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**Continual Professional Learning of Experienced Ontarian Physical Educators:
The Ways They Learn and what Influences Their Participation in Processional Learning**

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Continual Professional Learning of Experienced Ontarian physical educators: The ways they learn and what influences their participation in professional learning.

by
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THESIS

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**“Continuing professional development is, fundamentally, about inspiring and
sustaining teachers’ professional curiosity.”
-AIESEP**

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Abstract

This study incorporated the perspectives of twelve experienced physical education (PE) teachers to better understand the ways they learn, and what influences their choices regarding professional learning. By providing a Canadian perspective on a topic that has primarily been researched in the UK, this study addresses a current gap in the experienced PE teacher learning literature (Armour & Yelling, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2006). Using Illeris' (2007) workplace learning theory, the study provides a holistic understanding of teacher professional learning by equally acknowledging the individual and the environment. The data collected from three focus groups and twelve individual interviews indicated that the PE teachers learned in a variety of formal, nonformal and informal ways (Coombs, 1974). Moreover, the individual and the work environment influenced each teacher's professional learning. Finally, the participants continually engaged in informal learning to augment their formal and nonformal learning opportunities and they credited professional learning with helping them to develop as effective teachers.

Introduction

Teacher learning is a career-long endeavor, with each teacher's learning needs based on their professional and personal circumstances. For instance, it is well established that new teachers have different learning needs than experienced teachers (Broad & Evans, 2006; McIntyre & Jamison, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006). Moreover, professional learning and support have been identified as key contributing factors in retaining new teachers (Ontario College of Teachers [OCT], 2007), and are also a critical component to all large-scale school reforms (Fullan, 2001). Within Ontario, there is the additional belief that teacher professional learning is directly linked to student learning. (OCT, 2006). Professional learning, therefore, can impact the teacher, the students and the whole school, making it an important research area within the field of pedagogy.

The present study takes an in-depth look at the unique context of physical education (PE) teachers' professional learning. It has been established that PE teachers face challenges of isolation (O'Sullivan, 2006; Stroot & Ko, 2006) and have difficulties in finding PE-specific professional learning (Armour & Yelling, 2007). Recently, PE teacher learning was given international attention when the International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education (AIESEP) organized a seminar specifically on PE teachers' continuing professional learning, with the following rationale:

Throughout a 30-year career, each individual physical education teacher could teach 20-30,000 lessons. Thus, each teacher has the potential to make an impact – positive or negative – upon hundreds of thousands of pupils. In other words, every physical education teacher matters and how teachers learn and grow through their careers should be a major concern. Yet, in comparison with the relatively brief

period of initial teacher training, teachers' career-long learning has received little attention in the physical education profession. We do know, however, that the nature and structure of much traditional professional development flouts almost everything we know about effective learning. We also know that when it is done well, professional development has the potential to enhance teachers' career satisfaction, improve teacher retention and improve the quality of learning for pupils. (Armour, 2009, p. 2)

In addition, it is acknowledged that PE teachers place high value on learning from their colleagues and "[attempt] to compensate for the inadequacies of formal continuing professional development provision by learning with and from professional colleagues" (Armour & Yelling, 2007, p. 196).

Traditionally, teacher education has focused on the individual learner acquiring new knowledge. More recently, there is a belief developing that it is important to look at the individual and the work environment to provide a more holistic view to teacher professional learning (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005). This strategy has been employed in workplace learning literature but has rarely been used in teacher learning literature. The theoretical framework used for this study is Illeris' (2007) "model for learning in working life," which combines an individual learning theory and a workplace learning theory. By combining the two theories, the researcher is encouraged to view learning from the perspective of the individual and of the work environment equally.

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand the ways experienced PE teachers learn throughout their career and identify what influences their choices regarding their learning. This study provides a Canadian perspective in an area that has, to date,

been primarily researched in the UK (Armour & Yelling, 2004a, 2004b, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2006). Furthermore, the individual interviews provided an opportunity for experienced PE teachers to express what professional learning opportunities they prefer and what influences their choices, which makes the results of this study original and useful for those who offer professional learning.

Research Context

In the following chapter I will review the literature on teacher professional learning as it relates to learning in the workplace with the purpose of examining teacher learning from a holistic view. Specifically, this chapter will review the literature on teacher professional learning from the perspective of three levels of organization, the province, the district, and the school (Fullan, 2003); followed by an in-depth examination of the literature on experienced teacher and PE teacher professional learning, bringing attention to gaps within the current literature. Evidence will be established to support the concept of exploring teaching learning from a workplace learning perspective.

Teacher Professional Learning

For the purpose of this study, teacher professional learning is defined as any work-related learning that occurs individually or with others (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006). Professional learning spans the length of teachers' careers from the pre-service, university education, to continual professional learning while they are practicing. Pre-service education is primarily concerned with the preparation of the teacher, whereas the purpose of continual professional learning is for teachers to "stay current and up to date" (Ontario College of Teachers [OCT], 2006a, p. 22). The literature reviewed in this study, like the study itself, is focused on experienced practicing teachers. The following section will address the context of continual professional learning for Ontarian teachers.

Fullan's Tri-level Reform: Teacher Context Within Ontario

Education in Canada is under provincial jurisdiction and thus each province in Canada has a unique context. The present study was conducted in Ontario; therefore, this section focuses on the Ontario context. Over the last three decades, Andy Hargreaves

and Michael Fullan have conducted a number of studies related to educational change that can be directly linked to teacher learning (Fullan, 2001; Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). Although Fullan's (2003) tri-levels were generated from large scale educational reforms, the three levels presented also apply to general teacher learning and will be used to organize the literature. The tri-level reform is based on the idea that for reforms to be successful, there needs to be involvement between the school, district and province (Fullan 2003). Additionally, Fullan (2001) notes that a crucial component to all reforms is continual teacher professional learning. For the remainder of this section I will present how professional learning is influenced at the school, district and provincial levels according to Fullan.

To begin with, professional learning is largely influenced by the schools' constantly changing environment (Fullan, 1999). Teachers must learn to adapt and change within their working environment to provide the best learning opportunities to students. Fullan (2003) identifies collaborative reciprocal learning between staff members as a key method of professional learning. He further indicates that these interactions between staff not only increase teachers' knowledge, but also their confidence in the material they are teaching. A second major element at the school level is administration and teacher leaders. Fullan (2003) states that support from administration can help increase professional learning. In the end, learning must include multiple sources so that practices can be challenged and modified to address the unique needs of teachers.

The district has a substantial influence over professional learning, and larger districts face the challenge of trying to address the needs of their numerous employees

(Fullan, 2001). Furthermore, the district has to balance the politically-driven policies of the Province with the individual needs of the schools and teachers. The relevant provincial entities are the Ministry of Education (Ministry) and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), which face the challenge of creating policies that can positively impact all districts and schools which is a complex process, according to Fullan (2003). In addition to creating policies, the Province also has to convince the teachers and administrators of the benefit of the created policies. It is important to note that Fullan (2003) acknowledges that professional learning can be helped or hindered by each level above it. Therefore the Province influences both the districts and the schools, and the district primarily influences the schools. Therefore, the structure of the tri-level design highlights each level separately while also bringing attention to the interactions between the levels.

Province of Ontario. The provincial education system is under the provincial jurisdiction and the Ministry provides the government funding to all the regional district school boards (district). Annual funding from the Ministry to the districts is given out as grants to cover all costs of running schools including, but not limited to: school maintenance, curriculum supplies, employee salaries, and teachers' professional learning. As previously mentioned, funding allocation by the districts is often highly directed by the Ministry's priorities. The Ministry's current priorities, which have been in place since 2003, are: (1) Success for Students, (2) Strong People, Strong Economy, and (3) Better Health (Ministry of Education [Ministry], 2008). The priority of *success for students* has a "major activity" pertaining specifically to "improved teacher professional learning and

access to learning resources,” which was addressed by the Ministry shortly after setting the priorities (Ministry, p.5).

In 2003, the newly-elected provincial government decided to make changes to Ontario’s education system. One of the first actions of the Ministry was to form an education partnership table, including students, parents, trustees, teachers, support workers and principals to address a number of mini-discussion papers prepared by the Ministry. One paper in particular was related to continual professional learning of the teaching force (Ministry, 2004). The discussion surrounding this paper lead to the creation of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) and then to “explore[ing] opportunities and support for experienced teachers to engage in professional learning” (Ministry, 2007, p.2). The recommendations for effective professional learning for experienced teachers were published in 2007 (Ministry, 2007). However, it is unclear if and how the recommendations are being introduced to teachers. An earlier policy developed by the Ministry lead to the establishment of the OCT, which is predominately responsible for professional learning of teachers at the provincial level.

The Ministry established the OCT to “regulate the profession of teaching and to govern its members” (Ministry, 1996). Responsibilities of the OCT included the development of the standards of practice and conduct, and regulations to ensure all members live by the standards. The Foundations of practice include the ethical standards, the standards of practice and the professional learning framework (Appendix A).

The ethical standards guide the actions and behaviours of Ontarian teachers and are reflected in all actions of the OCT. The ethical standards (trust, care, respect and

integrity) are of the utmost importance in light of the profession's responsibilities. The ethical standard of integrity relates specifically to teachers' professional learning by encouraging all teachers to participate in continual reflection pertaining to their professional commitments and responsibilities (OCT, 2006a). Internal learning that occurs from reflection is viewed as a key characteristic of teachers who teach with integrity. In addition to the value of integrity, college members are responsible to learn ways in which to develop students' potential, to treat them as individuals, and to earn and keep their students' trust (OCT).

The standards of practice are a collective vision that "articulate[s] the goals and aspirations of the profession" (OCT, 2006a, p.13). Each standard is associated with a specific aspect of teacher professional learning. First, commitment to students is demonstrated through teachers adapting the curriculum to ensure that students' learning needs are met. Professional knowledge, the second standard of practice, is the outcome of professional learning; therefore, it is important to better understand the learning process that leads to the achievement of this outcome. Professional practice, the third standard, requires teachers to "refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection," all of which are opportunities to learning (OCT, p.15). The fourth standard, leadership in learning communities, involves "collaborative partnerships, reflective dialogue, inquiry and self-directed learning," (OCT, p.21) between colleagues, administration, parents, and students. The OCT believes that learning communities promote student success by sharing school responsibilities, planning, and development of initiatives and ideas. The final standard, ongoing professional learning, recognizes the

importance of participation in a variety of professional learning opportunities many of which are identified in the professional learning framework.

The professional learning framework acknowledges that teachers learn differently depending on their career stage and, consequently, will have different learning needs (OCT, 2006a). Furthermore, the professional learning framework identifies pre-service and in-service accredited learning programs in addition to bringing attention to wide-range of other learning opportunities (OCT). The accredited programs offered by the OCT come in two forms: additional basic qualifications (ABQ) and additional qualifications (AQ). It is strongly encouraged that teachers hold an ABQ or AQ in a subject area prior to teaching it to students. In addition to accredited learning, the OCT recommends that teachers participate in, and organize, less formalized professional learning opportunities such as research activities, professional networks, and learning through practice. The professional learning framework “assures the profession and the public that College members have the opportunity through professional learning to remain current throughout their careers” (OCT, p. 25).

District. The Ottawa-Carleton district school board (OCDSB) is required to provide professional learning opportunities to their teachers according to the collective agreement with the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation. The actions of the district are directed by the focus areas presented in the strategic plan developed by the OCDSB. The current four-year strategic plan, starting in 2007, has focus areas in learning, leadership, and community. Each year the strategic plan is adjusted to better address the focus areas. As previously mentioned, professional learning is largely funded by the Ministry and is to be used to meet the Ministry’s specific priorities.

The OCDSB is one of the largest districts in Ontario; consequently, it has many divisions to address its numerous needs. Within the OCDSB, there are three divisions that control the majority of teacher professional learning: quality assurance, staff development, and curriculum services. Quality assurance is achieved by collecting student data from provincial and district standardized testing in reading, writing, and mathematics as well as student success indicators (graduation rates, yearly credit accumulation and yearly credits earned) (OCDSB, 2008). Staff development is primarily responsible for providing support and professional development for new teachers, which is accomplished through the new teacher induction program (NTIP) and strategies for success program. The NTIP is in its second year in 2008-2009 and includes mentoring, professional development, and resources to first year teachers. The strategies for success program, developed by the Ministry, consists of a number of workshops directed towards novice teachers' concerns. The third division, curriculum services, uses the information gathered by the quality assurance division and the priorities of the Ministry to guide the delivery of the following year's professional learning opportunities. As a result, most of the professional development is produced in the areas of assessment and evaluation, literacy and numeracy, and differentiated learning instruction (OCDSB). However, the district still offers professional learning opportunities to all teachers in all subject areas. Forty full-time teachers are employed by the OCDSB as instructional coaches, and they are assigned to a specific subject and grade range with the expectation that they will supply professional learning opportunities to teachers. The OCDSB distributes funding to the instructional coaches based on the Ministry's priorities and the districts' current focus areas. For PE, much of the professional learning is funded by outside agencies

which, consequently, have significant influence over PE teacher learning. In the 2007–2008 school year, professional learning for secondary PE teachers provided by the district included certifying PE teachers as cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillation instructors, and producing a resource for the health component about healthy relationships. The OCDSB issues funding for each subject area to organize a professional development day with a variety of learning opportunities. Furthermore, funding is also available for teachers to organize and plan their own professional development workshops and also to cover partial costs for conference attendance. The district believes that professional learning is directly related to continual improvement of teachers and the education they provide to students (OCDSB).

School. The school has influence over professional development in numerous ways. Professional learning that occurs within a school has the unique quality of occurring in the teachers’ working context, whether teachers are engaging in professional conversations with colleagues or participating in professional learning provided by the administration. There is an agreement that school leadership — administrators and head teachers — influence all activities associated with the running of the school, including professional learning (Colbert, Brown, Choi, & Thomas, 2008; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006, Walstrom & Louis, 2008). Furthermore, Walstrom and Louis indicated that when administrators share decision-making with non-administrators in the school, it legitimizes collective decisions regarding support for teacher instruction. Sharing decision-making among non-administrators allowed for more people to feel that their opinions were valued. However, this is not always the case. In fact, teachers often feel a disconnect between activities that are offered by their administration and what they teach in the

classroom (Colbert et al.). Administrators in Ontario organize two of the three yearly professional activity days and it is up to them to balance staff needs with the latest Ministry and district objectives.

In the OCDSB, the district contacts the principal via e-mail regarding professional learning opportunities and the principal is then responsible for forwarding the e-mail directly to the teachers or to the department head in that subject area. As well as forwarding the learning opportunities provided by the OCDSB, the administration — both the principal and vice-principal(s) — can create a working environment that encourages professional learning (Bechtel & O’Sullivan, 2007; Knight, 2002). In addition to administrators, department heads also influence professional learning for teachers in their departments. On top of a full-time teaching schedule, the department heads in OCDSB are required to be the heads of two separate departments and PE department heads are also often the athletic director of the school. Department heads also relay information regarding professional learning opportunities to the teaching staff and play an important role in encouraging staff to participate in professional learning and share resources and ideas. The following two sections will describe the context of newly qualified teachers’ and experienced teachers’ professional learning.

Newly Qualified Teachers

Novice teachers have a number of concerns related to their early teaching experiences. Ontario is making steps towards addressing those concerns by putting in place programs specifically for novice teachers. It has been noted that teacher development is not a discrete event that occurs once, but rather a continuum throughout their career (Glassford & Salinitri, 2007).

Based on their analysis of the evolution of the NTIP in Ontario, Glassford and Salinitri (2007) discussed that providing assistance to novice teachers will result in a higher retention of more effective teachers. Their assessment acknowledges the program is off to a good start, having only finished its first year by the end of Glassford and Salinitri's investigation (school year 2006-2007). Success has been possible mainly due to government support and the provincial funding provided to the school districts for professional development and mentoring opportunities as part of the program. In its first year the NTIP did not include occasional teachers (McIntyre & Jamison, 2006), but in its second year it made an attempt to add more occasional teachers due to the fact that most new teachers now start off as occasional teachers (OCT, 2007). This program provides support to a group of teachers who would not otherwise have support.

