



Creating a Culture of Meaningful Physical Education: A Secondary School Community of Practice

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Author Biographies

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences of secondary physical education teachers participating in a community of practice (CoP) focused on implementing a Meaningful PE approach in rural Alberta. We used case study methodology of the CoP to examine the experiences of the teachers as they explored implementing the features of a Meaningful PE approach. Qualitative data were gathered (e.g. interviews, field notes) and analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. Data analysis produced three themes: 'context matters'; 'oh, no, this is cool. Mr. Teacher knows what he's doing'; and 'The best PD is committed people working together'. These illustrate the value of the CoP for teachers implementing meaningful pedagogical approaches as well as the need for contextual flexibility. The results are impactful for professional development and implementation of quality PE in secondary schools.

Keywords: meaningful physical education, secondary education, teachers

Résumé

Cette recherche avait pour objectif d'examiner les expériences des enseignants en éducation physique au secondaire participant à une communauté de pratique (CdP) axée sur la mise en œuvre d'une approche d'éducation physique significative (Meaningful PE) dans les régions rurales de l'Alberta. Nous avons utilisé une méthodologie d'étude de cas de la CdP pour analyser les expériences des enseignants dans l'exploration des caractéristiques d'une approche d'éducation physique significative. Des données qualitatives ont été recueillies (p. ex. entrevues, notes de terrain) et analysées afin de mieux comprendre les expériences des participants. L'analyse des données a fait émerger trois thèmes : « Le contexte est important », « Oh, c'est cool. Monsieur le prof sait ce qu'il fait », et « La meilleure formation continue, c'est des gens engagés qui travaillent ensemble ». Ces thèmes illustrent la valeur de la CdP pour les enseignants qui mettent en œuvre des approches pédagogiques significatives, ainsi que la nécessité d'une flexibilité contextuelle. Les résultats sont significatifs pour le développement professionnel et l'implantation d'un programme d'éducation physique de qualité dans les écoles secondaires.

Mots-clés: éducation physique significative, enseignement secondaire, enseignants

Introduction

An enduring goal of physical education (PE) is to impart a lifelong commitment to physical activity (Kilborn, et al., 2015). The development of the Meaningful PE framework (Fletcher, et al., 2021; Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2021) seeks to prioritize meaningfulness in PE (Harding-Kuriger, 2021) as a means to develop lifelong movers. A meta-analysis of over 50 empirical peer reviewed research articles identified six initial features of meaningfulness in PE and youth sport (Beni et al., 2017): fun, improved motor competence, social interaction, choice, delight, and personally relevant learning. In addition to these features for teachers to consider when prioritizing meaningful experiences for students (Fletcher, et al., 2021; Vasily, et al., 2021) Fletcher and Ní Chróinín (2021) have developed concept-based pedagogical principles. The first is the democratic principle as applied to both teaching and professional learning. The democratic principle honours both autonomy and inclusivity by fostering an environment where students have voice and choice in their PE activities (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2021) and where teachers have autonomy to pursue authentic professional development (i.e. relevant to their lived experiences and context). The second principle is reflection, which applies to both students and teachers. Reflection enables students and teachers to “capture the continuity (past-present-future)” (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2021, p. 1) of their learning and teaching experiences respectively. Furthermore, when done in community - teachers and students or teachers in a Community of Practice (CoP - Armour, et al., 2017) - reflections provide examples of teaching and learning that generate Meaningful PE experiences (Fletcher et al., 2021), as well as those that do *not*.

The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences of secondary physical education teachers focused on implementing a Meaningful PE approach (Fletcher, et al., 2021). We wanted to explore how PE teachers could operationalize the Meaningful PE framework within a CoP and what their experiences and learnings might be with such support. Our research is intended to provide insight into the structure, experiences and results of such a CoP so that others may learn and benefit for application to their own context. As such, we modeled the CoP after Fletcher, et al.'s. (2018) work on teacher educators' enactment of pedagogies that prioritized learning about Meaningful PE experiences with their pre-service teachers. Using that article as a template, the research team recognized that our teacher participants' pedagogical decision making was a result of a combination of their knowledge, goals, values, and teaching context (Fletcher et al., 2018). Therefore, our CoP focused on observing, supporting, and reflecting upon five pedagogies: 1) Meaningful participation should be explicitly prioritized in planning, teaching, and assessing their teaching experiences; 2) Pedagogies that support meaningful participation were modeled and co-taught by the teachers and researchers; 3) Teacher participants were supported via the CoP and by administrators to engage with their preferred professional development; 4) Lessons were framed using Beni, et al.'s (2017) and Kretchmar's (2006) features of Meaningful PE instruction: fun, improved motor competence, personally relevant learning, social interaction, and 'just right' challenge; and 5) Teacher participants were supported and encouraged to reflect on their experiences of teaching for meaningfulness (Fletcher, et al., 2018).

