Adventure Based Learning in Physical Education

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Physical Education
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My Research Interests

Student Centered Pedagogy
- Adventure Based Learning
- Emotionality

PETE Doctoral Education in USA
- Faculty
- Student
My Research Interests

- PT's
- ABL
- Teacher
- Transfer
- Debrief
• Secondary Physical Education in the USA is dominated by the multi-activity curriculum.
• Criticized for:
  – Embarrassing, boring, irrelevant, and lacking relevance for students (Carlson, 1995; Cothran & Ennis, 2000; Ennis et al, 1997)
  – Inequitable opportunities for all (Ennis, 1999; Evans, 1993)
  – program quality (Locke, 1992)
  – Isolating and degrading for students of lower skill levels (Flintoff & Scratton, 2001; Bramham, 2003)
Numerous reasons for this dominance such as:

- teachers have not learned to teach using alternative models,
- many of the models require a different kind of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge than teachers currently have,
- or student reaction to the models results in teachers reverting back to the status quo.
Hot Topic

• Important to understand more about the implementation of alternative curricular models to begin to address the problems associated with the multi-activity curriculum model.
The purpose of this study was to explore the reactions of Pre-service Teachers (PTs) and the PCK enacted by PTs learning to teach ABL in urban middle schools.
Adventure Based Learning

• Adventure Based Learning falls under the umbrella of Experiential Education

• Experiential education is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection

• In other words experiential education is doing with reflection
Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

- Experiencing
- Reflecting
- Generalizing
- Applying

Physical Education
Adventure Based Learning

- The deliberate use of sequenced adventure activities – particularly games, initiative activities, and problem solving activities – for the personal and social development of the participants (Cosgriff, 2000)
- Adventure Based Learning encourages fun and challenging ways to experience a series of life skills that de-emphasize a win-at-all-cost mentality.
What is Adventure Based Learning

• Learning environment that is physically and emotionally safe for ALL.

• Processing/Debriefing is as important as the activities.

• Two relationships are important in experiential education:
  – Interpersonal (i.e., how people get along in a group).
  – Intrapersonal (i.e., how an individual gets along with him/her self - the idea of self-perception).
# Adventure Based Learning

## Intrapersonal
- Increased confidence
- Willingness to take risks
- Improved self-concept
- Enhanced leadership skills
- Greater reflective thinking skills
- Positive experiences

## Interpersonal
- Enhanced cooperation
- More effective communication skills
- Greater trust in others
- Sharing of decision making
- Conflict resolution skills
- Improved problem-solving skills
- Enhanced leadership skills
Importance of ABL in PE

• Helps support a positive and safe classroom community.

• Enables a diverse group of individuals to work together toward common goals.

• Allows Teachers to connect with students’ feelings, students’ abilities, and to share common life experiences.
Planning and Implementing ABL

- Key points to successful implementation
  - Appropriate sequencing of activities
  - Facilitation of the activities
  - Processing of the activities (debriefing)
The activities selected should move a group through the sequence of community building:

- Communication
- Cooperation
- Trust
- Problem solving
- Challenge
Sequence

• Knowing when to move a group onto the next phase of the sequence

• Cannot place an artificial time limit on this process
Facilitation

- Role of facilitator is crucial to the success of unit
- Create an emotionally and physically safe environment
- Don’t solve the problem
  - group processes are important here
- Refocus group if necessary
- Stage the activity - frontloading
Debriefing

• Most crucial aspect of the unit if it is called experiential education
• Activity that is structured to encourage individuals to plan, reflect, describe, analyze, and communicate about experiences.
• Can occur any time before, during or after the activities
• Processing is the vehicle with which to accomplish transfer of learning to everyday life
Debriefing

• The debrief process is where the group reflects on what *(What?)* happened during the activity, what it meant to the group members *(So What?)*, and what each group member can take from the experience that will impact their lives beyond participation in the activity *(Now What?)*. 
Research has focused primarily on the outcomes of adventure education or ABL (Brown, 2006; Dyson 1995) and has just begun to explore the pedagogy of adventure education (Dillon, Tannehill, & O’Sullivan, 2009; Sutherland, Ressler, & Stuhr, 2011).
• Dyson (1995) found that the student goals for ABL in two elementary schools included ‘cooperating with others, challenging themselves, taking risks, having fun, and learning motor skills’ (Dyson, 1995, p. 397).
• Dillon et al. (2009) found that PTs experienced some difficulty when teaching ABL. The PTs incorporated some of the ABL activities they experienced in their PETE program but did not include the key aspects of ABL such as full value contract, challenge by choice, and debriefing.
• Misalignment of the choice of teaching strategies and the intended outcomes of the ABL unit were recognized by the PTs but was not a concern as long as the students were active in the class. Leading student-centered debriefs proved to be difficult for the PTs.
• Sutherland et al. (2011) explored the journey of 11 PTs incorporating a meaningful debrief in a middle school ABL unit. The findings indicated that the PTs had a good technical understanding of the debrief process but had difficulty facilitating a meaningful student-centered debrief.
Theoretical Frameworks

• Occupational Socialization and Pedagogical Content Knowledge provided the lens for this research.