Keay (2005, 2006a, 2006b) presents many of the challenges that newly qualified physical educators in England deal with at the beginning of their career. Novice teachers' professional development was viewed primarily as a means to survive their day-to-day teaching or to fix a problem, not as a way to develop professionally. Keay suggest that external PE specific-courses and internal learning between colleagues merely enforced current teaching practice instead of encouraging new ideas (2006b). She suggests that creating a school culture that is collaborative and respects the views of all the staff members, old and new, may be a good way to question traditional teaching practices (Keay, 2006a, 2006b). As well, new teachers need to be taught how to be reflective learners in order to learn from their teaching experiences and critically reflect on the practices of others (Keay, 2005). If new teachers feel confident with their ideas

and are in an environment that supports their questioning of traditional practices, we can move towards evolving PE instead of just reinforcing old beliefs.

Experienced Teachers

Globally, there is trend recommending the use of constructivist learning strategies when providing professional education to teachers (Day, 1999; Fiszer, 2004; Rainer & Matthews, 2002). Each teacher is an individual with different past learning experiences, which will influence future learning opportunities. Experienced teachers, in particular, are looking for ways to modify their practice and keep up to date in a rapidly changing teaching environment. Broad and Evans (2006) were hired by the Ontario Ministry of Education to conduct a review of the literature on professional development content and delivery for experienced teachers. The following two areas will be expanded in the review: professional development practices, and experienced teachers' stages and pathways. Regarding professional development practices, Broad and Evans noted the following key findings:

- There are many definitions for professional development.
- "Professional development practices... are generally viewed as part of the continuum of learning of teachers throughout their careers" (p.3).
- Effective professional development links teacher learning to student learning.
- Professional development must be personalized to the individual learners' needs.
- Learning from and with colleagues is a key component of professional development.

- “Effective professional development needs to be sustained, ongoing, in-depth, requiring active engagement by the professional” (p.3).
- Ontario is attempting to produce more research informed professional development.
- Teachers can learn in variety of ways in a variety of settings.

Broad and Evans (2006) identified the following five key findings specifically related to “experienced teacher stages and pathways”: (1) “There is no single, linear pathway or career trajectory for teachers. Instead, career paths are often cyclical and even recursive” (p.3); (2) Professional learning needs to adapt to the teachers’ needs; (3) Experienced teachers need to be treated as adult learners and thus need a choice of learning, that is viewed as relevant and meaningful; (4) There is investigation into what kind of incentives will encourage professional development; and (5) Incentives, financial or otherwise, may not encourage professional development.

The first Canadian study to involve both teachers’ formal (e.g. university courses, professional development days and certification courses) and informal learning (e.g. self-directed learning, collaborative learning) was conducted by Smaller, Hart, Clarke, and Livingstone (2001). This three-phase study involved a questionnaire survey of over 1500 Canadian teachers with twenty-eight teachers filling out daily diaries, and interviews with four teachers. The overall findings from this study indicated that teachers participated in, on average, 12 hours of informal learning per week (E.g. reading, collaboration with colleagues, and computer/Internet) and that learning occurred at work and home throughout the evenings and weekends. Furthermore, teachers learned a great deal from their colleagues and from reading a variety of materials. This study clearly established

that teachers are learning in multiple environments and it recommends that professional learning should reflect the reality of the teachers' current teaching context and needs.

A Canadian study by Colbert et al. (2008) investigated "the impacts of teacher-driven professional development on pedagogy and student learning" (p.1). Twenty-six teachers with 10 or more years of experience were included in this research study. The researchers found that teachers were better able to meet their own needs because they were directing the professional development and it created a feeling of empowerment regarding their learning. The findings suggest that:

When teachers are empowered to create their own professional growth plan, their passion for teaching and for improving the lives of their students is greatly enhanced. When they are subjected to professional development activities by their administration, they are generally not enthusiastic and feel there is a disconnect between those activities and what they do in the classroom. (Colbert et al., p.148)

Colbert et al. further suggest that teacher empowerment could have a powerful impact on teacher learning, since it gives teachers the freedom to plan learning based upon their individual needs. Therefore the learning the teacher chooses to engage in will be what they see as important to them in order to develop professionally. Overall, within the research on experienced teachers learning needs, there is a distinct gap in the literature regarding the fundamental ideas of experienced teacher professional learning and its relationship to current teacher professional learning.

Physical Educators' Professional Learning

In reviewing the literature specific to physical educators' professional learning, there is a global recognition of the importance of continual professional learning of physical educators in maintaining up-to-date quality PE programs (Armour, 2009; NASPE, 2007) along with many recent recommendations of how professional learning should be delivered in order to provide experienced teachers with the most appropriate learning opportunities (Armour & Yelling, 2007; Bechtel & O'Sullivan, 2007; Ministry, 2007; O'Sullivan & Deglau, 2006). The current body of literature on experienced PE teacher learning is primarily from the UK and the USA, and is traditionally focused on formal (offsite) professional learning (Armour & Yelling, 2004; Deglau, Ward, O'Sullivan, & Bush, 2006), or learning to teach a new curriculum (Ko, Wallhead, & Ward, 2006; McCaughtry, Sofo, Rovegno, & Curtner-Smith, 2004; Rovegno & Bandhauer, 1998).

Armour and Yelling (2004a, 2004b, 2007) conducted a two-year study, with three phases on the continuing professional development (CPD) of experienced PE teachers in England. They interviewed 20 experienced PE teachers and identified six themes in their learning, of which three are of primary importance to the current study: (1) CPD was lacking in depth and challenge; (2) research in physical education was rarely, if ever, consulted; and (3) haphazard CPD patterns resulted in little discernible coherence or progression" (Armour & Yelling, 2004a). In comparing the themes of PE teacher professional development in this study with the recommendations of Broad and Evans (2006), one can argue the needs of experienced PE teachers' are not being addressed.

Phase two of Armour and Yelling's study involved a profile questionnaire identifying the teachers' perspectives on the "meaning of effectiveness" of CPD and the link between CPD and teachers' aim for student achievement. This phase of the study had four main findings: (1) the PE teachers' main source of professional development was sport-specific courses; (2) the teachers engaged in little progressive or sustained learning; (3) the teachers viewed effective professional development as something that is practical, relevant and applicable; and (4) the main concerns reported by the teachers regarding participation in offsite professional development were based on financial and time issues and quality of replacement teachers (Armour & Yelling, 2004b). In the final phase, Armour and Yelling (2007) complete a case study of 10 teachers' professional learning in a school year. The results indicated that PE teachers place high value on learning from colleagues. Furthermore, PE teachers find that typical professional development is difficult to apply to their school context and they compensate for that by engaging in informal collaboration with their colleagues.

O'Sullivan's (2006) study of 66 Irish PE teachers with over 20 years of experience, explored the cultural norms around teaching PE, their expectations of the Irish education system and their critique of the role professional development has played over the course of their career. The two key findings from this study were that the teachers commented how isolated they felt from professional colleagues, resulting in them rarely being able to benefit from the interactions with colleagues, and that there was a need to provide varied professional development that would take different career stages into account.

Attard and Armour (2006) conducted a three-year study on the reflective practice of an experienced English PE teacher. They found that, as the study progressed, the PE teacher's reflective thoughts were influencing his teaching practice; however, it was unclear how helpful the act of reflecting was. At the end of the three-year study, the findings identified that self-reflection did enhance the PE teacher's teaching practice and once he started to reflect he found it difficult to stop.

The previous three studies present significant findings in the area of experienced PE teacher learning. In particular they identify that experienced PE teachers have unique needs that are rarely addressed and that PE specific learning opportunities are difficult to find. It has been established in the literature that PE teachers face unique working conditions, which influence professional learning. Examples of such conditions are that PE departments are often physically (Armour & Yelling, 2004b) and socially isolated (Ward & O'Sullivan, 1998) from teachers in other subject areas. This isolation contributes to a pre-existing marginalization of PE in schools (Stroot & Ko, 2006). Specifically in Ontario, academics that involve numeracy and literacy are prioritized over PE at both the provincial and district levels. For instance, the Ministry only requires students to earn one PE credit in their final four years to graduate. This low prioritization of secondary PE has filtered down to the district where teacher professional learning is highly influenced by student results on standardized academic testing and the funding received from the ministry. Consequently, there is little professional learning offered by the district that is specific to PE. It is because of this context that it is important to better understand how experienced physical educators are engaging in professional learning.

My Own Experience

Through my experiences as a student, teacher and researcher I have noticed that there appears to be no single way to ensure that all teachers will participate in career-long learning and that there are numerous factors that influence an individual's learning participation and numerous contradictions. For example, some teachers will learn despite working in environments that are not supportive of professional learning. There are teachers who do not learn in the work environments, but are indeed supportive of professional learning. As a result of observing contradictions between individual learning and the work environment and numerous reading in the areas of adult education and workplace learning I chose to use a workplace learning framework to better understand PE teacher learning that incorporated both the individual and the work environment.

Workplace Learning Theories

Workplace learning theories prior to the 2000s have rarely been used to understand teacher education. However, more recently there are researchers who are choosing to use workplace learning theories to provide a more comprehensive understanding to the concept of teachers' professional learning. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) are UK researchers who completed a research study about workplace learning of English secondary school teachers from 2000-2003. They noted that workplace learning theories and teacher education theories were developed separately and rarely intersected. Moreover, they argue that since teacher professional learning is an example of learning in the workplace, that it would be useful to combine the two theories which would "provide the foundation for a more productive approach to understanding

and improving teacher learning” (p.112). The results of their study suggest that we need to look at the work environment as well as the individual when providing professional development opportunities, and that less restrictive learning will allow more teachers to address their individual learning needs.

In Australia, a group of physical education researchers obtained a three-year (2008-2010) grant from the Australian Research Council to study physical educators’ professional development. “Conceptually, it is innovative in using workplace learning and communities of practice theory to analyse Health and Physical Education departments as sites of professional learning” (Tinning, Rossi, & Macdonald, 2008). The project’s strengths include a better understanding of the individual teacher while also exploring how the workplace culture will impact teacher professional learning.

Illeris’ “double perspective for learning in working life”

The present study used Illeris’ (2004, 2007) “double perspective for learning in working life,” as the theoretical framework (Appendix B). Illeris combined a general model of learning (Illeris, 2007) with a model of learning in working life (Jorgenson & Warring, 2003) putting equal emphasis on the individual and the work environment during learning. Working life encompasses all work related learning, which is defined by Illeris (2004) as taking place in the workplace and in other contexts including courses, offsite professional development, networks, and work-related situations. I will now further describe Illeris’ (2007) double perspective model, including both an individual learning process and the work environment.

The individual learning process in the double perspective model is separated into two dimensions: learning content and learning incentive. Illeris (2007) believes that with

learning there is always someone (incentive) learning something (learning content).

Learning content can be described as the readiness and ability of the learner to process what is to be learned and the critical ability of the learner to process what has been learned. Learning incentive is described as providing the necessary mental energy for the learning to occur. This mental energy has many forms, including motivation, emotion, and attitude. It is through the interactions between the learning content, learning incentive and the work environment that the individual's work identity is formed.

The work environment of Illeris' (2007) double perspective model contains the two dimensions of the social-cultural learning environment and the technical-organizational learning environment. He argues that these dimensions are inherent in all learning experiences in the workplace. The social-cultural dimension is influenced by how colleagues interact in their specific environment, and the cultural norms that exist in regards to learning. The technical-organizational dimension is concerned with what the organization offers in terms of professional learning. Some examples of the technical-organizational influences are: the way in which employers support and encourage learning, the financial rewards for learning, the organization of the workplace to influence learning, and the effect of stress and strain of a job and how it influences on professional learning.

Therefore the working practice of an individual is created from the interactions between the technical-organizational learning environment, the social-cultural learning environment and the individual him/herself. Illeris' (2007) model suggests that learning in working life only occurs when the working practice of the organization and the work identity of the individual overlap. However, learning unrelated to the profession can

occur but only where one's working practice and working life do not overlap. The double perspective for learning in working life points us towards a more holistic view of learning in the workplace.

Methodology

Research Paradigm

This study took a constructivist approach to better understand physical educators' learning. In this view "we construct our own understanding of the world in which we live; we search for tools to help us understand our experiences" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 4). The learning process that Brooks and Brooks describe is a dynamic and active process whereby one creates individual meaning from each experience. The meaning from an experience is formed either by fitting the experience into the currently held structure of knowledge or by creating a new meaning from the experience (Fosnot, 2005). Individuals experience situations differently as a result of their personal structure of knowledge, which is formed by their previous unique understandings of similar past experiences. Specific to physical educators, it has been identified that their individual learning needs are based upon their level of experience, their content knowledge and the resources in their workplace (Armour & Yelling, 2007, O'Sullivan, 2006, O'Sullivan & Deglau, 2006). Taking a constructivist view allowed the researcher to be aware of each participant's individuality.

Data Collection and Methods

Participants

This study used Patton's (2002) purposeful sampling to select 12 participants from the current employees of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB). All of the participants were physical educators with six to 26 years experience teaching PE in publicly-funded Ontario schools. Previous research on experienced physical educators' learning in the UK classified teachers as experienced after they taught PE for five or

more years (Armour & Yelling, 2004a). Furthermore, the OCT (2006b) states that teachers in their fifth year are well established and confident in comparison to teachers with fewer years experience. The sample consisted of seven women and five men, including three PE department heads. All participants contributed to school extra-curricular activities through coaching or managing at least two athletic teams annually. Prior to participating in the study the participants all read and signed the teacher information and informed consent form (Appendix C)

Once ethical approval was granted both from the University of Ottawa (Appendix D) and the OCDSB (Appendix E), the data was collected at three schools, two suburban and one urban, each with over 900 students. The participants have shared offices with other physical educators that are located near the gymnasium, and typically a long distance from teachers in other subject areas. The data was collected through two phases: focus groups and individual interviews.

Phase 1 – Focus Groups

The purpose of phase one was to identify the ways experienced teachers learn. The current study adapted Morgan's (2002) definition of a focus group by having the teachers answer a series of semi-structured, open-ended questions that each participant answered individually. First teachers were asked to answer each question, in order to ensure their involvement in the focus group. Following each question the teachers were given an opportunity for free discussion on the question. This allowed for sufficient time to discuss questions pertaining to their professional learning (Krueger, 1998). In addition, focus groups provided an opportunity for teachers to comment collectively on shared learning experiences and for the participants to learn how their colleagues in their

department learn. A final benefit of using focus groups is that participants remembered additional learning opportunities in which they participated as a result of hearing others' answers. Consequently, I compiled a more comprehensive list of learning opportunities in which these teachers participated. Focus groups provided a medium that allowed for the discovery and exploration into PE teachers' learning (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). Since the participants knew each other, they were reminded that they only needed to share that which they felt comfortable sharing. The complete guide for the focus groups is available in Appendix F.

The participants' responses to the questions provided an understanding of the ways the PE teachers learn and gave the opportunity for the participants to develop their initial thoughts on ways in which they learn. The collective atmosphere allows for those individuals who had ideas to share quickly, and those who needed time to have further thought before they spoke. In an area such as learning it was helpful for some participants to listen to others and to build ideas from their colleagues or to remind them of shared learning experiences (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Since the focus groups were organized at each school, it was easy for the teachers to attend and at the same time brought attention to the professional learning norms at each school (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis).

Phase 2 – Individual Interviews

The second phase involved conducting individual interviews that were from 33-58 minutes in length and conducted at the teachers' convenience, often during a preparation period. A list of all the learning opportunities mentioned in the focus group was used to direct the first part of the individual interviews. The teachers were asked to go through

the professional learning list and confirm if they had or had not participated in similar learning opportunities and also to share what influenced their participation in the learning opportunities. The remaining portion of the interview was semi-structured to gain further depth, description, and explanation about the professional learning they did and did not participate in.

The semi-structured portion of the interview provided direction to the interview as well as flexibility, allowing for the interview to go in different directions depending on the participant. Further, the researcher used Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interview style permitting the interview process to be dynamic and interactive. This style of interviewing allowed the researcher to capture the individuals' learning experiences and listen to the meaning behind each comment. The guide for the individual interviews is presented in Appendix G. The use of individual interviews provided the depth to further understand what influenced PE teachers' learning (Amis, 2005).