Theoretical Perspective

Our research is underpinned by John Dewey's (1938) theory of experience. “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). Dewey's theory consists of two principles: interaction and continuity. To live is to interact and take part in interactions between oneself and the environment (Dewey, 1938). As such, the interactions between oneself and the environment

creates a situation. In our overall research project, the individual teachers were interacting with their school environment, with a primary focus on their students experiencing the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al., 2017). The secondary interactions were between the research team and the teachers in the CoP (Armour et al., 2017) with a focus on understanding experiences within the CoP.

If an interaction was not agreeable (miseducative), it would be less likely to influence later growth. Educative experiences lead to growth and a desire for similar experiences (Dewey, 1938). In the context of teaching Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021) a physical educator takes into consideration their teaching past, their teaching philosophy, and their desire to create Meaningful PE experiences for their individual students. The teacher can imagine which physical equipment and materials to use during lessons and which location will be best suited for learning. The lesson activities and learning environment are tailored to respect the needs of the students and the goal of Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021). Similarly, the CoP members consider personal areas of expertise and the needs of the teachers in order to co-create the topics of the CoP meetings and which pedagogical principles will be of focus during the Meaningful PE lesson planning and implementation. Finally, using student and teacher reflection, an experience can be deemed more or less educative when the whole picture is considered: individuals, the external conditions, and the experience's influence on future behaviors.

To ensure adequate adaptation, Dewey makes it very clear that context counts. Teachers must be aware of the social, political, cultural, and institutional factors that are shaping the situations in which they teach (Dewey, 1938) in the same way that we as CoP facilitators needed to be aware of the context of the teachers we were working with. "The principle of interaction makes it clear that failure of adaptation of material to needs and capacities of individuals may cause an experience to be non-educative quite as much as failure of an individual to adapt [themselves] to the material" (Dewey, 1938, p. 47). In summary, the individual teacher is a given, they come as they are. Objective factors are those that can be changed to accommodate the teachers' desire for creating educative experiences. Together, they form an interaction - the first of the two principles that can be used to discern between educative and miseducative experiences.

The second principle is continuity: the consideration of our past, present, and future teaching experiences (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2021). A movement opportunity during which students are both engaged and able to connect the activity to their own personal lives is more likely to be sought independently in the future. Dewey's principle of continuity assesses lived experiences. A reflexive educator will evaluate their past experiences and take them into consideration during the 'in the moment' teaching experiences. Then upon reflection, they will further connect the experience with new knowledge and prior wisdom which will influence the next lived lesson. "This information processing forms a constant loop in which new information is interpreted in the context of existing information, and revisions to the state of knowledge concerning a particular phenomenon are made when necessary" (Castellano, 2000, p. 23). As part of our case study, we collected data that would provide the contextually lived experiences of the teachers in the CoP which was analyzed thematically and theoretically.

Methodology

The research project began with a Twitter interaction as a rural secondary school administrator was looking for assistance to increase student participation and engagement in PE. Initially, we met with the administrator and the PE staff (n=7) for a professional development day focused on Meaningful PE. We introduced the framework through resources available on the

