

Physical Education Teacher Candidates' Journey: Before, During, and After Practicum

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine perceptions and experiences of nine physical education teacher candidates during their student teaching practicum. The constructivism theory provided the framework to observe how teacher candidates construct new ideas based upon their past and current knowledge. **Method:** This study methodology followed a basic qualitative research design as an interest in how an individual constructs reality while interacting with social factors. Semi-structured interviews conducted before, during, and after the practicum were the primary data sources. Daily teacher candidate reflections and practicum supervisor evaluations were used as secondary data sources. **Results:** The results indicate that, in addition to their hands-on experiences, the teacher candidates felt prepared to teach with increased competency due in part to the constructive and specific feedback received from their practicum supervisors. In addition, conversations (through formal and informal mentoring) with practicum supervisors about job search and interview techniques helped teacher candidates to gain a greater understanding of the employment process. **Conclusion:** This article offers practical suggestions for physical education teacher education (PETE) programs to help their teacher candidates develop teaching competency before, during, and after the student-teaching practicum experience.

Keywords: physical education, student teacher triad, teaching training, building competency, constructivism theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The constructivism theory provides a useful theoretical lens to observe how teacher candidates make decisions during their student-teaching practicum, apply knowledge, and teach lessons based on their own beliefs and teaching philosophy (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Elbaz, 1981; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Larsson, 1987). The main tenet of constructivism theory is that learning is an active process in which the learner constructs new ideas based on current and past knowledge (Brandon & All, 2010; Geary, 1995). Brandon and All's (2010) view of constructivism theory is that teacher candidates are the creators of their own teaching philosophies and knowledge. Within this view, facilitators (i.e., practicum supervisors) only get involved when needed (Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004; Knowles, 1979). For example, teacher candidates may engage in an active dialogue with practicum supervisors (i.e., cooperating teacher and faculty supervisor) to self-reflect and discover their own teaching philosophy and principles (Brandon & All, 2010). Consequently, the practicum supervisors' role is to have a high level of expertise, tolerance, and openness to different views of each teacher candidate's reality and perspective depending on their background and personal characteristics (Tomljenovic & Vorkapic, 2020).

Krahenbuhl (2016) acknowledges that constructivism is not a unified theory. Piaget believed collaboration is key for the individual to find the authentic voice to solve problems (as cited in Schunk, 2012). Vygotsky (1978) believed without collaboration the individual does not experience cognitive development. Therefore, collaboration and social interaction lead to learning and cognitive development. Hence, while there are many variants, the view of constructivism theory in this study is that teacher candidates are learners who engage in reflective practice, self-critique, self-direction, critical thinking, and linking of concepts learned in previous teacher preparation courses and during the student teaching experience.

Through the student teaching experience, and as part of this reflective process, teacher candidates have the opportunity to practice the art of teaching before becoming in-service teachers (Kasanda, 1995). Depending on the teacher preparation program or higher education institution, the practicum experience can be conducted in multiple forms or structures (Perry, 2004). Whatever form or structure the teacher preparation program institution uses, the intent of the practicum is to provide the teacher candidate with the opportunity to integrate teaching methods and practical knowledge learned in the field (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). Moreover, the practicum allows teacher candidates to apply the theories and strategies learned, actively engage in the profession, and begin to view themselves as educators (Hixon & So,

2009; Leko & Brownell, 2011). Traditionally, during the practicum experience, teacher candidates are supported by their cooperating teachers and faculty supervisors who offer feedback, co-planning, and opportunities of practice and reflection; all while the teacher candidate develops and refines teaching behaviors and skills (Goodnough et al., 2009; Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011).