Data Analysis

Data analysis started after the first focus group was transcribed verbatim and continued through the study as data was collected. The transcribed data was imported into Nvivo7 and then was sorted and coded using a deductive content analysis (Patton, 2002) with Coombs (1974) definitions¹ of formal, nonformal and informal learning to identify the ways physical educators learned. To ensure the quality of the data analysis process, two additional analysts were used to confirm the coding process. All three analysts separately coded a random selection of 15% of the material, with a 92%

¹Formal learning is highly-organized, typified by having a specific curriculum and ending with the individual obtaining a grade or certification. Nonformal learning is organized learning held outside of formal learning and does not result in a grade or a certification. Finally, Coombs defines informal learning as a "lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment" (1974, 8).

consistency between the analysts. Deductive content analysis identified influences on learning choice while also bringing attention to the similarities and differences between cases (Patton). Since Illeris' (2007) double-perspective model pertains only to influences in working life, a fifth dimension—personal life—was identified and data was coded to include this dimension. Of further note, the dimension of learning incentive was three times the size of the other dimensions and was further analyzed using deductive analysis identifying themes of motivation, emotion and attitude.

Data analysis for the second article involved the researcher conducting a deductive content analysis of the focus groups and individual interviews using the three levels identified in Fullan's (2003) tri-level design (Patton, 2002). Deductive content analysis identified the provided learning opportunities available to the participants while also bringing attention to the similarities and differences in their experiences (Patton). The study also included a category for the interactions that occurred between the levels.

Methodological Issues

Trustworthiness

Throughout this study, the researcher used the following three strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. First, member checking was employed with the transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each participant was given the opportunity to review the data and revoke, change or add to both the focus group and the interview transcripts. Poland (2002) suggests that giving participants the opportunity to provide the accurate meaning may be at least as important as ensuring accuracy in transcription. Second, two peer reviewers were used to monitor researcher bias through providing an objective view on the material and the sharing of ideas and strategies through the research

process. Third, the researcher used self-reflection to ensure the quality of the research. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that as a researcher, one will hold preconceptions and biases. The researcher kept multiple journals through the study where she would question ideas and note preconceptions. Moreover, the researcher reviewed the transcripts to ensure that she was not leading the participants and that probing and follow-up questions were used at appropriate times. Allowing time between interviews provided the opportunity for reflection in addition to preventing fatigue in the researcher. The aim was to bring attention to biases so that she was aware during the data collection, limiting personal influence over the responses. In addition to these three methods, the first article included inter-rater reliability to further ensure its trustworthiness. Three analysts were used to allow triangulation of the data analysis (Patton, 2002). The average consistency between the three analysts was over 90% on all coded material, which Miles and Huberman state as the optimal level. Using these methods allowed the researcher to be confident in the data that was collected from the participants.

Limitations

The research does have limitations based upon the chosen design. First, recalling how one learns is not an easy process. In this study, participants benefited from early collaboration, through the use of a focus group to stimulate recollection of learning situations. It is important to have the second phase of individual interviews to ensure the individual perspective is shared since Krueger (1998) states that knowing the other participants may influence the answers given by the participants. At the onset of the focus groups, participants were encouraged to share only information they were comfortable sharing and to listen and respond to all everyone in a respectful manor. A

second limitation to this study is the number of participants does not allow for the generalizability of the results. Awareness of these limitations allowed for the researcher to prepare for potential challenges while also recognizing the limitations of a small study.

Significance of the Study

This study provides an in-depth view of the learning opportunities of 12 PE teachers in a Canadian context. In addition, the research was conducted using a workplace learning theory that took into account the environment and the individual with regards to professional learning selection. Going through the professional learning opportunities list created from the data in the focus groups during the individual interview gave the time to reflect, allowing them to remember and note additional learning. The focus group provided the teachers with the forum to express how they choose to learn and incidentally learn about how their colleagues engage in professional learning. The research provided the opportunity for PE teachers to further their critical examination of their learning process therefore contributing to their professional growth. In using these methods together, it gave a greater understanding to the ways experienced PE teachers choose to learn and what influences the choices in their learning.

Results

Two articles will compose the results section of my thesis. The first of the two articles is titled “Continual professional learning of experienced Ontarian physical educators: The ways they learn and what influences their participation in professional learning.” This article will be submitted to *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*. This article has been formatted according the journal specifications that use Chicago style.

The second article will be submitted to the *Canadian Journal of Education* and is titled “What Do They Think: Experienced physical education teachers’ thoughts and feelings concerning professional learning.” This article will specifically examine how teachers feel about professional learning delivered by the school, school district and the Ministry of Education. This article has been formatted according to the journal specification that uses APA style.

Article 1: Continual Professional Learning of Experienced Ontarian Physical Educators:
How they learn and what influences their participation in professional learning.

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Continual professional learning of experienced Ontarian physical educators: The ways they learn and what influences their participation in professional learning.

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Background/context: Professional learning is viewed as an integral part of a successful teaching career. Moreover, professional learning positively influences student learning by helping teachers stay up-to-date with current teaching practices and subject content knowledge. There is a need to better understand experienced physical education teachers' participation in professional learning in order to better meet their needs.

Purpose: This study aimed to identify what professional learning opportunities experienced physical educators participated in and what influences that participation.

Participants and setting: The study sample included 12 physical education (PE) teachers with a minimum of 6 years experience teaching PE. All of the participants were employed by a publicly funded secondary school in Ontario, Canada.

Research design: This qualitative study was a collective case study that consisted of two phases where the first phase was used to guide the second phase. Illeris (2004, 2007) workplace learning theory was used to provide a comprehensive understanding of PE teacher professional learning.

Data collection: Phase one involved three focus groups with the purpose to identify all the different ways the participants take part in professional learning. Phase two utilized individual interviews to take an in depth look at what influences the participants' involvement in professional learning.

Data analysis: The data from phase one was sorted into formal, nonformal, and informal learning categories using a deductive analysis process. Phase two involved deductive and inductive analysis methods to bring attention to the multitude of influences surrounding the professional learning choice of teachers.

Findings/results: The data clearly demonstrated that experienced physical educators engaged in a wide variety of professional learning. Moreover, the PE teachers exhibited unique learning needs that were influenced by the individual, the work environment and their personal life.

Conclusion: Professional learning is a key element to successful teaching; experienced teachers need to participate in a variety of learning opportunities for their professional needs to be met. Physical educators wished to be given the option to participate in more learning opportunities that are easily accessible, provide an intellectual challenge and can be applied to their current teaching context.

Keywords: physical education; experienced teachers; teacher education; workplace learning; qualitative

Introduction

In Canada, the certification of teachers is under the jurisdiction of each province and territory. To be eligible for certification within the province of Ontario, future educators must complete initial teacher training at a university that incorporates a practical component. In the Ontario, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) is the governing body responsible for certifying teachers to teach in publicly funded schools. Yearly recertification is contingent on teachers acting in accordance with the foundations of a professional practice and payment of annual dues. The foundations of a professional practice are composed of the ethical standards, the standards of practice and the professional learning framework. OCT's "members use the standards to reflect on their

own development as teaching professionals and inform their practice and ongoing learning choices” (OCT 2006, 4). The OCT believes that incorporating the foundations of professional practice into a teaching practice defines the Ontarian teacher.

Regarding teacher learning, the OCT views teacher learning as directly linked to student learning (OCT 2006). As a result, the OCT strongly encourages all teachers to engage in professional learning that is tailored to their needs. The Ontario Ministry of Education further recognizes that learning occurs throughout a teaching career and has committed to inquiring into continual professional learning for all teachers, novice and experienced. In the case of experienced teachers, it is argued that there is no single path to take with respect to professional learning, and teachers must be included in the planning of their learning for it to be meaningful and to meet their needs (Day 1999; Ministry 2007; O’Sullivan 2006).

The purpose of this article is to provide further understanding with regards to teachers’ participation – the ways they learn and what influences their choices of professional learning – by presenting the perspectives of twelve experienced Canadian PE teachers. This article will address teacher learning from the perspective of workplace learning theory utilizing Illeris’ (2004) “model of learning in working life.” Illeris’ model provides a comprehensive interpretation of teacher professional learning by including both the individual and environmental perspectives into a single model.

Research Context

Teaching in Ontario

The OCT’s foundations of professional practice—ethical standards, standards of practice, and the professional learning framework—are the cornerstones to teacher’s

successful practice. First of all, teachers' actions are directed by the four ethical standards of care, respect, trust and integrity. These are the cornerstones of the foundations of professional practice and should be seen as implicit in all professional actions of Ontarian teachers.

The standards of practice are a collective vision that “articulate[s] the goals and aspirations of the profession” (OCT, 2006a, p.13). Each standard is associated with a specific aspect of teacher professional learning. First, commitment to students is demonstrated through teachers adapting the curriculum to ensure that students' learning needs are met. Professional knowledge, the second standard of practice, is the outcome of professional learning; therefore, it is important to better understand the learning process that leads to the achievement of this outcome. Professional practice, the third standard, requires teachers to “refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection,” all of which are opportunities to learning (OCT, p.15). The fourth standard, leadership in learning communities, involves “collaborative partnerships, reflective dialogue, inquiry and self-directed learning,” (OCT, p.21) between colleagues, administration, parents and students. The OCT believes that learning communities promote student success by sharing school responsibilities, planning, and development of initiatives and ideas. The final standard, ongoing professional learning, recognizes the importance of participation in a variety of professional learning opportunities many of which are identified in the professional learning framework.

The third foundation, the professional learning framework, brings attention to the ways of learning teachers can be involved in their own learning. This framework acknowledges that teachers participate in a variety of learning opportunities and

encourages teachers to engage in individual, social and OCT accredited learning programs. Smaller (2005) found that 98% of Canadian teachers agreed that they learn while “on the job” and the OCT (2009) recognize that only 15% of teachers felt that their professional development (PD) days provided them with most of their yearly professional learning. It can then be argued that 85% of teachers need to access professional learning opportunities beyond professional development days.

In Canada, there was no previous research to include both teachers’ formal (organized workshop or course) and informal (self-directed learning apart from formal courses or workshops) learning participation prior to 1998. Smaller, Clark, Hart, and Livingstone (2001) and Smaller, Clark, Hart, Livingstone, and Noormohammed (2000) conducted a three-year project that consisted of a Canadian-wide questionnaire answered by 1500 teachers, teacher diaries completed by 13 Ontarian secondary teachers and four individual interviews. The questionnaire revealed that 86% of respondents had participated in formal learning in the last year and that teachers take part in formal learning from their induction to the end of their career. Almost all respondents learned informally during their career, with 82% learning collaboratively and 63% learning in a self-directed manor. The study also found that “The life of a teacher both at work, at home and elsewhere – is constituted as a never-ending series of informal-learning activities,” (Smaller 2005, 11) so much so that at social events in the evenings and weekends these teachers often converse about school-related issues. The interviews showed that during the period of curriculum reform in Ontario, teachers were given very little in-service support and thus “an immense amount of informal learning had taken place” (Smaller 2005, 15). The respondents also stated that the most significant form of

learning for them was with their colleagues. Overall, this study states that there is need for a better understanding of formal and informal teacher learning.

Over the last ten years, the Ontario government implemented different professional learning programs for teachers. Most recently, the Ministry spearheaded a two-phase process to address teachers' learning concerns. Phase one established the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) to help retain teachers who were new to the profession and also increased the number of annual PD days to six. Phase two involved a working table discussion with all of the teaching organizations in Ontario to discuss experienced teacher learning. An international literature review on professional learning for experienced teachers conducted by independent researchers, Broad and Evans (2006), was presented at the working table with the following conclusions: first, there is no single mode of professional learning that fits all teachers; second, as adult learners it is essential for them to see the relevance, meaning and be given choice in their learning; third, teachers take different career paths and have different objectives, which need to be met by professional learning; and fourth, it is common to offer incentives for participation in professional learning, however the benefit of such an action is still unclear. The working table agreed that the following five characteristics should be present in all professional learning: (1) coherence, (2) attentive to adult learning styles, (3) goal-orientated, (4) sustainable, and (5) evidence-informed (Ministry 2007).

Physical education teacher education

There is global recognition of the importance of continual professional learning of physical educators to maintain up-to-date, quality PE programs (Armour 2009; NASPE 2007), along with many recent recommendations of how professional learning should be

delivered in order to provide experienced teachers with the most appropriate learning opportunities (Armour and Yelling 2007; Bechtel and O'Sullivan 2007; Ministry 2007; O'Sullivan and Deglau 2006). The current body of literature on experienced PE teacher learning is primarily from the UK and the USA, and was traditionally focused on formal (offsite) professional learning (Armour and Yelling 2004a; Deglau et al. 2006), or learning to teach a new curriculum (Ko, Wallhead and Ward 2006; McCaughtry et al. 2004; Rovegno and Bandhauer 1998). The following will address in a more detailed manner two studies by leading UK researchers in the area of experienced physical educators' continual professional learning.

Armour and Yelling (2007) conducted a two-year study on the continuing professional development (CPD) of experienced PE teachers in England. In the first phase, they interviewed 20 experienced physical educators and identified 6 themes in their learning; the following three are of primary importance to the current study: first, CPD was lacking in depth and challenge; second, research in PE was rarely consulted; and third, professional learning was lacking in coherence and progression (Armour and Yelling 2004a).

The questionnaire in phase two of Armour and Yelling's study identified the physical educators' perspectives on the "meaning of effectiveness" of CPD and the link between CPD and teachers' aim for student achievement. This phase had four main findings: (1) the main source of professional development was sport-specific courses; (2) teachers engaged in little progressive or sustained learning; (3) effective professional development is practical, relevant and applicable; and, (4) the main concerns were based on financial issues, time issues and quality of replacement teachers (Armour and Yelling

2004b). The final phase examined the professional learning of participants during a year. The results identified that PE teachers place high value on learning from colleagues. Furthermore, they found that typical professional development is difficult to apply to a specific school context and teachers compensated for poor learning content through engaging in informal collaboration with their colleagues also in attendance. For the participants, efficiency and quality of learning are key contributors to a positive learning experience.

O'Sullivan (2006) conducted a study on 66 PE teachers with over 20 years of experience on how they lived through the cultural norms of the time, what they expected of the Irish education system and their critique of the role professional development has played over the course of their career. There are two key findings that directly apply to present study. First, the teachers addressed how much of their career was spent working in isolation from professional colleagues, resulting in them rarely being able to benefit from the interactions with colleagues. The second finding showed the need to provide professional development and with variation to accommodate different career stages.

In addition to what the previous two studies have found, physical educators have unique working conditions that influence professional learning. Examples of such conditions are how PE departments are often physically (Armour and Yelling 2004b) and socially isolated (Ward and O'Sullivan 1998) from teachers in other subject areas. This isolation contributes to a preexisting marginalization of PE in schools (Stroot and Ko 2006). Specifically in Ontario, academics that involve numeracy and literacy are prioritized over PE at both the provincial and district levels. For instance, the Ministry only requires students to earn one PE credit in their final four years to graduate. This

prioritization of secondary PE has filtered down to the district where teacher professional learning is highly influenced by student results on standardized academic testing.

Consequently, there is little professional learning offered by the district that is specific to PE. Therefore, it is within such a context that it became important to better understand how experienced physical educators are engaging in professional learning. This study will aim to identify: (1) what professional learning opportunities experienced physical educators participating in; and (2) what influences their participation in professional learning.

Illeris' "double perspective for learning in working life"

The present study used Illeris' (2004, 2007) "double perspective for learning in working life," as the theoretical framework. Illeris combined a general model of learning (Illeris, 2007) with a model of learning in working life (Jorgenson & Warring, 2003) putting equal emphasis on the individual and the work environment during learning. As a result, this model focuses on learning that occurs within working life. Working life encompasses all work related learning, which is defined by Illeris (2004) as taking place in the workplace and in other contexts including courses, offsite professional development, networks, and work-related situations. Illeris' (2007) double perspective model, including both an individual learning process and the work environment will be described.

The Individual learning process in the double perspective model is separated into two dimensions: learning content and learning incentive. Illeris (2007) believes that with learning there is always someone (incentive) learning something (learning content). Learning content can be described as the readiness and ability of the learner to process

what is to be learned and the critical ability of the learner to process what has been learned. Learning incentive is described as providing the necessary mental energy for the learning to occur. This mental energy has many forms, including motivation, emotion, and attitude. It is through the interactions between the learning content, learning incentive and the work environment that the individual's work identity is formed.