[Learning about Meaningful PE](#) website; worked through pedagogical cases; draft unit and lesson plans and discussed how we might progress further together. Eventually, we decided to set up a CoP (Armour, et al., 2017) consisting of the two full time PE teachers, their administrator and two researchers to explore the framework for Meaningful PE together. A detailed research project description was shared in person and via letter with all participants and the school district. Researchers apply study cases to gain insight about experiences within specific contexts (Yin, 2009). We set out to understand the experiences of teachers' enacting their vision of Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021) within a CoP located within the unique context of a rural Alberta secondary school. Together, we began to explore the features of Meaningful PE (Beni et al., 2017) and learned alongside the teachers as they began to implement the features and the framework in their contexts. As part of the case study, the research team visited the school frequently over a two year time period to engage with the CoP, listen and observe intentional and unintentional moments of Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021). Over this time, we collected multiple forms of data including teacher journals, researcher observations, teacher interviews as well as student interviews, focus groups and exit tickets. In addition, reflective notes were kept by the research team during each school visit and CoP (Armour et al., 2017). As an introduction to the larger study, this paper focuses only on the interviews we conducted with the two teachers and the administrator over the course of the two-year project. These educators were motivated to improve their practice alongside the research team within the CoP including looking for novel and meaningful activities for students. Both teacher participants embraced the concept of lifelong learning as professionals and embraced the autonomy and time to collaborate with us. To build relationships with the two junior high PE teachers we spent time in their classes observing, co-teaching and inquiring into the teachers' goals for the CoP. A comprehensive case study paper inclusive of all data collected as well as a paper focusing on student data are forthcoming.

Interviews

Patton (2002) describes the purpose of interviewing as allowing "us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341). Interviews occurred six times throughout the two years and were guided by semi-structured interview questions. The first set of interviews occurred in the Fall of Year 1, the second set of interviews occurred immediately after a teacher had taught an intentional Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021) lesson in Year 1, and the third set of interviews occurred in the Spring of Year 1. The same schedule was used during the second year of the study. The administrator was not part of the CoP interviews or observations and was interviewed separately by one of the researchers in the Fall of Year 1 and in the Spring at the end of Year 2. We've included the administrator's interviews as part of the data analysis to help define the particular context that the CoP occurred in and to add perspective from their viewpoint. Interviews ranged from 40-80 minutes, were audio recorded, transcribed for analysis and shared with participants.

Analysis

An application of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) provided a phased approach to developing themes from the teachers' experiences with the CoP. Thematic analysis also provided the flexibility to apply Dewey's theoretical framework of experience (1938) and Fletcher and Ní Chróinín's (2021) concept-based pedagogical principles to the inductively developed themes to further describe the experiences of the teachers within the CoP. We conducted a thematic analysis of the data following processes outlined in Braun & Clarke's (2022) step-by-step guide. Through data familiarisation, we read, listened, re-read, and re-listened to the audio transcripts of the interviews. Familiarisation notes included electronic notes via Google or

Word documents or handwritten notes. Google sheets was then used for inductive coding and applying codes for both semantic (more obvious) and latent (needing uncovering or revealing) meanings of specific data excerpts (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The initial thematic analysis developed three overarching themes: 1) the school community (sub-themes: administrator support, school community expectations of PE teachers, & teacher-student relationships); 2) the Meaningful PE features; and 3) the CoP itself (sub-themes: the value of support; the contextual adaptation of the pedagogical principles & Meaningful PE features; & the importance of reflexive, reflective, and communal reflection). Recognizing these were far too numerous and we were risking underdeveloped analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) a second round of thematic development occurred with the results shared below.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we report the teachers' experiences as they engaged in a CoP (Armour, et al., 2017) with a focus on implementing the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al., 2017) and pedagogies (Fletcher and Ní Chróinín, 2021) over a two-year period in a variety of PE units (e.g. cross country running and rugby). A discussion of literature relevant to each theme is embedded in this section for clarity and flow. The findings highlight the key relationships contributing to experiences within a CoP focused on a Meaningful PE approach (Fletcher et al., 2021). The three themes are "*Context matters*"; "*Oh, no, this is cool. Mr. Teacher knows what he's doing*"; and "*The best PD is committed people working together*".

Context Matters

The teachers and administrator were looking for ways to increase student buy-in, participation, and motivation. In a context of a rural Alberta secondary school with 300 students to consider over grades seven, eight and nine, finding time to adequately plan intentionally for meaning was challenging. The teachers were supported in that their administrators encouraged them to take time to plan during our CoP meetings (monthly over the two-year project):

Give people the opportunity and if they run with it great, but you always have to support. You always have to say yes. But if you say yes once, well? If they say, 'we want to go to Red Deer. And we want to go see what those guys are doing down there because we heard of this really cool idea in the meeting we had yesterday'. Well, then you've got to say yes (Administrator, Interview 1).