The relationships that exist within and between the teacher candidate, university supervisor, and cooperating teacher are referred to as the student teacher triad (Yee, 1967). With the help of these professionals, teacher candidates are able to understand the art of teaching including an understanding and application of the various nuances of the profession along with pedagogy strategies that work best for each individual teacher and classroom environment (Cuenca, 2010). In order to understand and refine teaching strategies, Siedentop and Tannehill (2002) note that it is helpful for teacher candidates to have a receptive attitude when receiving feedback and assistance from supervisors. With this, quality feedback from supervisors helps teacher candidates reflect on the practicum experience (King, 2008). For example, classroom management, discipline, and learning activities are a few of the areas that practicum supervisors have found to focus on when providing quality feedback (González-Toro et al., 2020). On the contrary, inadequate or no feedback at all may prevent teacher candidates from developing reflective practice skills needed for professional growth (González-Toro et al., 2020).

Atay (2007) suggested faculty and administrators within teacher preparation programs carefully select the mentors or supervisors for each teacher candidate. Oftentimes the cooperating teacher or faculty supervisor serve as important role models for teacher candidates (Kiggundu & Niyimuli, 2009; Marais & Meier, 2004). However, and unfortunately, some teacher candidates may feel dissatisfied with the relationship between supervisor and teacher candidate (Kiggundu & Niyimuli, 2009). As a result, the teacher candidate may then have a negative and/or unsatisfactory practicum experience (Marais & Meier, 2004). It is therefore recommended that faculty supervisors and cooperating teachers take time to reflect upon their own interests and passions for teaching physical education, review their performance as supervisors and role models, and look for ways to further improve the overall quality of the experience within physical education practicum (González-Toro et al., 2020). For example, problems of competence may stem from lacking the skills to successfully achieve a particular task. Supervisors can help teacher candidates master the pedagogical skills needed to teach, select lesson plans (planned activities) in which the teacher candidate is already skilled (i.e., that they are comfortable teaching), and focus primarily on setting task-oriented goals to help the

student-teacher progress and build confidence (while also building competence) (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007; Yost, 2006). In other words, through their instruction and feedback, create a mastery-climate in which teacher candidates build competence, confidence, and motivation.

Besides the teacher candidates' backgrounds and their experiences in method courses, which are part of acculturation socialization, teacher candidates reformed their occupational socialization about the physical education profession (Ferry, 2018). Subsequently, teacher candidates would go to a dialectical process of the hands-on experience between what they learned from the method courses and the fieldwork experience, which is the professional socialization phase of occupational socialization (Lawson, 1983; Schempp & Graber, 1992). Therefore, research has shown that the practicum experience, program supervisors, and supervisors' philosophies had the great influence on the occupational socialization of teacher candidates (Adamikis & Zounhia, 2016; Flory & Burns, 2017) (as cited in Zhang, 2022).

Practicum supervisors are facilitators who guide and provide emotional support to the teacher candidate during the practicum experience (Beck & Konsik, 2002). Mozen (2005) stated one of the responsibilities of the supervisor is to help teacher candidates develop effective behavior management plans and to clarify the expectations for the practicum experience (Ediger, 2009). According to Caires and Almeida (2007), critical roles of the supervisor are to (a) offer support to the teacher candidate, (b) facilitate the transitions that occur during practicum, (c) conduct observations, (d) evaluate, and (f) provide feedback through conferences. The benefit of conducting research in this area is to better understand the perceptions and expectations of teacher candidates during the practicum experience.

2. METHODS

This research was part of a larger study that analyzed the perceptions and expectations of physical education teacher candidates during their student teaching practicum. As the study developed, the teacher candidates' perceptions before, during and after the practicum became clearly apparent, overwhelming, and worth reporting. Followed a research design based on Merriam (2009), who presented basic qualitative research as an interest in how an individual constructs reality while interacting with social factors.

2.1 Participants and Setting

This study was conducted at a private college in the Northeast United States with institutional review approval. In the last semester of the physical

education teacher education (PETE) program, teacher candidates were required to complete their practicum experience for a minimum of 14 weeks. The first 7 weeks consisted of teaching at an elementary school, and the second 7 weeks at a secondary school. Given to the study purpose, the researcher collected data the first 7 weeks of the practicum (elementary level).

The nine teacher candidates had a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 in professional coursework, passed the state teacher tests required for licensure, and completed the pre-practicum experience with grades of 'B' or better. Prior to being placed for a full semester practicum, all teacher candidates were required to demonstrate their potential to teach through pre-practicum experiences in a public school.