The work environment of Illeris' (2007) double perspective model contains the two dimensions of the social-cultural learning environment and the technical-organizational learning environment. These dimensions are inherent in all learning experiences in the workplace. The social-cultural dimension is influenced by how colleagues interact in their specific environment, and what cultural norms exist with respect to learning, whereas the technical-organizational dimension is concerned with what the organization offers in terms of professional learning. Some examples of the technical-organizational influences are: the way in which employers support and encourage learning, the financial rewards for learning, the organization of the workplace to influence learning, and the effect of stress and strain of a job influence on professional learning.

The working practice of an individual is created from the interactions between the technical-organizational learning environment, the social-cultural learning environment and the individual. Illeris' (2007) model suggests that learning in working life only occurs when the working practice of the organization and the work identity of the individual overlap. However, learning unrelated to the profession can occur but only where one's working practice and working life do not overlap. Illeris' double perspective

for learning in working life points us towards a more holistic view that until recently has not been used to study teacher learning.

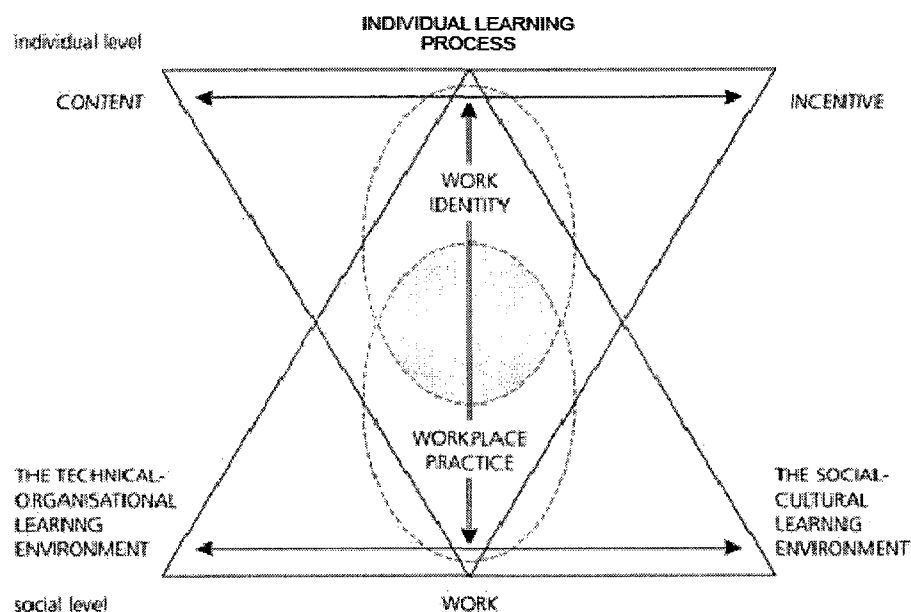


Figure 1. Illeris' (2007) model for learning in working life.

Methods

Case study

A collective case study design, containing 12 cases, was used to better understand the issue of experienced physical education teachers' professional learning. Each case provided unique information about the ways PE teachers learning and what influences their learning based on their specific context. Creswell clearly defines a collective case study as one that contains "multiple cases to illustrate the issue" (2007, p.74).

Consequently, the researcher was able to identify similarities and differences between the 12 participants regarding the way they learn and what influences their learning. These

strengths of a collective case study design directly apply to teachers' learning since teachers have unique cognitive structures based upon past experiences, and the context in which they are teaching may or may not be supportive to their learning process (Day, 1999).

Participants

The participants were selected using purposeful sampling (Patton 2002). The sample consisted of twelve participants, seven female and five male, including a total of three PE department heads. All participants contributed to school extra-curriculars through coaching. The selection criteria required the participants to have a minimum of five years experience teaching high school PE and be currently employed by publicly funded schools in Ontario. All the participants had a minimum of six years experience teaching PE up to a maximum of 26 years.

The data was collected at three schools, two suburban and one urban, each with over 900 students. The participants have shared offices with other physical educators that are located near the gymnasium, and typically physically isolated from teachers in other subject areas.

Data collection and data analysis

The present study consists of two phases of research. The purpose of phase one was to identify the ways experienced teachers learn. This was conducted through three 90-minute focus groups, which contained a series of semi-structured, open-ended questions that each participant answered individually (Morgan, 2002). The focus groups created an environment that allowed for listening to and sharing of ideas, which allowed the participants to recall shared learning experiences and learning norms within their

school context (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). Furthermore, such an environment helped provide additional self-awareness and reaffirmation to their learning in working life. The second phase involved all the teachers participating in an individual interview six to eight weeks following the focus groups. Information from the focus group guided the first half of the interview. The semi-structured portion of the interview provided direction to the interview as well as flexibility, allowing for the interview to go in different directions depending on the participant. Further, the researcher used Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interview style permitting the interview process to be dynamic and interactive. All data collection occurred at the participants' workplace, was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The first analysis using Nvivo 7 software started with the focus groups and continued through the individual interviews. The researcher conducted an in-depth content analysis (Patton 2002) using Coombs (1974) definitions of formal, nonformal and informal learning to identify the ways physical educators learned. Formal learning is highly-organized, typified by having a specific curriculum and ending with the individual obtaining a grade or certification. Nonformal learning is organized learning held outside of formal learning and does not result in a grade or a certification. Finally, Coombs defines informal learning as a "lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment" (1974, 8). In a second phase of analysis, all interview transcripts were coded with a deductive content analysis using Illeris' (2007) "model for learning in working life." Deductive content analysis identified influences on learning choice while also bringing attention to the similarities and differences between cases

(Patton). Since Illeris' (2007) double-perspective model pertains only to influences in working life, a fifth dimension—personal life—was identified and data was coded to include this dimension. The dimension of learning incentive was three times the size of the other dimensions and was further analyzed using inductive analysis identifying themes of motivation, emotion and attitude.

Four strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. First, member checking was employed with the transcripts (Miles and Huberman 1994). Each participant was given the opportunity to review the data and revoke, change or add to both the focus group and interview transcripts. Second, two peer reviewers were used to monitor researcher bias through providing an objective view on the material and the sharing of ideas and strategies through the research process. Third, three analysts were used to allow triangulation of the data analysis (Patton 2002). The average consistency between the three analysts was over 90% on all coded material, which Miles and Huberman (1994) state as the optimal level. Fourth, the researcher used self-reflection to ensure the quality of the research. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that as a researcher, one will hold preconceptions and biases. To monitor the self-reflection process, the researcher reviewed the transcripts to ensure that she was not leading the participants and that the probing and follow-up questions are used at appropriate times. Allowing time between interviews provided the opportunity for reflection in addition to preventing fatigue.

Results and Discussion

The participants experienced a number of learning opportunities during their teaching career. The following is a list of many of learning activities, which they participated in:

- Formal; additional qualifications, certification courses, post graduate degrees
- Nonformal; conferences, school board workshops, PD days, staff meetings
- Informal; collaboration with colleagues, personal experience, reading

Participating in a wide range of learning opportunities allowed the PE teachers' learning needs to be better met. The remainder results will be presented using Illeris' (2007) four dimensions of learning in working life, learning content, learning incentive, social-cultural learning environment and technical-organizational learning environment. In addition, the emerging dimension of personal life will also be presented. In all cases the participants' identities have been protected with the use of pseudonyms.

Learning content

None of the teachers cited difficulty in dealing with the learning content as a barrier to participating in learning. A possible reason for this is that all the teachers in this study have at least one university degree and all but one had taken their honours specialist in PE or completed a master's degree. Carmen described annual professional development offered by the district as being "very good for learning new activities but once you've been in the profession for awhile you kind of know those activities, so there's no progression in there of any higher learning." It can be argued, that as a highly educated group, the participants may have developed some strategies over the years to deal with difficult content; or perhaps the content is not difficult. For example, when Tyler was asked why he wasn't able to read the publications given to him he responded with "Oh I am able to, honestly I am." Tyler did not feel he would have difficulty in understanding the content of the publications. Instead, he simply felt that he did not have time. The issue of time will be developed further in the paper.

It is primarily through informal social interactions and self-directed learning that many of the teachers felt their previously held conceptions were added to, challenged or confirmed. For example, Tyler had a specific experience with an additional qualification that he described as “the content that was delivered wasn’t earth shattering... but it was the collegiality I found that great.” Similar to the findings of O’Sullivan (2006) the results of this study indicate that mass delivery of professional learning is difficult given the individual needs of experienced teachers, therefore often leading to an unsatisfactory professional learning experience. Similar to O’Sullivan’s findings, Carmen “resented sitting there and learning nothing,” when she took her honour’s specialist. The effect of the school and school board on PE teachers learning will be discussed further as part of the technical-organizational learning environment.

Learning incentive

All the participants actively sought out professional learning to address their individual needs, resulting in each participant learning in different ways including, but not limited to, reading, observing, and collaboration. In fact, Darcy felt that the most beneficial type of learning to him occurred when “you take the initiative... because you feel it’s what you need or what you want.” For example, Sherry viewed her colleagues as “resources in the department” who she could access to learn more about specific sports. Through the interview process, emotion, motivation and attitude were factors that influenced the participant’s learning incentive.

Emotion

The interviews revealed strong emotions among the participants relating to their work and the role of professional learning. There was an overwhelming consensus that

all the participants had positive feelings about their work, in fact, over half of them stated that they “love their job.” When Darcy was asked why he continued to learn, he responded with “I love my job. I love my field. I love my students. I think my job is great. I want to do the best job I can because it’s important.” Most of the participants felt that continual learning was a key component for them to do their “best job.”

Interestingly, Tyler felt as PE teachers they were “all quite competitive and [they] all have a sense of pride and want to do the best job [they] can.” It is not clear from this data if the competitive nature of many physical educators encourages learning for everyone but it certainly did for some of these participants. As educators, they not only viewed learning as something essential to do their job well, but they also enjoyed learning. Laura revealed, “I realized that I really enjoy learning, whether it’s formal or informal and I find that I need it.” It is interesting to note that Henninger (2007) conducted a study identifying two types of experienced teachers, lifers and troupers. The lifers exhibited a commitment to teaching and their students learning through all circumstances, in contrast, the troupers were essentially “biding their time” (2007, 138). For example, Tracy believed that “if you’re a motivated kind of person and you’re really interested in getting better, you’ll watch your colleagues, you’ll find outside sources to learn.” The participants in the present study exhibited enthusiasm and desire to do their best, which are two central characteristics of Henninger’s lifers.

Motivation

The participants were highly motivated and frequently took learning into their own hands. Two main motivators were identified: their students, and themselves. For example, Tracy would research on the internet and read because she felt “it’s interesting

and that [she's] motivated to learn because [she] wants to make teaching interesting for [herself]." In addition, the teachers felt a responsibility to their students to offer them the best possible PE program where they can learn about physical activity and develop as individuals. "After all PE isn't just about running laps and doing push-ups;" as Dale declared, it is "physical activity and learning to enjoy it and wanting to continue it on through your life."

Second, most of the participants felt similar to Tracy's stance that, "as a teacher you could come in and really not progress at all, if you didn't go and search out professional learning. It wouldn't just come to you." Tracy described how easily a teacher could choose not to learn, but felt, this attitude would not serve well in an elective subject area such as PE. Christina explains that since PE is an elective subject "If our enrollments go down then we thin out in PE, and go back to our second teachables." Therefore if student enrollment goes down so does the number of teachers needed to teach PE at that school. The teachers in this study continued learning so that they could keep themselves and their students interested in the PE curriculum. Tracy described why she feels variety in the classes is not only important to keep the students interest but also for the teachers.

If you did the same thing as when you first came into teaching, it would be horrible. I can't imagine it myself, because trying new things is the fun part. It's seeing how things work and how they don't work and that makes it kind of interesting otherwise teaching would be pretty boring.

Furthermore, Carmen was of the opinion that the quality of the lesson is directly linked to the teacher,

I know it's all about the kids but really it's all about the teacher. Because if the teacher's not doing a good job of running the class then to me the class will go haywire. I have to come up with something that is going to motivate me in front of that class.

A unique finding of this study was how teachers engaged in professional learning to keep them motivated with their teaching.

Attitude

The experience of these teachers led to some strongly held attitudes. In particular, the participants believed that learning in their career was essential to their success as teachers. Ultimately, teaching is not easy at the best of times, and Sherry explains why her professional learning is imperative:

if you don't enjoy doing teaching it would be a horrible day, it would be just a horrid way to make a living. You have to learn and if you aren't willing to learn and be open to stuff maybe you should find something else, some other way to pay your bills because teaching will not be it.

Additionally, Carmen explains why reflecting on her teaching is so important to her:

teaching can be very stressful so if you reflect and make your lessons better for the next time then you are going to enjoy your job more. You're not going to be as sick, you're not going to be ugly to people, you're going to be a happier person.

Social-cultural learning environment

The teachers in this study have similar social and cultural experiences regarding learning. All the participants coach extra-curricular sports within the school and have an openness to learn from different people.

Coaching

In schools, there is a cultural expectation that the PE teachers should be involved with extra-curricular sport activities. The teachers in this study coached, managed teams, or organized activity-related pursuits such as intramural programs. As an athletic director Sherry played a slightly different role in her schools athletics by being “a field hockey coach... [and] also manag[ing] sports teams just to make sure they got off the ground.” Sherry managed teams to attract coaches who would not coach because they did not want the extra administration work that comes with coaching. In many cases, their coaching responsibilities influenced their availability to participate in formal and nonformal professional learning. Further, all of the participants took part in coach education courses for professional learning purposes, and this finding agrees with the findings of Armour and Yelling (2004b) and O’Sullivan (2006).

The participants felt that coaching responsibilities were a considerable time commitment in addition to regular teaching duties. Stuart shared that the teachers in his department use collaborative learning, as a quick form of learning, since “they are quite busy because coach all the time.” Laura explained how balancing coaching and teaching duties influenced her professional learning. “If you coach a lot and do a lot of different activities you are already missing a lot of school, so taking another additional day off, [for professional learning] you kind of feel guilty that you want to do that.” So these teachers wanted to learn; but found, the demands of their teaching and coaching responsibilities limited their learning participation in formal and nonformal learning. Consequently, the teachers in this study chose to learn in ways where they could get the maximum amount of learning in a short period of time. For example, Dale expressed that

learning for him “doesn’t have to be formal... and people don’t like sitting down for long periods of time to discuss stuff that could take 5 seconds.

Open to variety of sources

The participants expressed an openness to learn from a variety of people including students, parents, student teachers, and colleagues. The following quotes explain why they are open to learning from such a variety of sources:

Students:

Students are a wealth of knowledge, in certain areas. They don’t have the broad base that a more experienced teacher would have but they could be really focused in a certain area and know an awful lot about that certain area, even more than yourself. -Kim

Parents:

Talking to parents is immensely helpful in doing the best you can for the student. -Toni

Student teachers:

They come in with a lot of new things, new ideas [games of low organization and different teaching strategies]... that’s where I get a lot of my new stuff from. -Carmen

Colleagues:

Colleagues are a wealth of information... everyone views things in different ways especially in phys ed... I don’t know I just kind of assume that everyone in the teaching profession does that regardless of your teachables. You’ve got all these resources right around you, why not use them and share and learn from them? I just figure that’s the norm. -Toni

Sherry not only felt learning from colleagues was beneficial but that it would be detrimental to not learn with and from colleagues: “If you choose to live as an island it would be so at your peril... it just makes more sense to have more brains on the

problem.” All the participants learned from other people and in particular from their PE colleagues in their department.

Technical - organizational learning environment

The researcher noted multiple ways that the organization of the workplace influenced the professional learning of the participants. All the participants’ felt professional learning was rewarded by their employers, but inhibited by the daily stresses of their job. In addition, as PE teachers the participants exhibited some unique challenges to their professional learning.