The administrator recognized how well the PE teachers worked together and wanted to provide inclusive and autonomous opportunities for professional growth and reflection. This perspective aligns with the pedagogical principle of democratic practice (Fletcher and Ní Chróinín, 2021) in that the administrator listened to their teachers and what they needed for professional growth. Their support for the project, but more importantly PE as an important part of the school community, demonstrates value, leading to time commitments and support. In other words, the administrator recognized the unique needs of the community, the complexity of professional learning and let their teachers decide how to best meet those challenges (Armour, et al., 2017).

As our knowledge and experience of the school grew over the study, we began to see two major contextual challenges emerge: time and athletics. We could sense the frustration in our teacher participants:

Time to plan is the only thing that is difficult, right. Time to reflect and discuss. Teacher 1 and I work together in all three of the classes we're trying to use it [Meaningful PE] in.

But we really never have a ton of time to talk about it or reflect on it afterwards. Sometimes we do. When we do, it's valuable" (Teacher 2, Interview 3).

The recognition of the importance of reflective practice (Fletcher and Ní Chróinín, 2021), coupled in the time restraints provide a valuable lesson. Although their study involved pre-service teachers, Ní Chróinín et al. (2018) also highlighted the importance of reflective practice, "...the value of reflection activities as an important pedagogy of meaningful physical education was made explicit (through the research). (p. 130)

Both teacher participants were also coaches for junior high and high school athletics. In the early Fall they would be away most Fridays for cross-country meets. During mid to late fall both were running practices and attending games with their volleyball teams. Just before Christmas break, basketball teams were being created, practices occurred, and games were being held. The new year brought the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and so badminton, curling, softball, and track and field events were canceled. That being said, it became clear that the hours immediately after school were spent with the student athletic teams and evenings were rightfully spent with their families. This left little time for pedagogical reflection and planning.

We don't have time to debrief at all. At the end of the day, we're both coaching and we've both got families, right? So, I guess that would be the biggest struggle for me. And I know how valuable the reflection is. It's something I haven't done hardly ever in my practice but I do enjoy it. I like it. I like talking about it [pedagogy] with people and bouncing ideas off of people when we're planning. But time is an issue. (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

A lack of time for reflection is not an uncommon challenge (Rodgers, 2002). Physical educators are typically coaches in their school communities and may also have families (Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie, 2017; Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie, 2022). This creates tension between pedagogical planning for physical education and athletics.

We both coach high school teams, so we're gone every Friday for the first three months. Not that it should play a part, but it does. And our after-school teams and our athletic program is why, in physed, we try to follow the timeline for the sports season so that we can try and draw kids into those sports. (Teacher 2, Interview 1)

As Armour et al. (2015) recognize, "Effective CPD [continuous professional development], therefore, is about supporting teachers to learn as they gain experience over time and through different contemporary times, so they can support their young (and by definition contemporary) learners" (p. 808). The competition for time between school sport and physical education continues to be a complex challenge to be solved (Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie, 2022). Our participants found that the time and space provided by the CoP (and supported by their administrator) helped them to maintain or even increase the focus on PE planning and reflection.

Both physical educators were working hard to balance the time dedicated to PE instruction and time that was needed to support athletic events. However, despite their best efforts, students seemed to be continuing to lose motivation and participation was dropping:

...by the time it seems they get to grade 9, they're like, 'Oh (groan)'. And then high school, we hardly have any kids come out for [PE or sports], right. So, I don't know if it's just the clientele we have or if it's just, we've got to just change gears I'm not sure. So, my interest is, how can we get them to buy in, pique their interest, get them excited about it? (Teacher 1, Interview 1)

Throughout the observation days and collaboration days, a clear context began to emerge. Teacher 2 explained:

An activity will work really well with one class and then the next group it doesn't work at all. And I try to talk about it with them, and all they say is, 'Well, why do we have to do this? Why can't we just play a game?' 'Because I know exactly how the game's going to go.' So, it's trying to change that attitude before we start. (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

Teacher 1 echoed this sentiment:

I'd like to kind of get a new angle, get some new ideas, making it more meaningful. I mean, over my 23 years of teaching, it used to be that that was kids' favorite subject, and that's not necessarily the case anymore. I see our society kind of getting a little more lethargic and not as interested, not as competitive, so I'm looking for some ways to maybe tap into making it meaningful for them, so that instead of me telling them what to do and stuff like that, maybe they find that intrinsic motivation to actually try themselves, increase their interest, increase their buy in. What's a different way, a different approach? (Interview 1)