Each teacher candidate was supervised by a full-time or adjunct college/university faculty member and worked under the guidance of a state certified physical educator (i.e., the cooperating teacher). The faculty supervisor was responsible for observing the teacher candidate a minimum of three times at the elementary school. For inclusion in the study, all participating cooperating teachers and faculty supervisors were familiar with the requirements of the Office of Educator Preparation at the designated institution. The current study aimed to determine how teacher candidates perceived their journey before, during, and after student teaching practicum.

2.2 Data Collection

In the present study, the researcher collected data via three semi-structured interviews throughout the seven weeks. May (2002) suggested interviews need to guide the participants through a maze of life experiences. To obtain additional information about the teacher candidate practicum experience, participants' daily reflections and supervisor evaluations were employed as a secondary source of data collection.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method of data collection. Interviews were conducted three times with each participant before, during, and after their seven-week practicum placement. The length of each interview ranged from 7 to 28 minutes and were conducted in person or virtually. Interview questions were developed by the researcher, reviewed by a panel of experts in qualitative research, and pilot tested prior to use. First interviews took place before the practicums started, second interviews during the third week of the practicum, and final interviews at the end of the first half of the 14-week practicum placement. During the first interview, participants answered questions about educational background, pre-practicum experience, and expectations. The second interview included questions about their overall PETE program experience, relationships with practicum supervisors, assessments, and supervisor feedback. In the third and last interview, participants provided suggestions and shared lessons

learned during the practicum. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and sent back to the participants for member checking purposes.

As a requirement for their college/university practicum course, participants completed a daily reflection for each day of student-teaching. With this, teacher candidates reflected upon their overall experience, progress being made, daily challenges along with possible solutions, cooperating teacher and supervisor evaluations, relevant emotional responses, and any other concerns that arose during the practicum. In addition to the daily reflections, following the first 7-weeks of practicum, each teacher candidate completed an evaluation of the cooperating teacher and faculty supervisor. Within these evaluations, the teacher candidate made comments and suggestions regarding characteristics of the practicum supervisors. Some of the characteristics identified for the faculty supervisor were: number of visits, quality of observations, clarity of expectations, feedback on written work, and knowledge and experience in the field. Characteristics for the cooperating teacher included: effectiveness as an educator and knowledge as a supervisor. A digital copy of the evaluations was provided to the researcher by the Educator Preparation and Licensure Program.

Prior to the present study beginning, data collection protocols were pilot tested with three teacher candidates that completed the practicum experience the semester before the study was conducted. Based on this pilot, and with the help of an expert panel, appropriateness, language, length, order, and overall clarity of the questions were reviewed and revised appropriately. Informed consent forms were reviewed and signed by all participants prior their first day of practicum.

2.3 Data Analyses

Open, axial, and selective coding was utilized to analyze and interpret interviews, daily reflections, and student evaluation of practicum supervisors (Neuman, 1991). During open coding, and after reading through the collected data several times, labels were created to summarize content. Identification of relationships among open codes and condensation of items into categories followed (Neuman, 1991). Lastly, categories were condensed into before, during, and after building competency themes.

3. RESULTS

The perspectives constructed by teacher candidates, following Merriam (2009) protocols are presented under the building competency theme and three categories: (a) before practicum, (b) during practicum, and (c) after practicum. The overarching building competency theme is aligned with the constructivism theory used to guide the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987;

Elbaz, 1981; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Larsson, 1987). Pseudonyms were used throughout the results to protect the anonymity of the participants.

3.1 Building Competency

Teacher candidates are active learners who apply concepts learned in previous teacher-preparation courses, through their own experiences, and from practicum supervisors. The building competency theme refers to the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and desires which lead teacher candidates to ongoing success. This theme is divided in three time periods: (a) before practicum including information about how teacher candidates chose physical education as a major, educational background of the teacher candidate, and pre-practicum experiences; (b) during elementary practicum including current experiences in the practicum; and (c) after elementary practicum including changes the teacher candidate experienced after seven weeks of elementary practicum.