Rewards for learning

Rewards from employers were in the form of an increase in salary, potential promotion, and retention of employment. Every teacher in this study who took the honours specialist in PE noted an increase in pay as a reason for taking the course. Many participants clearly stated that they would not have taken the course if it did not contribute to an increase in their pay. For example, when Carmen was asked why she took her honour’s specialist in PE she expressed “Would I have taken my honour’s specialist if was I already at the highest pay level? Would I have done it? Probably no.” Other teachers took additional qualifications or school board workshops initially to garner employment early in their career, while others took them for promotion later in their careers. Linda stated that she pursued business courses early on so she “could fulfill the requirements for the job” where Tyler took his honour’s specialist in PE “because [he] wanted to be head of department one day.” Interestingly, the teachers identified informal learning as the type of learning they participate in most often and they do not receive any financial reward for learning informally.

Inhibitions to learning

Two main factors - lack of time and being away from their classes - inhibited the PE teachers' participation in professional learning. All of the participants cited lack of time as a reason for not taking part in formal and nonformal learning, resulting in them choosing time efficient informal learning methods. For example, Carmen "informally learning in her spare time... because it's the only time you get to do learning because [they] are all so busy." Amour and Yelling (2007) found that their participants also elected to use informal learning that was flexible, accessible and free when there were barriers to participating in formal or nonformal learning. A second stress expressed by the teachers was being absent from their class to attend many of the workshops, conferences and formal learning opportunities. The participants did not like to be away from their classes, as they clearly demonstrated a passion for their profession and wanted to give the best to their students. Kim explains why PD during a school day is not worthwhile for him,

I find the reward for missing work doesn't outweigh the pain... I would rather be at work working then have someone else come in or have my kids go to the caf [cafeteria] for a day... so when you have to miss school to go do these [district provided workshops] I don't find it worthwhile.

PE Teachers professional learning

The physical educators in this study faced a variety of influences that can be attributed directly to their employers and current work environment. First, all the physical educators in this study share offices with other PE teachers near their teaching facilities. This physical arrangement of their work environment lead to participants observing other teacher's classes either through windows in offices or from walking

through the gymnasium. On daily trips to the main office Darcy cuts “through the gym as opposed to going through the change room because that way it allows [him] to observe whoever is teaching in there.” Furthermore, due to the fact that they also share the same facility Sherry felt that she gets “to watch teacher’s teach much more than a standard teacher,” who does not share a facility. Essentially, the organization of the PE departments necessitated daily communication, to ensure smooth running of their PE programs. The PE teachers in this study have other physical educators in close proximity with whom they can share ideas with, learn from and take from each other’s experiences

Second, the professional development that the district and the OCT offered PE teachers rarely met their professional needs as experienced teachers. Carmen described the yearly PE PD day as “very good for learning new PE activities but once you’ve been in the profession for awhile you kind of know those activities, so there’s no progression in there of any higher learning.” Similarly, Sherry felt that PD days were targeted at teachers with zero to five years teaching experience and were focused on

dealing with very basic behaviour management and assessment and evaluation...

[she was] passed a lot of that, and recognized that [the district] needs to meet the needs of those newer staff. That’s a bigger priority than meeting [her] needs

because [she] is more of independent learner for those issues than the newer staff.

Both teachers specifically felt that current professional learning was directed towards new teachers and they needed to learn other ways to meet their learning needs. This finding helps to explain Smaller’s (2005) findings that more experienced teachers’ participated in less formal learning and more informal learning than novice teachers.

Regarding formal learning offered by the OCT, ten out of twelve teachers in this study had their honours specialist in PE. Of the ten, eight had taken it within the first five

years of teaching and all eight found it to benefit their teaching. Interestingly, the two teachers who took the same course after teaching PE for over five years had different opinions. Paul felt the academic and instruction side of the course to be lacking but had a positive experience due to the collegiality in the course. Carmen, on the other hand, clearly expressed her disappointment with the course: “I resented sitting there, with 20 other people, learning nothing, to be quite honest.” The feeling that professional learning does not providing enough depth and challenge is consistent with the PE teacher in Armour and Yelling’s (2007) study.

Personal life

The participants in the study all had factors in their personal life that influenced their choices of professional learning. For instance, eleven of the twelve teachers have their honours specialist or equivalent and nine took it before they had young children at home. The only teacher who did not have her honours specialist felt it was more important to spend summer holidays with her family. Family was the primary reason for the participants not engaging in professional learning outside of the workplace, with ten out of twelve of the teachers in this study having children and seven of them had children under the age of 12. All 12 teachers felt having a young family influenced their formal, nonformal and informal learning choices. For example Toni stated “I’m not going to get a babysitter for the kids for four days so I can go to a conference.” Similarly, Dale indicated “I won’t stick my wife alone with the kids for a weekend for anything I don’t see as being very important.” Having children made the participants more selective of their professional learning and they opted to participate in learning that they could do in a

short amount of time. Christina clearly expressed how having children influenced her professional learning:

before kids I was able to do all of this [conferences, district workshops, certification courses] where that just doesn't happen anymore. But I don't want to use that as an excuse, it isn't, but it's part of your life so it has to be.

Christina explained that family commitments were part of her life and they had an effect on her professional learning. Christina was not unique in that sense. Her challenges with balancing her personal commitments and work were expressed by the majority of the participants. In addition to family commitments, Laura indicated that financial responsibilities required her to work during the summer so she was not available to take AQs. In this study, personal life was one of the most commonly mentioned factors determining teachers' participation in learning. Sherry explained it clearly when she said, "I guess I'm only willing to do what fits in my personal life." This finding is notable since the literature on experienced physical educators has not identified personal life a key factor in learning participation. This perhaps is due to the fact that previous teacher learning literature was highly focused on the individual learning construction of teachers (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005).

Conclusion

This paper identified the professional learning opportunities available to physical educators and the factors influencing their participation in professional learning. All the participants engaged in a variety of professional learning opportunities. Moreover, the workplace learning theory of Illeris (2007) provided a comprehensive view to PE teachers' learning, through addressing learning from both the individual and the environment perspectives. The physical educators in this study experienced a number of

factors that either encouraged or prevented their continual professional learning.

Specifically, the participants favoured professional learning they viewed as valuable, time efficient, and practical. Professional learning was clearly influenced by the individual, the environment and the participants' personal lives.

Three findings addressed gaps in the secondary PE teacher literature. First, the participants engaged in professional learning to keep the students interested but more importantly, learning kept them interested and excited in their work. Second, all the participants' personal lives had an impact on their professional learning. In particular, family and personal commitments led to the participants largely preferring the flexibility of informal learning. Third, physical educators' extra-curricular commitments influenced their availability to participate in formal and nonformal professional learning opportunities.

This study identified what influenced the professional learning of twelve experienced Ontarian physical educators. In addressing these questions, additional queries were brought to light. To begin with, in order to provide a more complete understanding to Canadian context of experienced physical educators further study is needed across Canada. It was clear physical educators want to learn, however, they want learning to be accessible, contextual, and challenging. For this to occur, we need to further investigate how teachers and professional learning providers can work together to ensure all the parties' needs are met. As identified in previous studies, physical educators participate in coach education as a form of professional learning. Nevertheless, further studies need to be conducted to understand the influence of coach education on teaching PE. Finally, "each teacher has the potential to make an impact – positive or negative –

upon hundreds of thousands of pupils,” (Armour 2009) therefore, quality PE programs need quality PE teachers. Since physical educators are largely responsible for their professional learning, we need to continue to investigate issues surrounding professional learning to better understand how it can have influence on the quality of teaching provided in our school system.

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Article 2: What Do They Think: Experienced physical education teachers' thoughts and feelings concerning professional learning

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What Do They Think: Experienced physical education teachers' thoughts and feelings concerning professional learning.

Abstract

Professional learning is viewed as a crucial component for a successful teaching career. Throughout a career, teachers will have many opportunities made available to them to participate in professional learning. This paper has conducted interviews of 12 experienced physical education teachers to better understand their thoughts and feelings regarding professional learning that is made available to them; more specifically, through the Ministry of Education, the district school board and the school. This paper will argue that there is a need for changes in how current professional learning is offered to experienced physical education teachers in order for them to feel their learning needs are being met and to continue to enhance their teaching expertise

Introduction

There is a belief that teacher learning is directly linked to student learning (OCT, 2006). But what, exactly, do we know about teachers' learning - in particular experienced physical educators' professional learning? Traditionally, research on experienced physical educators professional learning has been focused on formal (offsite) learning (Armour & Yelling, 2004; Deglau, Ward, O'Sullivan, & Bush, 2006), or learning how to teach a new curriculum (Ko, Wallhead, & Ward, 2006; McCaughtry, Sofo, Rovegno, & Curtner-Smith, 2004; Rovegno & Bandhauer, 1998). This paper aims to identify professional learning that is offered to physical educators, and their thoughts feelings towards the provided professional learning. Furthermore, this paper adds a

Canadian perspective to the literature on experienced physical educators' professional learning.

In Canada, each provincial or territorial government has jurisdiction over public education. The government division in control of elementary and secondary education in Ontario is the Ministry of Education (Ministry). The Ministry's responsibilities are province wide and include curriculum development and renewal; setting requirements for graduation; and providing funding to the district school boards (district). The district presides over the professional learning offered to teachers within their physical boundaries and thus, is also responsible for developing policies for professional learning. It is a commonly held belief that policies set by government and local policy makers greatly influence teachers' daily actions including professional development (Armour & Duncombe, 2004; Garet, Porter, Birman & Yoon, 2001). Previous studies on teacher professional learning identified that teachers learn in formal, nonformal or informal ways (Armour & Yelling, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2006; Smaller, 2005) and that professional learning in its many forms is necessary in developing quality educators (Chapmen, Gaff, Toomey & Aspin, 2005; Colbert, Brown, Choi & Thomas, 2008).

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) strongly encourages all teachers to engage in professional learning that is tailored to their needs. The Ministry further recognizes that learning occurs throughout a teaching career and has committed to inquiring into continual professional learning for all teachers, both novice and experienced (Ministry, 2004, 2007). It is argued that experienced teachers learn differently and that they should be included in the planning of their learning for it to be meaningful and meet their needs (Day, 1999; Ministry, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2006).

This paper uses Fullan's (2003) tri-level design to investigate the professional learning offered to teachers. It takes the view that professional learning for teachers is more than an individual act and needs to be supported by all levels in the education system. Fullan was a key Canadian contributor to the research on school reform in the 1990's and early 2000's. This paper identifies professional learning opportunities offered to PE teachers from Fullan's three levels, and their thoughts and feeling about the professional learning.

Research Context

Fullan's Tri-level reform

Fullan's (2003) tri-level reform introduces the idea that there needs to be involvement within and between the school, district and provincial Ministry for reforms to be successful. Professional continual learning is a key component of those reforms. To begin with, a school's impact on learning is primarily dependent on a constantly changing school environment (Fullan, 1999). Teachers must learn to adapt to their working environments to provide the best learning opportunities to students. Fullan (2003) identifies collaborative learning, which is reciprocal in nature, as a key method of professional learning between staff members. A second element at the school level is administration and teacher leaders who can help to increase professional learning (Fullan, 2003). It can be argued, then, that in order for professional learning to meet the needs of the ever changing school environment, teachers must engage in a variety of learning opportunities.

The district has a substantial influence over professional learning and larger districts face the challenge of trying to address the needs of their numerous employees

(Fullan, 2001). Furthermore, the district has to balance the politically-driven policies of the Ministry with the individual needs of schools and teachers; priorities in the district are often highly-influenced by policies that are delivered by the provincial government (Fullan, 2003). The Ministry faces the challenge of creating policies that can positively impact all districts and schools, which Fullan (2003) identifies as a complex process. In addition to creating policies, the provincial government also has to convince the teachers and administrators of the benefit of the created policies. It is important to note that Fullan (2003) argues that professional development can be helped or hindered by each level above it. The provincial government, therefore, influences both the district and the schools, while the district primarily influences the schools. The tri-level design brings attention to how each level, and interactions between levels, influences professional learning. The tri-levels will be further expanded using the teacher and physical education teacher literature in coming sections.

The Province

The Ministry is the major source of funding received by the district school boards. Annual funding from the Ministry to the districts is allocated through grants to cover all costs of running schools, including, but not limited to: school maintenance, curriculum supplies, and employee salaries. School boards' spending is often highly influenced by the Ministry's priorities. The Ministry's current priorities are: (1) Success for Students, (2) Strong People, Strong Economy, and (3) Better Health (Ministry, 2008). The healthy school strategy was put in place to address the Ministry's priority of better health, and it "is focused on supporting learning and growing through good food, daily physical activity and health promotion" (2008, p.9). The majority of the healthy school strategies

are directed towards elementary schools, which is likely a result of students only requiring one secondary PE credit to graduate. The Ministry further requires all teachers in publicly funded schools to hold certification or interim certification of qualification issued by the OCT.

The Ministry established the OCT for teachers “to regulate the profession of teaching and to govern its members” (Ministry, 1996). Responsibilities of the OCT included the development and enforcement of the standards of practice and conduct. Specifically, the OCT has developed the Foundations of Practice, which include the ethical standards, the standards of practice and the professional learning framework. The ethical standards guide the actions and behaviours of Ontarian educators and are reflected in all actions of the OCT.

The standards of practice reflect a collective vision of goals and aspirations used to guide teachers’ professional actions (OCT, 2006). Each standard is associated with a specific aspect of teacher professional learning. First, commitment to students is demonstrated through teachers' adaptation of the curriculum to ensure that students' learning needs are met. The second, professional knowledge, is the outcome of learning; it is therefore important to better understand the learning process that leads to the achievement of this outcome. Third, professional practice, requires teachers to, “refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection”, all of which are situations of learning (OCT, p.13). Fourth, participation in a learning community, involves “collaborative partnerships, reflective dialogue, inquiry and self-directed learning” (OCT, p.19) between colleagues, administration, parents, and students. The OCT believes that learning communities promote student success by sharing school

responsibilities, planning, and development of initiatives and ideas. Finally, ongoing professional learning recognizes the importance of participation in a variety of professional learning opportunities throughout a teaching career. The OCT further expands on professional learning in the professional learning framework.

The professional learning framework identifies many of the ways teachers can learn within it (OCT, 2006). Formal learning opportunities offered by the OCT are in the form of accredited standard-based learning including additional basic qualifications (ABQs) and additional qualifications (AQs). Upon completion, teachers are qualified to teach in that subject area or subject level. In addition to accredited learning, the OCT acknowledges that teachers participate in, and organize, less formalized professional learning opportunities: “The range of opportunities reflects the complexity of the teaching profession and identifies ways that educators remain current in their practice” (OCT, p.24). This is consistent with the argument that increased variety in teacher learning is essential in meeting the needs of experienced teachers (Broad & Evans, 2006; O’Sullivan, 2006).

Fullan (2003) would agree that the Ministry and OCT clearly exert a significant influence over teacher professional learning. Similar to Ontario, Armour and Duncombe (2004) found that local authorities in England are largely responsible for delivering professional learning to teachers. Their study also found that, with a large increase in funding for PE professional learning local authorities were able to provide more and better learning opportunities. This was identified as leading to an increase in accountability on the part of the teachers, in that the teachers were required to demonstrate that students were in fact benefiting from the teachers’ participation in

professional learning. Furthermore, the OCT provides accredited learning opportunities and the Ministry provides funding for professional learning. Both of these encourage teachers to learn outside their school environments and bring new information back to the school. This is important since Keay (2005) found that if teachers only collaborate within their school, it might only reinforce pre-established behaviour. As Fullan (2003) identified, this would not address the needs of a changing education environment.

District

The Ottawa-Carleton district school board (OCDSB) is required to provide professional learning opportunities to their teachers according to the collective agreement with the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation. The actions of the district are directed by the focus areas presented in the strategic plan developed by the OCDSB. The current four-year strategic plan, starting in 2007, has focus areas in learning, leadership and community. Each year the strategic plan is adjusted to better address the focus areas. The Ministry funds most professional learning, but the funding must be used to meet specified objectives.

The district has many divisions to address the needs of a large district. There are three divisions that control most of teacher professional learning: quality assurance, staff development, and curriculum services. Quality assurance plays the role of collecting student data from provincial and district standardized testing in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as student success indicators (graduation rates, yearly credit accumulation and credits earned) (OCDSB, 2008). Staff development provides support and professional development for new teachers; they accomplish this through the new teacher induction program and strategies for success program. Curriculum services use the

information gathered by the quality assurance division and the priorities of the Ministry to guide the delivery of the following year's professional learning opportunities.