The teachers were looking for ways in their particular context to shift their relationships with students and the students' relationships with PE and athletics. As such, these two teachers epitomized the following statement from Armour et al. (2015). "...effective PE-CPD is that which nurtures and protects the career-long growth of professional practitioners as learners who are, in turn, able to nurture the growth of pupils in PE" (p. 808). As can be clearly seen by the quote from Teacher 1 above, the purpose of professional growth activities is to support students to meet the purpose(s) of PE (Kilborn, et al., 2016). For our participants, that purpose was beginning to be met through a focus on Meaningful PE within the CoP. Linked to this idea, and our second theme, is an examination of the teachers' experiences of implementing the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al., 2017) with their junior high students.

Oh, No, This is Cool. Mr. Teacher Knows What He's Doing

Following intentional Meaningful PE classes, the teachers would ask the students to reflect on the lesson and their experiences both in conversations and/or in PE journals/ exit tickets. Here, we will use the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al, 2017) to provide an outline for our findings in this theme so as to illustrate how the features were embedded into the work of the CoP.

Social Interactions

Connections with peers and teachers were identified as the primary factor contributing to meaningfulness for students (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Harding-Kuriger, 2021). Overall, social elements were viewed positively by students (Beni et al., 2017; Ní Chróinín et al., 2018; Smith & Parr, 2007). Teacher participants really focused on peer interactions based on the groupings of students during class.

We talked about why we group them the way we do and what happens when one team's way better than another and that that's not really fun for anybody. And they were starting to figure it out I think. And they could create their own groups, more or less. Or at least they complained a lot less when they and their friends were separated. (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

Candid conversations with students also provided an avenue for social interactions between students and teachers:

We were being intentional about these things [groupings] but you're also sharing those intentions with the kids. So, you're supporting their autonomy but you're providing those social groupings based on skill. The social interaction is connected to their motor competence is what I'm seeing. (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

These types of conversations and joint decision making are excellent examples of both democratic and reflective pedagogies in action (Fletcher and Ní Chróinín, 2021). Further conversations throughout the Meaningful PE lessons focused on students' articulating their experiences.

Some kids said 'it was actually pretty good. I didn't think it was going to be. But it was actually kind of fun'. And that would be kind of the general summary of it. Most kids didn't think they'd like it and then they found out at the end, whatever way we did it worked for them. (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

One further notable interaction between the teachers and students revolved around PE clothing, "we also don't harp on them to change anymore. We figured that's maybe not worth it, and that's been better". (Teacher 2, Final Interview)

Personally Relevant Learning

The social interactions between teachers and students can provide guidance and scaffolding so that students become active agents in their learning (Ní Chróinín et al., 2018) which leads to personally relevant learning. As an example, Steph Beni (in Fletcher, et al., (2021, Chapter 4) shares the interactions that occurred in her jump rope unit that began with free time to practice with a partner or group (social interaction) and resulted in students asking parents to purchase jump ropes to use at home (personally relevant learning). As Teacher 2 noted "everything depends on the kid and we want to avoid humiliation and create a safe space (Interview 1). Teacher 1 felt that *it's important to instill the value of activity and give some different options, and different things within our community to expose to. So, we have, like, jazzercise, and we've had people come in and do stuff. We've got pickleball in our area or curling, and swimming, so we try to access those facilities within our community so that there's something afterwards. (Teacher 1, Interview 1)*

Both teachers taught using the democratic principles of inclusivity and autonomy (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2021). To ensure they were delivering personally relevant content they began to implement regular reflections during and after PE.

Google forms are good, because then they-- They're doing that at home or away from you, away from their peers. They can be honest, and they can kind of give some honest feedback, and then, if you want to follow it up with a closer conversation with them you can. (Teacher 1, Final Interview)

Using exit tickets and google form reflections students shared their thoughts on content and experiences they found to be most relevant and fun.