3.2 Building Competency Before Practicum

Teacher candidates construct new ideas based on prior knowledge and experiences. Teacher candidates were influenced by other individuals (e.g., former teachers, educators in their families), ideas (e.g., being fit and active), and other factors (e.g., sports) to become physical educators. A decision made by teacher candidates was the selection of physical education as a career; with former teachers influencing 75% of the teacher candidates to become physical educators. Parents of two teacher candidates were educators, and six teacher candidates mentioned they had a good relationship and appreciation for the teachers during high school. Beth commented,

I had my teachers and I was close with physical educators so I always knew I wanted to be a physical education teacher or guidance counselor; I had role models and that is why I wanted to be a physical educator.

The remaining 25% of teacher candidates were influenced by sports and the importance of having an active life. Moe stated,

In fifth grade year book they asked what do you want to be when you grow up and I wrote a NFL football player or a physical educator. Obviously did not work out for football player, so, I went for a physical education teacher to make an impact.

Prior to practicum, teacher candidates experienced feelings of nervousness and excitement. Five teacher candidates responded they were nervous, two responded they were excited, and one mentioned that he/she was nervous and excited. Rob commented,

I feel that this is the last step to become a teacher so it is going to be done the right way with a lot of enthusiasm as everything should be. I feel ready, I am confident enough. I have been coaching basketball throughout the winter, so, I've been in the school system.

One factor that could have contributed to the feeling of nervousness was the lack of confidence teaching at the elementary level, considering eight of nine teacher candidates did their pre-practicum at the middle or high school. Tia explained, "the last time I did elementary it was in adapted and is kind of different because it was only with two students versus 24 little tiny first graders." However, Nick expressed that the pre-practicum during the winter break was better than the pre-practicum during the semester because he was able to be in the school every day for two weeks in a row rather than one or two times a week during 14 weeks.

Teacher candidates build competency such as new ideas and perceptions based on past knowledge and experience (educational background and pre-practicum experience). Rob reflected, "doing the pre-practicum in two weeks help to get use to going to school on the daily basis working the full day and doing the duties that you have to do and help me get the work done". During practicum, teacher candidates are exposed to different experiences (e.g., professional development, bus duty, committees, extracurricular activities) and the reality of being a teacher (e.g., behavior management, lesson plans, meeting diverse learners needs). The practicum process allows the teacher candidates to apply and refine the theoretical skills learned during teaching methods courses in order to better understand the role of teaching. Based on our results, the practicum process prior experiences (e.g., pre-practicum) and beliefs (e.g., appreciation for other teachers) helped teacher candidates to reconstruct these experiences into meaningful ideas about teaching.

3.3 Building Competency During Practicum

During practicum, teacher candidates constantly reflected on experiences and integrated new information with the assistance of practicum supervisors. Two weeks after the start of the practicum, teacher candidates were describing the teaching experience they were having. Several candidates began describing the practicum experience with positive phrases such as "learning a lot" (e.g., planning) and "I feel more engaged." Tia was

the only teacher candidate who used a negative phrase, "it is very stressful" trying to manage college work and teaching responsibilities. The elementary practicum experience made Nick and Rob realize or confirm that the elementary level is not the level they want to teach. Rob added, "I don't think I want to teach elementary kids." However, in the last week of elementary practicum, Rob mentioned that he can take a job in elementary level "with some guidance at first." On the contrary, Mary commented "I definitely picked the right major, I love the little kids."

In addition to teaching physical education classes, cooperating teachers helped teacher candidates get involved in other responsibilities at the schools. Responsibilities included: assisting students with math and reading, bus duty, professional development conferences, organization of events, faculty meetings, collaboration with the physical therapist, and committees. The teacher candidates who had opportunities to participate with different roles and responsibilities, all had cooperating teachers who were involved in school-wide clubs, events, and/or committees. Ali stated,

...two days a week the cooperating teacher has pre-teaching, she works with the physical therapist at the school. She is a member of two separate committees to which I attend, one of them is academic meeting and the second is the safety committee.