Consequently, most of the professional development is produced in the areas of assessment and evaluation, literacy, numeracy, and differentiated learning instruction (OCDSB).

However, the district still offers professional learning opportunities to all teachers in all subject areas including, but not limited to, physical education, English, science and math. Forty full-time teachers are employed by the district as instructional coaches to apply for and allocate funding that professional learning in their area of expertise. PE is given very little funding from the district; consequently, PE professional learning is funded by outside agencies resulting in them having significant influence over PE teacher learning. In the 2007–2008 school year, professional learning for PE teachers provided by the district included certifying PE teachers in automatic external defibrillator and cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction, and producing a resource for the health component about healthy relationships. The district also provides annual funding for one professional activity day where each subject area is responsible for organizing professional learning. Furthermore, money is available for teachers to organize and plan their own professional development workshops and to cover partial costs for conference attendance. The district believes that professional learning is involved in continual improvement of teachers and the education they provide to students (OCDSB, 2008).

It is generally agreed in the literature that the district has a large influence on teachers' professional learning (Armour & Yelling, 2007; Broad & Evans, 2006; Engstrom & Danielson, 2006; Fullan 2003; Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004). This

influence often results in teachers having very little input in their learning. For example, Colbert et al. (2008) found that experienced teachers felt the provided professional learning opportunities “were rather repetitive and not particularly tailored to their needs. Consequently, they were hoping to have new types of professional development programs which updated and enhanced their instructional capabilities in the areas that they felt needed most improvement” (p.143-144). Furthermore, it has been identified that experienced teachers have unique learning needs and need variety in their learning (Armour & Yelling, 2007; Broad & Evans, 2006; and O’Sullivan, 2006). As Fullan (2003) identified, large school boards face the challenge of trying to provide professional learning that will meet the needs of each individual employee.

School

Professional learning that occurs within a school has the unique quality of being conducted in the teachers’ working context, whether they are engaging in professional conversations with colleagues or participating in professional learning provided by the administration. It is within this context that all school-based professional learning occurs. It is noted that school leadership, administration and head teachers are influential on all activities associated with the running of the school (Colbert et al., 2008; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Administrations that have the trust of teaching staff will find that the teachers will support the aims of the administration (Walstrom & Louis, 2008). Lack of trust is largely due to the fact that teachers feel a disconnect between activities that are offered by their administration and what they teach in the classroom (Colbert et al.). In Ontario, the school administration is also in charge of organizing two of three

professional development days for secondary school and the latest Ministry or district objective typically influences these.

Principals are the connection between teachers and the district when it comes to district-wide learning opportunities. The district contacts the principal via e-mail regarding professional learning opportunities and the principal is then responsible for forwarding the e-mail directly to the teachers or to the department head in that subject areas. Further, the administration – both the principal and vice-principal(s) – are responsible to create a working environment that encourages professional learning and, along with the department heads, are largely responsible for encouraging professional learning (Bechtel & O’Sullivan, 2007; Knight, 2002). In addition to teaching full-time, department heads in OCDSB are required to be the heads of two separate departments (and the PE heads are often the athletic director at the school). The department heads play an important role in encouraging staff to participate in professional learning and to share resources and ideas. This concept of informal collegiality between teachers is acknowledged by Armour and Yelling (2007) as an important part of professional learning. However, research has found that if there is no outside influence, these teachers may continue existing practice and not develop new ideas (Keay 2005; Fullan, 2003). Fullan (2003) encourages teachers to also learn from colleagues from other schools and to take part in learning opportunities that are offsite. This article aims to identify professional learning that is offered to physical educators from all three levels and to explore their thoughts and feelings towards the provided professional learning.

Methodology

Research design and participants

The present study employed a collective case study strategy to better understand the specific issue of how experienced PE teachers feel about professional learning that is offered to them (Creswell, 2007). Creswell defines a collective study as one that contains “multiple cases to illustrate the issue (p.74). This was accomplished through purposeful sampling of 12 PE teachers with six to 26 years of teaching experience (Patton, 2002). The thoughts and feelings of these teachers provided insight into experienced PE teachers’ professional learning.

Data collection and data analysis

The data was collected through two phases. First, each participant took part in a focus group with the other PE teachers from their school (N=3). The purpose of the focus group was to identify the ways PE teachers engaged in professional learning. Second, five to six weeks following the focus groups each participant took part in an individual interview. The interviews provided additional depth to why participants chose to participate or not participate in learning opportunities. All data collection occurred at the participants’ workplace, was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The data gathered for this paper went through a primary analysis to identify the ways teachers learn and what influences their participation in professional learning (reported elsewhere – First article). The secondary analysis of the data will be presented in this paper. The researcher conducted a deductive content analysis of the focus groups and individual interviews using Fullan’s (2003) three levels (province, district, and school) to identify how PE teachers feel about professional learning offered to them.

The following strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis of the data. First, the researcher allowed each participant to review and comment on the transcripts as a way to member check (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Second, two peer debriefers monitored researcher bias through providing objective views on the material and the sharing of ideas and strategies through the research process. This was to protect against the preconceptions and biases, which a researcher may hold (Rubin & Rubin 2005). Third, the researcher used self-reflection to ensure the quality of the research. To monitor the self-reflection process, the researcher reviewed the transcripts to ensure that she was not leading the participants and that the probing and follow-up questions are used at appropriate times. Allowing time between interviews provided the opportunity for reflection in addition to preventing fatigue.

Results

Province

Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)' Additional Qualifications (AQ). The thoughts and feelings of the participants towards the OCT's AQs were mostly positive. The primary reasons cited for taking AQs included increase in salary (N=10), retaining employment (N=6) and promotion (N=3). Many of the participants felt AQs were helpful at the time, most having taken them in their first five years of teaching. However, as experienced teachers, none of the 12 teachers had plans to take any formal OCT certifications in the near future. When asked why their thoughts and feelings had changed over time, many of the participants felt the AQs lacked in practicality and were of very little use for their daily teaching. Dale explained that he "could have taken [more, but they were]... huge cost, big time commitment... and a very little of it is valuable

from day-to-day [for his teaching].” Carmen simply felt that she was “five years from retirement so for [me] to do another learning course like that - no, [I do] not need any more additional qualifications.” Instead, Carmen chose to participate in learning through reading, researching and collaborating with her colleagues. The participants also had very strong feeling towards the type of work they were given at the courses. Anne felt much of the work was “a bit of an insult to our intelligence; most people came in with an honours bachelor for sure and some people with masters and doctorates and the kind of work we were doing just seemed ridiculous.” Toni had similar feelings and felt the course assigned “busy work” where participants “regurgitate stuff in a paper” and affirmed that she would choose to go to a conference where she was given choice in her learning before she would take another AQ.

Ministry of Education. The teachers believed that they have a better idea on how to fix and improve issues in their schools since they are the ones teaching in that particular context. One teacher expressed his feelings about the government and why he would not request help with a teaching difficulty:

Once you get a certain distance away from the board... my opinion about some of the people who are at the board office is they're really distanced, they don't seem to get what's going on in the schools. And when you get even further away from the district and you go into the government, you go, 'hey they don't have any idea anyway' so why would I have any questions for them? Why would I ask them because they'll give me more of a government answer than a pedagogy one?

On the other hand, one of the participants had been involved on the technical review board for the PE curriculum, indicating that the Ministry includes people from all levels when designing new curriculum to include perspectives from all levels.

District

General education workshops. The teachers felt the general education workshops offered by the district were a positive experience. Many of the participants had taken courses particularly earlier in their career and felt they were helpful. Only 4 out of 12 teachers participated in district-provided workshops after their first five years of teaching. Three of the four were department heads and participated in a specific day for PE department heads. The fourth teacher was involved in the mentoring program as part of the new teacher induction program. Most of the teachers expressed a desire to participate in district provided workshops, but cited primarily logistical reasons for being unable to. For example, Kim felt that, with many of the workshop occurring shortly after school at a location far from his place of employment, he didn't "have the time to commit to going down there."

Another barrier to participation is the method of relaying workshop information to teachers, which they state is not efficient. Stuart clearly describes the weakness of using e-mail to distribute information about workshops:

Our principal forwards them [PD opportunities] onto the [School] folder. Is that a good thing? I would argue no because I don't read them... I can tell that it's a course; I just click on delete, just because of time constraints. I'll read the title but if it's not a course that I'm interested in I'm not going to read any further. And that's usually where they are selling it right, in that first paragraph that I never read.

District-wide professional development days. The thoughts and feelings of the teachers toward the district-wide professional activity day contrasted. Linda stated that she "enjoy[ed] the district-wide PD days because then you can network with other teachers"; and Toni simply expressed "I love our phys ed specific day" because she could

“choose activities that are in an area that [she’s] not as familiar with.” Of the teachers who did not enjoy the district-wide PD day it was almost always related to the content being impractical or not useful. Carmen called normal PD days “too dull,” Paul felt the PE PD day was “not particularly useful at all,” and Tracy stated that “PD days in general for us are a waste of time.” There was a feeling among participants that the PD days were repetitive, and catered to new teachers, which explains the participants’ feelings.

School

School organized professional development (PD) days. There are two annual PD days that are organized on a school-by-school basis. The content of the day is usually highly influenced by initiatives of the Ministry or school board. For example, Dale expressed “We don’t really get much of a chance to do phys ed learning, it is more around the provincial priorities of literacy and numeracy.” Similarly, Tracy stated that, “most of the PD days that are run by the school are about curriculum, testing and evaluation and assessment.” Consequently, most of the participants have developed negative feelings towards the school-run PD Days.

Overall the participants felt that they were often left sitting and listening to content that did not apply to them. Sherry clearly expressed that she has “a bad taste in her mouth about the PD days run by the school because they are much more broad curriculum based and they are not based on phys ed.” Carmen felt that they were “talked at and not included with” when it came to the content that was delivered. Half of the participants indicated a desire to contribute to the content of the PD days. The last problem participants had with this provided professional learning event was that they were not learning. For example, Christina clearly stated “that we are not learning

anything from them and we are supposed to.” For the above reasons, the PE teachers in this study did not feel that in-school PD days were beneficial.

There was, however, one aspect of the school-based PD days that was consistently reported as positive. The participants in two of the three schools in this study indicated that they were given a portion of the day dedicated for departments to work together. Linda felt that it gave them time to spend on “in-house issues like equipment that we need, planning summative evaluations, planning special days, and planning special events.” Similarly, Laura felt that getting “some time with our department to talk about things is really important.” Communication with other PE teachers was highly valued and will be discussed in more detail shortly.

Staff meetings. The general feeling towards staff meetings is that they are necessary but not enjoyable. Staff meetings generally have three components: general announcements, discussion items and a professional learning portion. The participants feel that much of the shared information is useful but could be done in a more efficient manner. For example, Darcy felt that the staff meetings were repetitive from one meeting to the next, but he thought it was necessary “because with a large staff you need to keep everyone focused on what your goals are, what your tasks are and the things that have to be done by the staff.”

The professional learning component of staff meeting was generally not well-received. There was a feeling that “PD at staff meetings... became this sort of add-on, last-minute, throw-something-together type thing,” or as one participant described “they are an attempt to do PD.” This lack of thought and organization combined with a

meeting which, in their opinion, could be run more effectively, led to negative feelings about staff meetings.

Interactions between teacher colleagues. The collaboration between the participants and their departmental colleagues was the most valued form of professional learning. In fact, Dale felt that “collaborative learning is probably the most important thing that we do.” Similarly, Laura felt that “it’s really important to be able to collaborate with other teachers to figure out how you do things and how they do things, work together.” Similar sentiments were expressed by most of the participants.

Within each school there was a strong feeling of collegiality among the PE department that consequently fostered informal collaborative learning. Tracy expressed that, as a result of their PE teachers having a shared philosophy, they “really worked well as a group and support each other in terms of all the different stuff that we are doing.” For Carmen, the collegiality was important in a different way - she felt that hearing about her colleagues’ professional learning made her want to learn more. Furthermore, collegiality allowed the participants to learn in a quick and efficient manner - in Darcy’s words, “We constantly share ideas... we are big advocates of not reinventing the wheel necessarily all the time and it allows us to manage our time.”

For PE-related issues, the participants had a tendency to consult the other physical educators in their department. In fact, a belief shared among the participants was the importance and preference of learning from their colleagues, in particular their colleagues within the same school. Carmen had an analogy explaining why she valued her colleagues’ opinion:

We're the soldiers and we're in the trenches doing work and we know exactly what is going on, we know the cliental, we know the school, we know the community so when we bounce ideas off each other quickly we know it's going to work.

Stuart addressed the idea of efficiency when learning from a colleague: "it doesn't have to be formal... people don't like sitting down for long periods of time to discuss stuff that could take five seconds." The instant practicality of the information was a key factor. Furthermore, Stuart felt "that there is a certain level of trust to anything" and "that if you have a personal relationship with those individuals then it would be a little bit easier," to ask them for help or their opinion. In addition Christina stated, "I have no problem bothering my friend, but I'm not going to bother someone I don't know." The participants in this study felt that the easiest means for getting a reliable answer to their question would be to ask someone with whom they have a personal relationship.

When it comes to interactions with other teachers in the school, the participants who had the most interactions with staff outside the PE department were the part-time PE teachers and department heads. When the participants consulted teachers from outside their department, it was often related to a student or a general teaching question or concern, not PE content. In the case of the department heads, it was often questions related to department head responsibilities.

Interactions between and within levels

The interactions between the levels indicated that most professional learning opportunities were driven by the Ministry and the district priorities. There were limited interactions between the three levels and when interactions occurred it was often a one-time meeting. The teachers all acknowledged taking part in district and Ministry related professional learning. Only one of the teachers mentioned relaying information back to

the district or the Ministry. In Dale's case, he was asked to be involved as a member of the technical review board for the PE curriculum in the late nineties. He describes it as a great opportunity:

I got the chance to network with top notch physical educators from around the province... to make sure you are on the same page and sometimes you can pick up different ideas and different concerns and issues so you can look at things from a different more big picture view... you can bring different perspectives into your program.

The only level that involves the participants is the interactions between the schools. Interactions between schools occurred yearly at the district-wide PD day and any further informal interactions occurred rarely. Carmen describes her interactions with teachers from outside the school:

I have to say right now except for those PD days I don't see many people from another school unless I've known them from before and I make a contact with them, like I phone them for something.

Other teachers did speak of contacting teachers from other schools; however, all the contacts were teachers the participants knew and trusted and, in most cases, it involved teachers they had previously worked with. For example, Tyler stated that, "sometimes I do speak to people at other schools within the district... people I respect and sort of look up to." The only consistent interaction between at the school level occurred between the heads of departments at the district-wide heads meetings and for help with questions pertaining specifically to the tasks of department heads.

Discussion

Province

OCT courses. Since most of the teachers took their AQs in their formative years, it is perhaps not surprising that they felt the provided courses were quite good at the time.

It was at an early part of their career where they were learning a tremendous amount on a daily basis. Why, then, do teachers now feel as though they are not useful anymore?

Given that the AQs have gone relatively unchanged until 2008, this finding supports the teachers in Colbert et al.'s (2008) study who felt that the provided learning was repetitive. They see little value in the content for their daily teaching and find the assigned work requires little thought. This lack of connection to their teaching content and individual challenges may contribute to teachers finding other ways to take part in professional learning. This finding is consistent with the teachers in Smaller's (2005) study who supplemented their provided learning with informal learning.

In the current system, one only needs to teach a subject for two years to be eligible to take the honour's specialist and be a specialist for life. Most of the participants took their honour's specialist early in their career since it resulted in an instant increase in their salary. If teachers are only required to take one course over their entire career to be specialists, does this help ensure that the profession will continue develop in the direction of change and not just keep functioning in the same way? Keay (2006) suggests that we need an increase in quality PD which is offered to teachers, and the same can be said based on the results of this study.

Ministry of Education. The teachers in this study have developed a skeptical attitude towards Ministry initiatives. Considering that most have been through a number of administration changes in the Ministry, resulting in a new set of priorities each time, their skepticism is hardly surprising. Similarly, the teachers in Grimmet, Dagenais, Amico, Jacquet, and Ilieva's (2008) study did not feel comfortable with the new initiatives put forth by their government. The teachers are choosing to collaborate with a

trusted source, their colleagues. The results in this study were similar to those of Johns (2003) who found that education policy makers appeared to be distant from the needs of the teachers in the schools. This needs to be addressed before teachers will fully support the Ministry's initiatives.

