



Meaningful PE as a Source of Legitimation for Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs

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Abstract

Background: Teaching physical education is thoughtful, complex work, and requires teachers to draw from varied and extensive funds of knowledge (e.g. content, pedagogy, children, communities), experience, and their beliefs. However, much of teachers' knowledge is tacit: expressing the knowledge and beliefs underlying these thoughts is notoriously difficult to articulate and make explicit (Freeman, 1993; Sternberg, 1999). The purpose of this research is to examine the ways that Meaningful PE supports teachers in articulating their knowledge and beliefs about teaching physical education. Meaningful PE is a pedagogical framework where teachers use the meaningfulness of students' experiences as the main filter for their decision-making. Teachers use democratic and reflective pedagogies and develop a shared language of meaningfulness with students (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2022).

Methodology: A sample of teachers ($n = 10$) from Ontario and Alberta participated in this research. Participants have learned about and used Meaningful PE for between two and seven years. Data included individual semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, teaching observations, podcasts, and blog posts. Data were analyzed deductively, with concepts related to teachers' knowledge guiding coding and thematizing.

Results: Many participants felt that Meaningful PE provided a language and set of conceptual tools that they felt were previously elusive; this language helped them describe their practice, while also legitimizing their beliefs and practical (tacit) knowledge of teaching. Some participants claimed that they had valued the principles of meaningfulness throughout their careers but struggled to enact these values and articulate them in a coherent way that was backed by broader schemes and theories.

Significance: Meaningful PE supported teachers in articulating their knowledge of teaching and beliefs coherently, and enacting these in practice. The research highlights the personal and professional value of teachers having coherent frames of reference for their teaching.

Keywords: physical education; longitudinal; enactment; tacit knowledge



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