For the majority, the cooperating teacher served as a facilitator to expose teacher candidates to new knowledge in addition to specific physical education pedagogical content. Responsibilities at the school were other areas of knowledge that teacher candidates acquired to build competency before becoming an in-service teacher. Mary and Nick were the only two teacher candidates that did not get involved with other responsibilities. Nick expressed "we were in the gym all day."

In their daily reflections, Joe and Mary pointed out some professional conversations beyond physical education content they had with the cooperating teacher. Joe mentioned the cooperating teacher taught him about the emergency plans of the school and what to do in specific situations. In addition, the cooperating teacher informed Joe about differences in teacher salaries and benefits between two local school districts. Moreover, Mary commented that the cooperating teacher "kindly asked the principal to give me a mock interview this week so that I can get some experience in interviewing. It is finally getting down to the wire here and I am definitely starting to feel it." Several reflections after, Mary stated, the "mock interview was really interesting and it was good to get some experience in interviewing and learning about what an interviewer looks for in a candidate." Practicum supervisors serve as mediators while teacher candidates build competency. In order to construct new ideas and

knowledge such as perceptions about current practicum, teaching skills, and responsibilities at the school, the teacher candidate needs the guidance of a supervisor.

3.4 Building Competency After Practicum

The practicum experience provides teacher candidates the guidance, practical real-world field and resources to enhance the learning experience. The intention was to provide teacher candidates the opportunity to practice the art of teaching. All nine teacher candidates noticed positive teaching changes after seven weeks in the elementary practicum. Moe stated,

The first time that I was observed by my cooperating teacher and faculty supervisor I was really nervous. I was trying to do everything perfect. Now I realized that I don't have to be perfect, just teach a good lesson and have some fun.

Patience, confidence, getting the attention of students, good relationship with students, clear directions, smooth transitions, and use of appropriate terminology were identified as positive changes in the teaching perceived by teacher candidates.

Almost all the participants were quick to note that their building competence was achieved primary due to the guidance and support from their supervisors, especially their cooperating teachers. Findings were similar with the responses in the student evaluations, where most of the teacher candidates strongly agreed that the feedback provided helped them improve as teachers. Emma speaks to how often she received feedback from the cooperating teacher "at the beginning of the practicum" but "for the past two or three weeks it is mostly me deciding how to do it.", she appreciated the autonomy provided by the cooperative teacher at the end of the practicum. In addition to the help of the supervisors, some teacher candidates attributed improvement as a teacher to other factors (e.g., students' responsiveness, teaching experience). Beth stated improvement occurred because students were responding better. Rob and Nick thought they improved as teachers because of the daily and constant practice. Overall, teacher candidates generally believed they were ready to be hired as elementary physical educators. Tia added,

I called my mom right after I got out of the school because I was very nervous about elementary before, and I was like 'mom I feel like if I got hired I will feel comfortable enough to be in control of that kind of job'. Young kids used to terrify me, now I feel way more confident and I am excited because now I don't have a school level preference.

Although teacher candidates were both nervous and/or excited about the upcoming practicum, most teacher candidates mentioned they enjoyed the practicum experience, felt more engaged, and were learning a lot from the practicum experience and feedback received from supervisors. After the practicum, the majority of teacher candidates felt ready to be hired as elementary physical education teachers. Contrary to a teacher candidate that preferred to teach in secondary school, "I don't think I want to teach elementary kids". Each teacher candidate is unique; each one constructs new knowledge and perceptions differently according to prior and current experience.

4. DISCUSSION

Teacher candidates should be active learners who constantly reflect, critically think of prior knowledge, and make connections with new knowledge. Therefore, constructivism theory was used as a framework to describe teacher candidates make decisions during the practicum experience, interpret knowledge, and perform in the gymnasium or classroom based on personal beliefs (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Elbaz, 1981; Larsson, 1987). Brandon and All (2010) described the constructivism theory as a spiral in order to better understand the dynamics of the theory. The interactions between student and supervisors happens inside the spiral, with the student the center point in the inner ring. In the current study, the dynamic between candidate and practicum supervisor is the interaction phase. The learning process started when the teacher candidate was influenced by a teacher or ideology to become a physical education teacher. As part of the physical education program, the teacher candidate took multiple teaching method courses, including early field experience, and the pre-practicum as the beginning of a new journey of the elementary practicum experience. Findings from the building competency theme support the progress and development of teacher candidates before, during, and after the practicum experience.