District

General education workshops. The results indicate that the participants are active learners and want to learn in a variety of ways. As identified in the results, the PE teachers enjoyed many of the general education workshops offered by the district but similar to Garet et al.'s (2001) finding, they were not able to attend to due issues such as time, location and work commitments. The participants face an even larger challenge in finding PD that is related to PE. The OCDSB identifies improvement on annual academic testing as one of their annual goals (OCDSB, 2008). Bechtel and O'Sullivan (2007) also found that the district is primarily focused on improving academic testing, which leads to more professional learning in those specific subject areas. This all results in fewer opportunities for PE-specific learning. For change to occur and for more PE PD to be offered, more funding will be needed. Garet et al. found that funding was a huge challenge in implementing new professional learning.

District-wide PD day. Providing a district-wide PD day that everyone will enjoy is a challenge in itself. As O'Sullivan (2006) addresses, experienced teachers are at different points in their career with different sets of needs; as a result, there is not one solution to professional learning. A current strength of district-wide PE PD day is that teachers are given the opportunity to choose from a number of workshops. Even with this choice, some teachers do not attend the PE PD day. These teachers would attend if

they felt it would be of value; furthermore, these teachers wished to be included during the planning stages so that their needs as an experienced teacher could be addressed.

This suggestion agrees with one of O'Sullivan and Deglau's (2006) principles for PD design and delivery: that teachers' needs should be incorporated into the professional learning.

School

School-based PD days. The school-based PD days are heavily influenced by the district and the Ministry's current priorities; consequently, they are highly focused on academic subjects. Often these topics are only slightly applicable to a PE teacher's daily work. Bechtel and O'Sullivan (2007) found that the PE teachers in the UK also had to sit through irrelevant PD. Fortunately, teachers from two of the three schools in this study identified that departments were given time to discuss issues specific to their department's needs. How does this affect a teacher who teaches in more than one subject department in the school? Furthermore, there is no guarantee that department meetings do more than reinforce current practice, considering that the participants in this study already collaborate on a daily basis (Keay, 2005).

Staff meetings. The participants acknowledge that staff meetings have a purpose; however, they feel strongly that there need to be changes to serve that purpose better. In regards to the PD portion of the meetings, the participants wish to be consulted and have choice in the PD the administration is offering to them. The participants suggest that when schools have a large staff they can split their staff into groups, thereby providing 3-4 different learning opportunities and choice to the staff. The type of planning put into

the PD component of staff meetings is unclear, but what is clear is that participants feel that more thought needs to be put into the professional learning portion of staff meetings.

Interactions between teacher colleagues. The results indicated that all the participants in this study were part of highly collaborative work environments. The findings are consistent with those of Armour and Yelling (2007), who found that PE teachers felt that informal collaborative learning was the most accessed form of learning, in particular when they were able to choose who they were going to consult with their questions or concerns. The collaboration in their department fostered a strong feeling of collegiality, which not only encouraged learning but also led to increased enjoyment in their jobs.

Interactions between and within the levels. The participants in this study were all part of highly collaborative work environments. However, the results of the study show that, there needs to be more interactions between all levels, and this study identified a particular need in PE. The district needs to be challenged on the idea that one person can do all the athletics and PE work for the entire district. The Ministry took a step in the right direction with their 2006 working table regarding experienced teacher professional learning. Individuals from all levels were involved in the discussion and many recommendations were put forth - however, only time will tell how they will be implemented into the current system. Further, Engstrom and Danielson (2006) identify that teachers need both collegiality and district-provided learning to meet the demands of teaching. Finally, if teachers wish to have their needs better met, they should take advantage of opportunities to take a more active role in their professional learning. In the OCDSB, they can provide feedback to the district about the learning they would like to

see, or organize a specific workshop. When teachers are involved in their own learning they can modify it to suit their needs and availability (Engstrom & Danielson).

Conclusion

This paper looked at teachers' thoughts and feeling towards professional learning offered to them from the Ministry, district, and school. In the participants' perspective, their participation in the professional learning offered by the Ministry was due to its external rewards – specifically, an increase in salary, for retaining employment, and for potential promotion. Furthermore, when experienced physical educators enrolled in AQs they were often felt unchallenged by the course content. With regards to district learning, most participants enjoyed the general education workshops early in their career. However, similarly to the AQs, they felt the district-provided workshops were repetitive and provided little challenge and progression to them as experienced teachers. As physical educators they were even more dissatisfied with the district, citing no subject specific professional learning workshops. School provided professional learning that allowed the PE teachers to collaborate together was a highly valued form of learning. However, the physical educators felt professional learning directed by the Ministry or district initiatives were of little value to their PE classes. Finally, there were little interactions between the levels; therefore, participants felt they had little control over their professional learning.

The analysis of the findings provided a better understanding of how learning is influenced at the tri-levels. In particular, provided professional learning needs to take into account that teachers have different individual needs that cannot all be met through one standard form of professional learning. In addition, physical educators are offered

little subject-specific professional learning. This article addresses a gap in the literature by presenting the views of experienced Ontarian physical educators.

Throughout preparing this article, the researcher faced a significant challenge in presenting the current professional learning climate at the different levels. There is little published information explaining exactly what the province and district do in terms of professional learning. Some documents are only accessible from district computers, therefore only accessible to teachers and not researchers. Fortunately, the researcher was able to access the information since she was concurrently an employee of the district. It would be highly valuable for future researchers to interview key individuals at all three levels in addition to teachers to report all perspectives equally.

There is a consensus among teacher associations that professional learning is essential to the delivery of quality education for students (Armour, 2009, OCT, 2006, & NASPE, 2007). However, many questions still remain unanswered surrounding experienced teachers' professional learning. This paper clearly identified that professional learning has to better meet the needs of experienced physical educators. The question remains, what exactly are experienced physical educators' needs? Is there a best method to deliver professional learning that will meet those needs? Should formal and nonformal learning be more directed by teacher needs or by initiatives put forth by the district and the Ministry? Or should experienced teachers participate in more informal learning and given greater autonomy over their professional learning to better meet their needs? In regards to experienced physical educators' learning, researchers must continue to provide a voice to those whom they are studying to best bring attention to their participants' current context and needs.

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General Discussion

The purpose of this general discussion will be to further expand our understanding of professional learning that was formed through this study. To begin with, I will present and explain a pyramid I created of Ontario teacher professional learning (Appendix H). The discussion will then shift to ideas developed from the PE teachers in this study; it is important to note that the ideas developed from this study may be different with a larger number of participants. It will continue by drawing similarities and differences between Ontario teachers and the PE teachers in this study, and finishing by proposing some strategies to restructuring current professional learning to better meet teachers' needs.

Professional learning for most teachers is an activity they participate throughout their careers. However, the frequency, duration and the ways in which they choose to learn is individual and often dependent on teachers' immediate needs. PE Teachers like Canadian teachers and participate in different types of learning dependent on their individual needs. These types of learning can be placed into three categories: learning which occurs once in a career; monthly/yearly learning; and day-to-day learning. For teachers in Ontario, all must hold at least one teaching qualification from the Ontario College of Teachers; some may hold more than one, but the key principle about these courses is that they are only ever taken once in a career. Most teachers garner these qualifications while they are in teacher's college or early in their teaching career. The second category includes types of learning that occurs at monthly to yearly intervals including but not limited to professional activity days, staff meetings, conferences, annual certifications, and district provided learning opportunities. The day-to-day learning that teachers participate in is informal learning that can be collaborative and/or self-directed.

Teachers on a day-to-day basis commonly consult colleagues about teaching related issues and many also address their own learning needs through self-directed reading, researching or observations.

PE teachers like other teachers participate in both formal and informal forms of learning. In particular, Smaller et al. (2000) noted that 98% of Canadian teachers learn “on the job” and all the PE teachers in my study acknowledged learning from experience or trial and error. Further, both groups identified learning from various sources including colleagues, students, parents and the school administration. It is interesting that teachers find that they can learn information from a variety of sources but for example when the PE teachers were searching out information they primarily accessed individuals who they trusted. Based on this, it appears that when it comes to learning participation all teachers participate in informal professional learning, however the frequency and duration of their participation needs further investigation.

Both Smaller’s (2005) teachers and PE teachers in the present study do take part in formal learning, however, there were some differences in terms of participation and learning opportunities available. 85% of teachers in Smaller et al’s (2000) study stated they had participated in formal learning in the prior year. For the PE teachers in this study the number was far lower with only one quarter of the PE teachers participating in formal learning the previous year. This perhaps could be due to a lack of formal learning that is offered to PE teachers when in comparison other subject areas are offered much more subject specific professional learning. As a result, PE teachers who choose to continue learning and developing will spend much more time engaging in informal learning than regular teachers due to a lack of formal professional learning. Another

finding of Smaller et al. indicated that more experienced teachers (>20 years) participated in more informal learning than formal learning. It is possible that with the mean years of teaching experience in the present study (being 14 years) this may also contribute to a reason for the PE teachers learning more informally. The limited amount of PE specific learning could be a reason why PE teachers start to participate in informal learning earlier than other teachers in other subject areas. Consequently, PE teachers exhaust their PE specific learning quicker than other teachers not because they learn more but because there is fewer opportunities available to them; directly resulting in PE teachers who shift to more informal learning to meet their professional needs. I feel it is somewhat reassuring to know that almost all teachers participate in some form of professional learning. To me this means that teachers will continue to learn and I am hopeful this lead to better learning experiences for students. In the case of PE teachers in this study, they specifically view learning as essential to their development as professionals.

All the teachers in the present study and nearly all of the teachers in the Smaller et al.'s study participate in learning but they had different reasons behind why they learned. The teachers from Smaller's (2005) study stated their employer and gaining certifications towards their teaching credentials as reasons for learning. Interestingly these were both reasons for PE teachers participating in formal learning; however, PE teachers also identified other reasons why they participated in informal learning. For them it was time efficient, it helped to solve specific problem and they were able to pick the source of their information (E.g. a specific person, book, or a search online). Furthermore, PE teachers identified that it was important for them to learn to keep their own interest in the teaching material and to keep the interest of their students. It was evident in the current study that

PE teachers learned for a variety of reasons, some personal and some work-related; however, the teachers in Smaller et al.'s study only shared work-related answers. Perhaps this is due to the questions that were in the questionnaire and how they were worded. It is rather difficult from my personal experience in schools to believe that teachers in general learn only because of their employer and for certification reasons.

The teachers in Smaller et al.'s (2001) study were asked why they didn't learn they shared the following five reasons, the: (1) expense; (2) inconvenient time or place; (3) family reasons; (4) lack of relevant courses; and (5) lack of support from employer. These were all reasons that were also shared by the PE teachers in the present study. In the case of the PE teachers the one barrier to their learning that all the teachers expressed was family reasons. Another main concern of the PE teachers was the lack of relevant courses, with government funding going primarily to academic subjects it is perhaps not surprising to see PE with little relevant opportunities for professional learning. Also, it is important to remember that the teachers in this study were experienced and had accessed PE specific learning in the past but wished to expand on those learning opportunities instead of repeating them. It seems that even though PE teachers have specific challenges to obtaining professional learning they are encountering the very same challenge as all teachers and that in general there needs to be shift towards learning that will better met teachers' needs.

If we look at the current professional learning of Ontario teachers it is clear that when they learn the vast majority of it is informal learning. The reasons cited for this are primarily because teachers all teach in different contexts, which directly result in specific learning needs (Chitpin, 2005, Cooper et al., 2003, Guskey, 2003). If teachers have

individual learning needs then they need to have input over their learning for those needs to be met (Fiszer, 2004). We cannot expect organizers of professional learning to be able to read the minds of all teachers, but we can expect them to include teachers' input when designing professional learning. However, even if teachers are given the opportunity to give feedback not all teachers' needs will be met. Teachers are learners like everyone else and they are individuals as well. It begs the question why we still think it is appropriate to provide teachers with learning opportunities designed as a "one size fits all." Further, Guskey (2003) suggests that it is "unreasonable to assume that a single list of effective professional development characteristics will ever emerge" (p. 17). Consequently, it is important to focus on variety and put more emphasis on teacher's informal learning that teachers feel better meet their specific needs.

Teachers engage in informal learning on a day-to-day basis even though they are not rewarded financially or given promotions for this type of learning. Teachers participate in informal learning because they can adjust it to meet their needs. In fact, Chitpin and Evers (2005) suggested that more autonomy allows teachers to be able to adjust their learning to accommodate the complexity and change of the school environment. In addition, Fiszer (2004) suggests that there should be a shift towards more in-school professional learning that is contextual with an emphasis on creating opportunities so teachers can engage in more collaborative learning and personal reflection. This shift would create an environment where teachers would be better able to help each other. A similar idea discussed by Smyth (2007) proposed that professional learning be based around social involvement with like-minded peers. The idea is to build trust so that when a suggestion is made that teachers trust what is being offered to them.

The PE teachers in this study also felt that trust was important and more often than not they would talk to their trusted peers for help with an issue than any other person. It can be argued that a shift towards learning autonomy will allow teachers' needs to be met and this can be enhanced through school providing teachers with time for both collaborative and self-directed informal learning opportunities.

Conclusion

This research identified the professional learning opportunities experienced by physical educators and the factors influencing their participation in professional learning.

In fact, all the participants engaged in a variety of professional learning including:

- Formal; additional qualifications, certification courses, post graduate degrees
- Nonformal; conferences, school board workshops, PD days, staff meetings
- Informal; collaboration with colleagues, experience, reading, observation

The variety in learning allowed for the participants to manage potential influences, consequently, they were able to continue to learn throughout their career. Additionally, variety in learning allowed the participants to better meet their individual professional learning needs.

The use of Illeris' (2007) model for learning in working life provided a comprehensive understanding to experienced PE teachers' professional learning. This was clearly demonstrated by the fact that teachers felt their work environment and their individual background, and characteristics, played a large role in what they chose as professional learning. Specifically, the participants favoured professional learning they viewed as valuable, time efficient and practical. The participants exhibited a clear preference towards learning from a respected colleague and conversely the participants felt professional learning directed by the Ministry or district initiatives were of little value to their PE classes. Through using a workplace learning theory, this study exposed the complexity of experienced PE teacher's professional learning.

There were three findings in this study that were unique to the experienced secondary PE teacher literature and thus addressed current gaps within the literature.

First, the participants engaged in professional learning to keep the students interested but more importantly, learning kept them interested and excited in their work. Second, the participants' personal lives had a huge impact on their professional learning. In particular, family and personal life commitments led to the participants largely preferring the flexibility of informal learning. Third, physical educators' extra-curricular commitments influenced their availability to participate in formal and nonformal professional learning opportunities.

This study identified how twelve experienced Ontarian physical educators learned and what influenced their professional learning. In addressing these questions further queries were brought to light. First, in order to provide a more complete understanding to Canadian context of experienced physical educators there is a need to conduct similar studies across Canada. Additionally, it was clear physical educators want to learn, however, they want learning to be accessible, applicable to their context and to provide a challenge to them as learners. For this to occur, we need to further investigate how teachers and professional learning providers can work together to ensure all the parties' needs are met. As identified in previous studies, physical educators participate in coach education as a form of professional learning. Nevertheless, further studies need to be conducted to better understand the influence of coach education on teaching PE. Finally, this thesis spoke amply about teachers' needs but did not clearly note what those needs are. In future studies regarding teacher learning, a valuable component would be to discover what exactly the needs of teachers are.

Personal Reflection

When constructing this final written portion of my thesis many thoughts went through my head, I could reflect on this for days and write pages upon pages, then I thought for time efficiency I better be selective on my reflection. Thinking back to the start of this journey if I had known what I was getting myself into, I would not have started. There are many little things that got me through to the end, but there are two that were critical to my success that I think will help any grad student. First, find a supervisor you can speak with openly, that will not only share ideas but genuinely listens to your ideas as well. For me this was a key factor to my completion! Second, research a topic that you absolutely feel passionate about because when you are spending most of day for 2-3 years either reading, writing or thinking about a topic you better like it. I could spend hours reading on my topic and hours boring my friends and then some nights I would still go to bed thinking about it, this made all the work I did seem not so arduous.