Fun

As the teachers read and considered the reflective feedback from the students' experiences of the Meaningful PE lessons, they began to see a change in their own conceptualization of fun:

We used to maybe expect that [PE] would just be fun. Right? They would have fun no matter what, so I started worrying about that a little bit less, and more - if that's a byproduct, then great....but it was disappointing when they'd have negative attitudes about whatever activity it is that we were doing or just did. (Teacher 2, Interview 1)

During a subsequent CoP meeting, planning occurred to shift an upcoming basketball unit to a more focused approach on zone games:

We were a little frustrated with basketball and how basketball was going. I mean, the same idea, kids either hate it or they love it. And the kids that love it, they almost seem like they're selfish about how they go about playing and it doesn't make it any fun for anybody else, right? So, we changed to—territory [zone] games. Instead of throwing the

ball at the basket, you've got to hit this pylon with a beanbag on it. Then you slowly introduce rules. We were moving to open spaces. It was a deconstructed basketball unit. And kids had way more fun with that, and even the basketball players had fun. And then you say, 'Okay. Now, the next day, you can either do the same game or we can do basketball on half-court'. (Teacher 1 - Interview 3)

Following the lesson focused on zone games and fun, teacher 2 shared a student's thoughts and their teaching reflection.

Student's comment: "Hey, I didn't think I was going to like this unit but I did,"

Teacher's reflection: "To me, that's indicative of a bit of a culture shift, right? So, they're not so much following the hive brain but they're able to go, "Oh, no, this is cool. Mr.

Teacher knows what he's doing. This is good". (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

Student voice, inclusivity, and autonomy became an important consideration for the teachers' planning to account for their context and the particular students in their PE classes.

Just Right Challenge & Improved Motor Competence

Both teachers were intentionally planning their lessons with the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al., 2017) and engaging in further considerations in the moment of implementation. They recognized that participation "depends on the kid.... and if they aren't great at any [particular skill], then they're not motivated to do anything well" (Teacher 2, Interview 5). As a result, they shifted to several small-sided defense-type games or open-space games where it was two on two, and students had to guard their chosen partner.

Now, instead of being on a team with their partner, students were playing against their chosen partner. This shift leveled the playing field a little bit because the best two players are going to choose each other as partners. We say, 'Okay. Well, now you're playing against each other. So you've got to guard each other'. And then the groups were even. (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

Both sides were able to have fun and be optimally challenged. To continue to optimally challenge students and improve their motor competence, a series of football lessons and student questions were designed. The unit preamble included the questions: What are your expectations of football? Are you looking forward to a unit in football? Why or why not?

Lots of kids, we found, wrote that they were looking forward to it and then they wrote why. And generally, it was because, 'I'm competitive. Because I think I'm good at it'. Or it was, 'I'm not looking forward to this because I can't throw. I can't catch. I'm scared of the ball. People will yell at me. People will get mad at me because I'm doing it wrong'.

The next class, we told them, 'This is what people said. This is what they're worried about. This is what they're looking forward to.' And then we had them self-group themselves, I guess, based on where they match-up, whether they want to be really competitive and get into more of an actual game faster or whether they want to just do lots of drills with catching and throwing. Then we went into passing routes and why we run them and how to play defense. And we did little three-person groups, with one quarterback, one receiver, and one defender to try and stop them. We also explained why we do this. Lots of slow, slow progressions in groups that they chose and felt comfortable with. (Teacher 2, Interview 3)

Allowing students to group themselves based on their level of ability really helped the teachers to feel successful in increasing student participation during the football unit. They were also very reflexive when getting student feedback and implementing the feedback in their PE lessons, leading to more educative experiences for students. The time we took as a CoP to understand the

student reflections and to plan accordingly really contributed to the successful implementation of the Meaningful PE features.

While the Meaningful PE approach (Fletcher et al., 2021) is not intended as a panacea for all miseducative experiences, it does provide significant adaptability to a variety of contexts. The approach has been used in elementary (Beni, et al., 2019; Ní Chróinín, et al., 2021; Vasily, et al., 2021), secondary (Harding-Kuriger, 2021; Walseth, et al., 2018), and postsecondary settings (Fletcher, et al., 2018; Fletcher, et al., 2020; Ní Chróinín, et al., 2019). The democratic pedagogical principles encourage autonomy for learners and a commitment to inclusivity. These principles were applied to student learning during our research project and to teacher professional development. Teachers were using the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al, 2017) to guide their decision making before, during, and after lessons which highlighted the importance of relationships between teachers and their students.