Lawson (1983) included acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization as phases of occupational socialization. The socialization process is responsible for perceptions, actions, and constructions of new ideas of teacher candidates. In the current study, the teacher candidates were experiencing the phase of professional socialization which occurs during the teacher preparation program and preparing for organizational socialization that occurs after the practicum experience. During school years, teacher candidates spent hours in physical education courses; the interaction with the teacher and the content of the course led students to form subjective warrant facilitated in part by a physical education teacher (Lawson, 1983). Additionally, the constant interaction and conversations about the art of teaching that teacher candidates had with

facilitators (supervisors) during practicum, led teacher candidates to keep forming the subjective warrant in the physical education profession. Subjective warrant refers to the perceptions an individual has about necessary abilities and skills for the profession of physical education. Coinciding with Lawson (1983) and other researchers, participants in the current study selected physical education as a career because of the influence of facilitators including high school teachers and family members (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Schutz et al., 2001).

All participants were certain about being a physical education teacher; however, at the beginning of the practicum, four teacher candidates mentioned elementary school is not a level they want to teach in the future. This perception changed by the end of the practicum when the teacher candidate felt comfortable teaching at the elementary level. Similar with the current study, researchers reported that after the practicum experience, teacher candidates at the elementary level felt better prepared, acquired knowledge and the abilities necessary to be successful teachers (Lee et al., 2012). Based on the findings, teacher candidates felt prepared due to the constructive and specific feedback received from supervisors in addition to the constant hands-on experience.

Most of teacher candidates felt nervous prior to the beginning of the elementary practicum experience. One factor that could have contributed was the lack confidence teaching at the elementary level, considering eight of nine teacher candidates did the pre-practicum in a middle or high school. In addition, the only teaching experience that teacher candidates had was the teaching methods courses required in the Teacher Preparation Program and experience working at summer camps. As a requirement of the teaching method courses, teacher candidates in the current study had to complete approximately 150 hours of teaching experience before the practicum (pre-practicum). In contrast to the findings in the study by Kiggundu and Nayimuli (2009), the first exposure of teacher candidates in the real world of teaching was during the practicum. Practicum adds meaning to the teaching knowledge learned during teaching methods courses (Perry, 2004). The findings of the current study are concordant to a study conducted by Murphy (2004) who demonstrated that teacher candidates were nervous and apprehensive prior to the practicum experience. Murphy also stated teacher candidates did not have past teaching experiences beyond requirements in the teacher preparation program. No magic formula exists for a successful practicum experience, even with the best preparation and planning (Knowles et al., 1994). During the practicum, teacher candidates stated they liked the practicum, felt more engaged, and were learning. Not only did they report learning teaching skills, but teacher candidates also learned about school responsibilities such as bus duty, faculty meetings, professional development conferences, and assisting students in other subjects. In Kiggundu and Nayimuli's (2009) study, teacher candidates described not being introduced

to the staff of the school, nor attending staff meetings. In the current study, most of the cooperating teachers were part of different committees and encouraged the teacher candidates to attend staff meetings.

Seven weeks in the elementary practicum was enough time for teacher candidates to notice improvement in their teaching skills. Teacher candidates attributed professional improvement to the supervisors; the findings are congruent with Johnson and Napper-Owen (2011) who mentioned teacher candidates refine critical teaching skills while being supervised and mentored by experienced professionals. Furthermore, Quezada (2004) stated one of the most difficult experiences for teacher candidates is the transition from student teacher to in-service teacher. The majority of teacher candidates in the current study felt ready to be hired as elementary physical education teachers. The practicum experience allowed them to establish whether the right career choice had been made or not. Furthermore, the conversations that some of the practicum supervisors had about job search and job interviews helped teacher candidates to gain basic, yet valuable, knowledge of the process of employment.

