

Olivia: I suppose XXX probably is a person who affected by career in the sense of he really loved what he did and he was very tough and he was very strict and probably a lot of people might say that he was very tunnel visioned and probably a fascist. I probably modelled my teaching technique a bit on him!

These role models provided for the teachers guidance in teaching strategies, interactions with students, organizational processes, setting standards, building teams, and viable career paths. few of the beginning teachers talked about their colleagues in this way, primarily because of their isolation. This factor alone raises questions about the placement of beginning teachers in isolated or small schools.

Furthermore, the value of working with a group of teachers came through in experienced teachers' discussions of those environments which they believed were conducive to professional satisfaction and growth.

Anne: Where everyone talks to each other, which happens most of the times in the staffrooms I've been in, and where they share resources and they share the workload, and they have an opportunity, which is good in this staffroom, although it doesn't always work, to socialise as well to get away from the work.

Frank: I enjoy the fact that we are organised as a group, I really enjoy the teamwork that we've developed, so as a Head of Department I enjoy

the teamwork that we've generated amongst ourselves.... I don't consider myself to have authority, I consider that they look to me for decisions, they recognise me as the Head of Department, but I don't work a pyramid.... If there's a problem we address it in these rooms, we get rid of the problem as soon as it occurs. We meet for morning tea, we team teach, we keep in touch, we communicate. That's what makes our environment here so pleasant.

Olivia:For a staff environment from an inter-personal basis... I think there's got to be open communication, I think they've got to be given ownership, they've got to be given praise, a lot of praise, they've got to be given support.

In describing the nature of their collegiality, some teachers made reference to the "different" climate of physical education staffrooms when compared to other subject areas. This was generally considered a positive attribute.

Ian: So I definitely believe phys. ed.s have a different culture than most other staff rooms and yet most people when they come to our staffroom come there quite often because they enjoy the atmosphere

there.

Frank:A lot of the staff come in here at lunch time and say I really enjoy coming down into your staff room because there seems to be a vibe or an energy that comes out.

However, one experienced female teacher alluded to the potential for this climate to be uncomfortable or threatening.

Kaye:So you've got to have thick skin in some ways, but you've also got to be a very strong character and particularly for a woman in a male-dominated staffroom. I think you can be very easily overshadowed by men, the phys. ed. men. A lot of them, too many of them, I think have always had this super-confident image. You know they're good at something themselves.

Of great concern to the young women was that they experienced within the "energetic" staffrooms harassment of themselves and some students in line with dominant masculine sexuality and physicality. While no experienced teachers mentioned harassment, and all enjoyed collegial relationships, the study of staffroom climate and productive environments for all physical educators deserves closer attention.

Conclusion

How is it that the experienced teachers had not only remained teaching for more than fifteen years, but had retained or, in some cases,

developed their enthusiasm and commitment? If they had been placed in the same contexts as the beginning teachers who participated in the study, would they have had similar reactions? Some reflections of the experienced teachers suggest not for two reasons. Firstly, Steven suggests that current beginning physical education teachers may not necessarily have the same motivation as in the past:

Phys. ed. people are going into phys. ed. because of TE scores, whereas we went into phys. ed. because we really wanted to do phys. ed.. We really wanted to teach phys. ed.. Whereas I tend to think that lots of kids these days who really want to teach phys. ed. don't get in.

and secondly, as suggested by Michael, they have unrealistic expectations:

Young ones today walk in (and) they expect senior classes straight off, 1st year 2nd year outs. In those days it didn't work that way. It was very much the pecking order, the rookie started at the bottom and you had to work your way to the top.

However, the weight of evidence suggests that it is detrimental for young teachers to be sent to isolated, rural and provincial schools where they are unlikely to meet appropriate role models or experience the growth which can occur in a collaborative staffroom. The implications of this involve an overhaul of the state system's appointment and transfer process! Such an overhaul could also involve the re-establishment of a "branch" for each secondary subject area which is better able to respond to the appointment and professional needs and interests of its teachers.

In the experienced teachers' careers and current working conditions, their ability to make decisions and to see these through was paramount. This factor was a great source of frustration for the beginning teachers. In terms of the professionalization/proletarianization tension, the experienced teachers, despite irritation with the

intensification of their work, were able to work as "professionals". They recognized the importance of authority and autonomy and, in turn, were sensitive to these in the ways they managed their staff as Heads of Department.

As reported by Rosenholtz (1989), the beginning teachers engaged in negative teacher talk which focussed upon the perceived overwhelming contextual constraints (e.g. transfer system, lack of support for the subject) transferring the focus of attention beyond themselves. In many instances their coping reflected strategic compliance or internalized adjustment, whereas the experienced teachers had the authority to redefine the nature of their work or context. However, these strategies were reversed in the case of personal surveillance. It was the

experienced teachers who had internalized expectations for how they should act and look, while the beginning teachers strove to resist the dominant images and expectations.

For teacher educators, challenging questions relate to our educative processes with the pre-service teachers. Are the "right" students coming into physical education teacher education? Can we better prepare students for the "realities" of beginning teaching by changing their orientations and expectations? Should we? Can we encourage the students to develop a love of teaching akin to the experienced teachers in this study? Can we assist in making "life sweet" for the beginning teachers or is the maturation process inevitable?

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