When you're thinking about it [planning] and you're trying to analyze whether the class has been meaningful, I like having the chance to converse with the average kid in PE and the less motivated kids and actually dive into why and how it can be made it better for them. (Teacher 2, Final Interview)

There was a vested interest in speaking with all students to build relationships and identify physical activity ideas that were relevant and enjoyable.

The Best PD is Committed People Working Together

Mandatory district and school wide PD initiatives can send a clear message to educators: 'You cannot be trusted to choose the context specific PD that will best meet your needs and those of your students'. Messages such as these repeal the self-determination, autonomy and motivation for teachers to continue to follow best practices in their subject areas (Vaughn & Parsons, 2012). In this study, resultant changes in lesson plans and intentional teaching were a direct result of teacher participation in a democratic and reflective CoP (Armour, et al., 2017). The teacher participants had been provided the autonomy to pursue PD in physical education that was relevant to their professional growth. The researchers were able to examine the teacher's experiences through the democratic and reflective principles (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2021). This case study supported the democratic principles being applied to a CoP (Armour, et al., 2017) focused on Meaningful PE (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín) experiences.

Both the administrator and the teachers emphasized the importance of support for autonomous PD. It was important to the team that best practices were easily accessible and that their teachers had the chance to collaborate and reflect. According to the administrator "the best PD is committed people working together to make things better. And I think the people that sign up for a CoP always have like a million ideas" (Administrator, Final interview). With the ongoing support from administrators, teacher participants expressed their interest in a variety of PD formats. Teacher 2 made clear: "if it's going to take you 20 hours to try to figure out what the hell's going on, you're just going to tune out, right" (Final Interview). Consequently, we provided a variety of learning formats. Teacher 1 enjoyed weekly CoP emails that contained one focused reading to reflect upon (Final Interview). Podcasts were also a welcome change to traditional PD, "For example the one talking about changing for Phys Ed and wasting time in the change room. The podcasts were good because sometimes, you're busy cooking stuff or whatever, and you can have that playing or what have you" (Teacher 1, Final Interview). Blog posts were also an accessible format for disseminating information and building discussion. Ultimately, it was the CoP itself that was the favored PD format:

Well, I like that you guys come out, and keep coming out. I think the day that

you guys stop coming is going to be scary, because--? Because I don't know if it's going to stick. Like I said, until there's almost a full-scale change in what we do, I think it needs to be, 'Okay, what are we doing this time? How are we doing differently in this unit?' Otherwise, our badminton and our basketball unit are going to be the same-old, same-old. (Teacher 2, Final Interview)

The time we had in the CoP for collaboration and the opportunity to role model really helped to build a trusting relationship with our participants. Teacher 1 explained:

I like how both of you are just so easy to relate to, and I know there was one day that Jodi was coming out and I was in a panic. I'm like, 'I'm not prepared for you to come. I'm like, Oh no, I don't know'. Then she says 'Oh, don't worry. Don't worry.' And she really, she just taught the class herself. And being able to just have a conversation and dialogue about the connections that we're making works well. (Final Interview)

The teachers were provided the opportunity for autonomy and inclusivity in their PD. Not all original CoP members chose to have us attend their classes and collaborate with them when planning. Those who did choose to pursue Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021) goals shared with us their vision for teaching and asked for resources or assistance in specific areas of PE. We did not arrive with a set agenda for the research, it evolved organically based on the student and teacher needs and interests.

The Meaningful PE features (Beni et al, 2017) and pedagogical principles (Fletcher et al., 2021) were concomitantly applied with the students and the teachers. Teachers were using the features to guide their planning and teaching. As reflective researchers we began to see that the features were aligning with our CoP as well. The CoP (Armour, et al., 2017) was built upon social interactions beginning with a Twitter post and morphing into a face-to-face collaborative project in rural Alberta. The teacher participants also valued the conversations before, during, and after observation days. These interactions influenced resources sharing and further conversations so that any support provided to the teachers was personally relevant.

Teacher 1 expressed an interest in using the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU, Griffin & Butler, 2010) for some of their games units. As a result, we provided them with several TGfU resources and collaboratively planned using the TGfU model alongside the features. As a CoP team, co-planning enabled support for our teacher participants in a curricular area of their choice and ensured that it was a 'just right' challenge for the teacher in their pedagogy. Through collaboration and support, the CoP (Armour, et al., 2017) was a contributor to the teacher participants' improved teaching competence.