With a focus on "hearing the voices of teacher candidates", we recommend the following strategies for enhancing student teaching practicum experiences:

1. As expected from a constructivist perspective, each teacher candidate had a unique practicum experience, even though they shared some common experiences. Teacher preparation programs should keep the individual nature of the practicum experience in mind; what work with one teacher candidate may not necessarily benefit another.
2. Encourage practicum supervisors, especially the cooperating teacher, to teach teacher candidates about the employment preparation process. For example, Quezada (2004) indicated one of the roles of the cooperating teacher is to help teacher candidates with the employment process to facilitate the transition from student teacher to in-service teacher.
3. Teacher candidates provided suggestions for the Teacher Preparation Program. First, to dedicate enough time to explain and provide specific deadlines for the paperwork requested. Second, teacher candidates want to be part of the selection of the school where she/he is going to teach. Finally, a teacher candidate suggested having a shorter pre-practicum and a longer practicum experience.
4. Goodnough et al. (2009) stated that autonomy and independence are limitations that prohibit teacher candidates to plan and teach independently. Teacher candidates expressed their desire to be more independent on teaching their lessons and learn from their mistakes. Instead, practicum supervisors can focus on assisting student teachers with lesson planning, instruction, and reflection throughout the practicum experience (Gonzalez-Toro et al., 2020). For example,

support implementation of Content-Focused Coaching training sessions (e.g. working with video examples, group discussions, and role-play) during pre-lesson conferences and weekly seminars to enhance learning and help develop teaching competencies (Becker et al., 2019).

5. New teachers experienced inconsistencies between the PETE programs and real classroom experiences in that they had difficulty transitioning from teacher candidates to in-service teachers (Ha, 2018). University faculty, in collaboration with cooperating teachers, may examine teacher preparation curriculum to ensure that practicum coursework includes purposeful and effective assignments that link theory development with skill practice for teacher candidates (Hennissen et al., 2017). With this, teacher preparation programs may provide additional training of all supervisors as needed to implement and hold students accountable for assignments and ultimately allow teacher candidates to develop both content knowledge and practical applications.
6. Address socialization factors within the physical education practicum experience including reflections and discussions on quality physical education, role stress, feeling of marginalization, and authenticity in the classroom (Cherubini, 2009; Gaudreault et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2017, 2018). Members of the student teacher triad can ask themselves, how do I contribute to a positive and productive working environment? What is the quality and quantity of feedback that I give and receive? Is the feedback immediate, consistent, and encouraging? How do my actions as a teacher candidate portray my enthusiasm for physical education? How do my actions as a supervisor portray interest in my teacher candidate's development as a future educator?

5. CONCLUSIONS

Teacher candidates were pleased with the changes noticed in their teaching during the elementary practicum, and the majority of the participants mentioned the supervisors played a role in the development as teachers. However, further study is needed before any conclusions about how teachers' candidates build competency during the student teaching practicum can be drawn. Hearing directly from the practicum supervisors and learning about their experience and perceptions working with teacher candidates will provide a holistic understanding regarding the practicum experience. Collaboration between faculty supervisors and cooperating teacher is essential when it comes to supporting teacher candidates and to pursuing issues that need to be addressed during the practicum. In addition, setting goals and expectations first, then monitoring the teaching

experiences could provide relevant feedback to the teacher candidate facilitating the construction of new knowledge. The practicum experience also positively influenced the perceptions of the teacher candidates and positive attitude toward teaching at the elementary level.

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6.2 Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

6.3 Contribution of Authors

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: study conception and design: Gonzalez-Toro, C; Moosbrugger, M.; data collection: Gonzalez-Toro, C; analysis and interpretation of results: Gonzalez-Toro, C; Mullin, E; draft manuscript preparation: Gonzalez-Toro, C; Mangano, K., Cherubini, J. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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