Regarding my reflections on the study itself I had a number of things going for me that made my research less challenging at times. I was fortunate to be a teacher and a coach in the school district I conducted my research. There were four main ways this was of benefit to me. First, I had a couple contacts at schools that made for acquiring participants a rather easy process. Second, as a district employee I had access to documents on district computers that are not accessible to the general public. Third, the district also provides their employees with a district e-mail address and I found using this e-mail address versus my university e-mail address resulted in quicker and more detailed replies from district employees. Last, as a teacher talking to teachers there was an instant rapport generated. Once the participants knew I was a teacher, there was a feeling that I

understood what they were going through and they were extremely open at times during their interviews. Moreover, the participants truly believed that I was doing this research to not only help them but also to help future generations of PE teachers consequently they were keen to make suggestions to help my research and help their current situation.

As I near the end of this journey I have thought about the value of master's education in my future. I have to say that this long, long journey has been worth it and I've learned a lot about myself, and what I can accomplish. I am about to embark on a teaching career at least for short while and there will be so many small things that I already know that will help in my career. I am aware of different ways that I learn and fully cognizant of what types of professional learning are most beneficial to me. Furthermore, I can now see how when I am teaching that I can continue to engage in the research process and continue to contribute to the understanding of teacher related issues. Finally, my research has brought me in contact with some amazing people from across the country and also around the world and I am fortunate to have some discussions with some great minds. Hearing this variety of opinions, thoughts and ideas has brought awareness to the fact that I really will never know it all and that there is always a different way to think about something. In the end, if those final two thoughts are the only things I take away from my master's than I think I have done pretty well for myself as an individual and also as an educator.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Foundations of a professional practice

The Foundations of Professional Practice

The Ontario College of Teachers' Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession, Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession and Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession form the Foundations of Professional Practice. They outline the principles of ethical behaviour, professional practice and ongoing learning for the teaching profession in Ontario.

Introduction

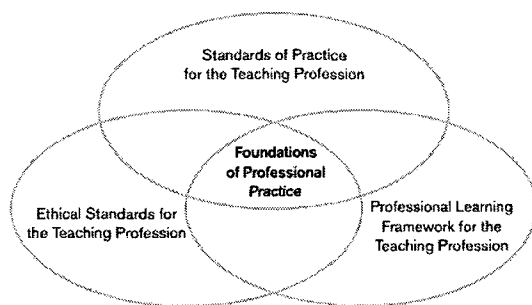
The standards describe what it means to be a member of the teaching profession in Ontario and reflect widely shared beliefs within the profession. They articulate the goals and aspirations of a teaching profession dedicated to fostering student learning and preparing Ontario students to participate in a democratic society. College members use the standards to reflect on their own development as teaching professionals and inform their practice and ongoing learning choices.

The standards acknowledge the contributions the profession makes to Ontario society. They convey to the public the commitment that College members make to students, the teaching profession and society.

The standards and the *Professional Learning Framework* are based on the premise that teachers move through a variety of career stages that will influence the multiple ways teachers live out the standards in their professional practice. All College members should be able to see the work they do described in the standards.

Throughout their careers, College members engage in a variety of formal and informal professional learning experiences that reflect the standards. All teachers – beginning teachers, experienced teachers, principals, supervisory officers, teacher educators and teacher leaders – engage in professional learning appropriate to their interests, needs, perspectives and responsibilities.

To ensure that the *Foundations of Professional Practice* reflect a shared understanding between the profession and the society it serves, the standards were developed and reviewed through extensive consultation and research with College members, educational partners and the public. The standards will be reviewed periodically to enable them to continue to reflect the evolving practices and aspirations of the teaching profession in Ontario. The College is committed to the ongoing development of the teaching profession.



Self-Regulation and Standards

A self-regulatory body must articulate the values, professional knowledge and skills inherent in the profession it regulates.

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* describe the professional beliefs and values that guide the decision-making and professional actions of College members in their professional roles and relationships. The four ethical standards – **Care, Respect, Trust** and **Integrity** – establish the core ethics of teaching and are implicit in the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.

The five interdependent domains of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* – **Commitment to Students and Student Learning, Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Leadership in Learning Communities** and **Ongoing Professional Learning** – describe the continuum of knowledge, skills and professional practices of College members.

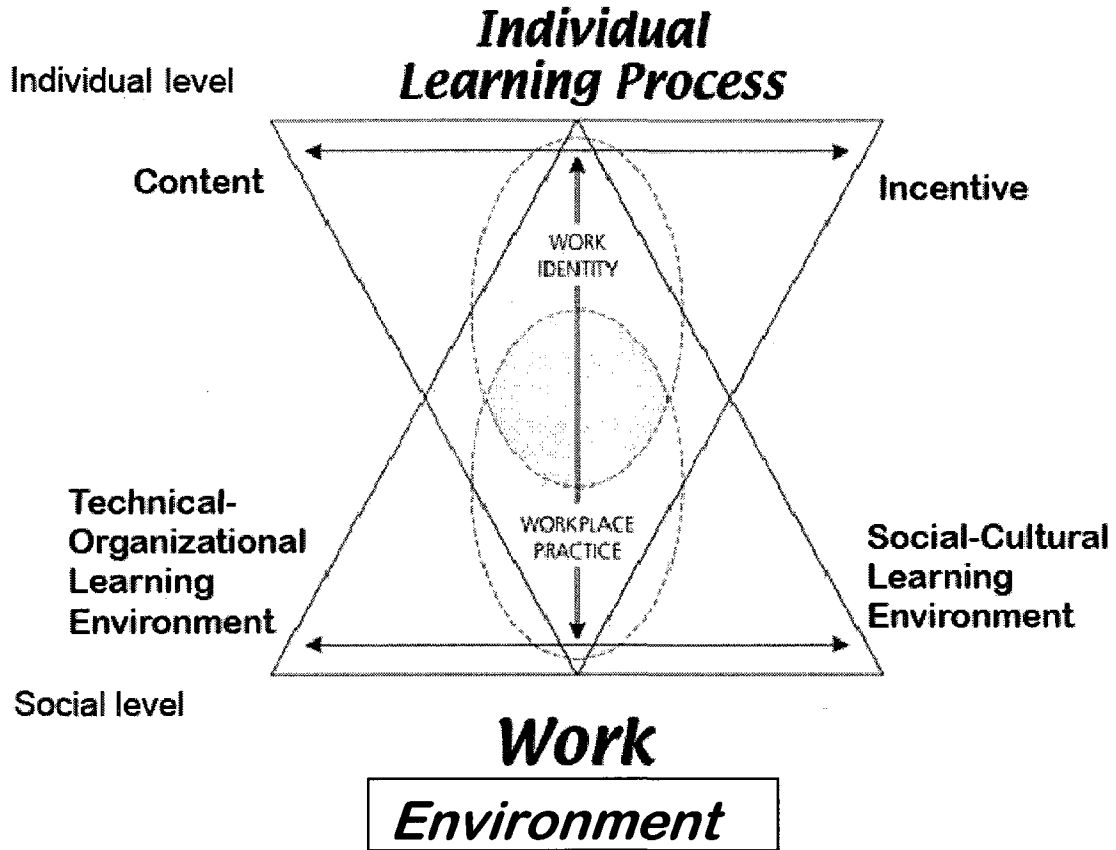
The *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* presents a variety of ways College members may pursue opportunities for ongoing professional learning. This framework identifies accredited pre-service and in-service programs of professional teacher education designed to reflect the ethical standards and standards of practice as well as a wide range of other opportunities for professional growth and development.

The standards are not intended to be the criteria for the ongoing performance appraisal of individual College members. Performance appraisal remains the responsibility of employers, who apply the criteria by which teaching performance is assessed. In publicly funded systems, this responsibility is outlined in the *Education Act* and *Regulation 99/02, Teacher Performance Appraisal* under this Act.



Appendix B

A model for learning in working life (Illeris, 2007).



Appendix C

Teacher information and informed consent form

Information and Consent for Physical Education Teacher

Title of research project: In-service Learning of Physical Education Teachers

Dear Sir/ Madam,

You are invited to participate in the research project entitled “In-service Learning of Physical Education Teachers,” conducted by Robin Moore, master’s candidate, under the supervision of Professor Charlotte Beaudoin, from the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. This research project has been approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, and Ottawa-Carleton Research Advisory Committee and the principal of your school.

The purpose of this research is to further understand which learning opportunities are experienced by in-servicing physical education teachers. A long term objective of this research is to lead to an improvement in learning opportunities being offered to physical education teachers.

Your participation will consist of being involved in a two phase study. Phase 1 will consist of a group discussion with other members of the physical education teaching staff at your school. The group discussion will last a maximum 90 minutes and will be carried out by primary researcher. You will be asked about the learning opportunities you participate in since becoming a practicing teacher. The date and time of this group discussion will be set according to your availability and convenience outside of classroom hours. Please note that the group discussion will be recorded and transcribed. You will have access to the transcription text, and be able to add, modify or remove information.

Phase 2 will consist of an individual interview that will last a maximum 45 minutes and will be carried out by the primary researcher. The interview will occur 5-6 weeks following the initial group discussion. The date and time of this interview will be set according to your availability and convenience, during a regular school day. Please note that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. You will have access to the transcription text, and be able to add, modify or remove information.

Your participation is on a voluntary basis and you can withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. If you withdraw from the study, the data gathered will be discarded and not used in any documents or publications. The information you provide will *not* be used to evaluate your teaching capabilities. You will not be asked to provide any personal information. You do not have to respond to any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Your participation in the study will provide the opportunity for you to listen and share about different ways of learning. It may bring about an awareness or clarification of ways in which they learn while also providing the opportunity to further understand how colleagues take part in learning. Furthermore, this study will contribute to current understandings about PE teacher in-service learning, specifically in Canada where there are no such studies. The results can be shared with participating schools and can contribute to the delivery of current physical education teacher professional development needs.

Please be aware that your anonymity and confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed during the group discussion. A consequence of using a group discussion in phase one is

the participants of the group discussion know who participated and what others shared. The primary researcher will invite the participants to keep confidential what is shared within the group discussion and to not reveal the identity of other participants who take part in the group discussion. The researchers would like to acknowledge that they have no control over how participants will behave after the group discussion as far as respecting anonymity and confidentiality. However, the researchers can assure you the information that you share with us during the individual interview will remain strictly confidential. All data from individual participants will be given a pseudonym so no names will appear or identify the transcript, therefore ensuring confidentiality. By doing so, the information obtained cannot be associated with a specific individual. Anonymity will be respected by assuring that your name will not be mentioned during the interview and group discussion in the transcript. All reports and publications will use pseudonyms to continue to ensure anonymity. Furthermore, the name of your school will not be published in any documents.

The only people who will have access to the data are the primary researcher and her supervisor. Please note that the data (documents, transcripts and cassettes) will be secured, for a five-year period, in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Professor Beaudoin at the University of Ottawa. Following the five-year storage period all data will be shredded and deleted.

If you wish to participate, please return a signed copy of the consent form at the end of this letter. There are two copies of the consent form: one copy is yours to keep and the second one should be returned to Robin Moore in the self-addressed envelope provided.

Upon your request translation of this document into French can be supplied. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Robin Moore or her supervisor, Professor Charlotte Beaudoin at the addresses below. If you have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, (613) 562-5841 or ethics@uottawa.ca

Sincerely,

Robin Moore
University of Ottawa, Faculty of Health Sciences
Health Sciences
School of Human Kinetics

Charlotte Beaudoin
University of Ottawa, Faculty of
School of Human Kinetics

Consents

The information collected for this project is confidential and protected under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I have read and understood the request to participate in the study about "In-service Learning of Physical Education Teachers" conducted by Robin Moore, master's candidate under the supervision of Professor Charlotte Beaudoin, from the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa.

☐ I agree to participate ☐ I agree to be audio-taped (voice only)
☐ I do not agree to participate ☐ I do not agree to be audio-taped (voice only)

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Name of School: _____

Please indicate if you would prefer to review the transcripts from the group discussion and interview as a *hard copy* or as an *electronic copy*: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D

Ethical approval from the University of Ottawa



Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa

Université d'Ottawa - University of Ottawa 145, rue Jean Jacques, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5

December 7, 2007

Charlotte Beaudoin
School of Human Kinetics
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Ottawa

Robin Moore
School of Human Kinetics
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Ottawa

**RE: Continuous Learning of In-service Physical Education Teachers in Ontario
High Schools (H 10-07-11)**

Dear Pr. Beaudoin and Ms. Moore,

You will find enclosed the Health Sciences and Science REB ethical clearance for the abovementioned study.

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms may not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must also promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

This certificate of ethical clearance is valid until December 7, 2008. Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer in December 2008 to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at:
http://web9.uottawa.ca/services/ngessrd/ethics/application_down.asp

A copy of this approval will be sent to research services, if necessary.

If you have any questions, you may contact the undersigned at the number

Sincerely yours,

German Zongo
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research
For Dr. Daniel Lagace, Chair of the Health Sciences and Science REB

Document communiqué en vertu de la Loi sur l'accès à l'information.
Document released pursuant to the Access to Information Act.
Document divulgué en vertu de la Loi sur l'accès à l'information.
Document released pursuant to the Access to Information Act.

Appendix E

Ethical approval from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board



Ottawa-Carleton Research Advisory Committee

3 December 2007

Ms. Robin Moore

Re: Continuous Learning of In-Service Physical Education Teachers in Ontario High Schools

Dear Ms. Moore,

On behalf of the Ottawa-Carleton Research Advisory Committee, I am pleased to inform you that your research proposal was approved, pending minor revisions, for implementation in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

Please note that this approval is conditional upon receiving a copy of the ethics approval for the Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa which must be forwarded to me as soon as possible. In addition, the committee felt that perhaps the group discussions could be conducted outside of classroom hours as they are anticipated to last 90 minutes. Finally, you will have to revise your consent form to include a separate line for the audio-taped sessions.

Before you proceed with this study, you must contact me.

Sincerely,

Yasmin Sankar Khan
Research Officer, Quality Assurance
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

On behalf of the Ottawa-Carleton Research Advisory Committee

Appendix F

Focus group guide

Explain the purpose of the research and the purpose of using a group discussion method:

The purpose of the research is to further understand which learning opportunities in-servicing physical education teachers experience. The use of a group discussion will allow for participants to note the learning opportunities, which they experience and their colleagues experience.

Introductory questions:

How many years have you been teaching PE?

-Have you always been in one school? How many years in this school?

Are you involved in extra-curricular activities?

If yes, can you tell me which ones?

Main Questions:

-Can you describe the types of learning opportunities are offered to you by the school/ school board/ OCT/ and Ministry of Education?

-Can you provide a few examples?

-Do you participate in these learning opportunities?

Do they contribute to your professional learning needs?

-Have you experienced additional learning in other ways/ circumstances in addition to the provided formal learning?

Can you share with me some examples?

-Are there any further ways of learning which you would like to add?

-Which ways of learning do you find most beneficial?

Can you explain why?

Wrapping Up:

-Has taking part in this group discussion made you realize anything about yourself as a learner?

-Is there anything you would like to add or clarify

Appendix G

Interview guide

The purpose is to gain a greater depth of information from each participant on the ways in which they learn.

Start with recapping what happened in their group discussion. Provide a list of the summarized learning opportunities that were generated in the group discussion. Review the list with participant.

Main Questions:

- Have you taken part in any of these learning opportunities since the group discussion?
 - What were your reasons for participating in these learning opportunities?
 - Does anything contribute to your likelihood of participating in learning opportunities?
- Can you share any other ways that you have learned since the group discussion?
 - Can you tell me how this happens?
 - Is there any particular reason for choosing these ways to learn?
 - what encourages you to learn? What prevents your learning?
- Did discussing how you learn affect the activities that you participated in the last 5-6 weeks?
 - Can you explain?
- Did you find anything out about yourself as a learner?
 - tell me more/can you further explain/can you give an example
- Will you do anything differently to help you learning in the future?
 - yes, can you give an example or share what you would do differently?
 - no, can you explain?

Wrapping up:

Did being part of this study an effect on your view of learning?

Is there anything you would like to add or clarify?

Appendix H

Teacher Professional Learning in Ontario