As a direct result of the CoP, teacher participants were demonstrating introspective reflexive practice during their teaching when they would pause to acknowledge Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021) moments. This took the form of conversations with students about the features during activities and also with each other and the research team. There were also instances when they changed activities based on student interest and participation in a conscious effort to focus on one of the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al, 2017). Retrospective moments provided the time and space to evaluate their lesson and the student reactions to their intentional teaching for meaningfulness. Both teachers described the importance of both reflective and reflexive practice in their interviews, however the CoP (Armour, et al., 2017) community reflections were found to be the most valuable. Dewey knew that sharing one's reflections unveils the educative and miseducative aspects of the experience. "The experience has to be formulated in order to be communicated," he writes. Then continues,

To formulate requires getting outside of the experience, seeing it as another would see it,

considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form that [they] can appreciate its meaning. . . . One has to assimilate, imaginatively, some-thing of another's experience in order to tell [them] intelligently of one's own experience. . . . A [person] really living alone mentally as well as physically would have little or no occasion to reflect upon [their] past experience to extract its net meaning! (1916/1944, p. 6)

The self-discipline required for the kind of reflection that Dewey advocates, especially given the overwhelming demands of a teacher's day, is difficult to sustain alone. When one is accountable to a group, one feels a responsibility toward others that is more compelling than the responsibility we feel to only ourselves. The value of a CoP (Armour, et al., 2017) that follows democratic and reflective pedagogical principles is more likely to ensure the continued educative experiences of teachers experimenting with Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021) thus presenting further opportunities for students to experience inclusive, autonomous, and relevant PE classes. Overall, we found that when the teachers were given the time and space to be reflective (Fletcher and Ní Chróinín, 2021) and they were able to partake in inclusive and autonomous professional development through the CoP, they described educative experiences when implementing the Meaningful PE features.

Limitations

Our study was located in a single rural secondary school and involved work with three educators and two researchers in a CoP. The integral role of the researchers and close connections to the school were both a benefit and a limitation. We question the sustainability of such a CoP over time (as seen also in a teacher quote above) given the time commitments, travel requirements and embedded nature of the work. However, we do wonder if some sort of 'online support group (CoP) could provide long lasting connections after the intensive nature of such a project.

Conclusion

Engaging in a CoP to explore the implementation of Meaningful PE experiences in a secondary school was overall a positive and growth experience for the participants. Relationships were key. Between the teachers and their school surroundings (context); between teachers and their students (pedagogical principles and the features of Meaningful PE) and; between the teachers themselves as they engaged in autonomous and democratic reflective practice/ growth. When teachers were in a supportive school environment that encouraged personally relevant professional development within a CoP (Armour, et al., 2017), teachers experienced growth in implementing the Meaningful PE approach (Fletcher et al., 2021) as evidenced by the findings. The relationship between teachers and students were enhanced as they discussed the focus on the Meaningful PE features (Beni et al., 2017), developed a shared language and reflected upon resultant PE lessons that were contextually specific to students' needs and interests. Lastly, both introspective and retrospective reflections strengthened the teacher's commitment to Meaningful PE experiences for students and their desire to continue to follow a Meaningful PE (Fletcher et al., 2021) approach.

This study is important for several reasons. First, it demonstrates the efficacy of the CoP approach for a specific implementation of a pedagogical practice – the Meaningful PE framework (Fletcher, et al., 2021). The design and function of this particular, context focused, collaborative community can serve as a guide for others (teachers, administrators and researchers) seeking to

implement a pedagogical innovation (Vasily, et al. 2021). The CoP itself illustrated the value of the democratic principles of autonomy and reflection in a teacher's ability to choose professional development and co-create professional learning that acknowledges complexity, challenge and context (Armour, et al., 2017). Second, the research also exposed critical challenges around the time demands on PE teachers with athletic commitments perhaps being the most poignant example that takes time away from pedagogical planning and reflection. PE teachers face tremendous challenges in a demanding environment – often without the support of peers or administration. As such, administrators, researchers, and fellow educators need to remember the commitment, time, and dedication that PE teachers devote to their students & student - athletes and take into consideration the cultural conditions which potentially undermine teachers' autonomy and motivation to pursue meaningful and relevant professional development.

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