• Occupational socialization has been defined as including ‘all of the kinds of socialization that initially influence a person to enter the field of physical education and later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teachers’ (Lawson, 1988, p. 265).
• Occupational socialization has been used to understand how PTs learn to teach physical education (Schempp & Graber, 1992; Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; McMahon & MacPhail, 2007; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009).

• Acculturation is the beliefs and values about physical education which are influenced by the PTs prior experience in sport, physical education and coaching and by significant others.
The influence of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs on PTs is referred to as professional socialization and has limited impact on PTs’ beliefs about physical education developed during the acculturation stage (Curtner-Smith, 1999; Curtner-Smith et al., 2008).
Shulman (1986) defined PCK as the various methods teachers utilize to transform content and convey it to their students, resulting in students’ understanding.

- PCK not only integrates content with pedagogy, but also involves the teachers’ knowledge of the learners (Shulman, 1986).
Research Questions

• How did the PTs make meaning of their experience teaching ABL in urban middle schools?
• What was the student reaction to participation in ABL?
• How did the PTs enact what they had learned about ABL when teaching middle school students?
Research Method

• Qualitative inquiry was used in this research study.

• Intrinsic Case Study (Stake, 2008)
  – Case itself is of primary interest
  – Group of UG PETE students implementing ABL in urban middle schools
The PTs were enrolled in a five-week internship in one of three urban middle schools.

- 6-8 PTs at each school site.
- Each PT taught two seven-day ABL units.
- The PTs taught small groups of students (8-12) to allow them to focus on content and facilitation skills (PCK) associated with ABL.
Participants

• The PTs (5 males and 8 females) ranged in age from 21-26 years and all self-identified as white.
• Ten of the 13 PTs had completed the ABL course at Ohio State.
• One PT was taking the ABL course at the same time as the field experience.
• Two PTs had taken a course in adventure education at other universities but the courses did not emphasize how to teach ABL.
Ethical Considerations

• Involvement in teaching and research – power dynamics

• Minimize power differential and studentship (Graber, 1991) following steps taken
  – Interviews not conducted until assignments for course completed
  – Did not assign grade for field experience
  – Data was not transcribed or analyzed until after course completed and grades assigned
Data Collection

• Three data collection methods used:
  
  – Interviews
    • 2 Face to face, using semi-structured interview guide, lasted between 25-40 minutes, was audio taped with permission, and transcribed verbatim.

  – Daily Reflections – Critical Friends
    • engage small groups of PTs (3-4) in a critical reflection on a series of questions related to their experience teaching
    • PT lead
    • completed Critical Friends sheets – used as data
Data Collection

• Stimulated Recall Reflection of teaching ABL
  – videotape of one ABL lesson to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons.
  – 2-3 page reflection paper focusing on how the ABL activities were framed, quality of the PTs facilitation, quality of the debrief, and student response to the activities and debrief.
Data Analysis

• Line by line coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and constant comparison (Patton, 2002).
• Data were scrutinized and compared line by line and codes were assigned to each piece of data.
• Codebook used to organize the codes and lead to the formation of initial themes.
• As the themes were developed each piece of data was constantly compared to other data to confirm or disconfirm the finding.
Trustworthiness

- Four methods used
- Data Triangulation – investigator and data sources
- Member Checking
- Peer Debriefing
- Negative Case Analysis
Findings – Reaction to ABL

• Two themes:
  – This is harder than I remember
  – Student reaction: It’s not what I expected
This is harder than I remember

- PT reaction varied between those who were excited to teach ABL and those who were not confident
- Belief in their content knowledge in ABL had a strong influence on their reaction
- Most PTs experienced disjuncture in relation to feeling being prepared to teach ABL and how the unit was progressing during the first few days.
This is harder than I remember

- Mismatch between multi-activity approach students used to and student-centered approach of ABL.
Student Reaction

• They are ruthless! It was really tough going, they were just terrible to each other. They said discouraging words to each other and to me. Some kids did not want to participate and would disrupt the group (Adam, ABL Reflection)

• It had never really occurred to me that it wasn’t going to work, and that these kids weren’t going to buy into it. Cause every experience that I have ever had has been so good (Amber, I1)
Student Reaction

• I’ve already had to take one kid out of my group and move him to another because they would just fight and scream at each other the entire time and it wasn’t going to work (Amber, I1)

• Even in the face of blatant student resistance Amber wanted to, ‘reach these kids. I am more motivated because I want to come in and think okay we’re going to have a great lesson this time. I was determined not to let this group beat me’ (I1).
• The first couple of days we had just yelling at each other, trying to get them to pay attention. But now in a group they’ll be like, ‘Okay well I have an idea’ and they’d sit and listen, then they all try it and if it doesn’t work then, ‘okay well how about we try this instead.’ (Amber, I2)

• The areas of student growth included communication, cooperation, support, encouragement of others, teamwork, coming together as a group and leadership.
Discussion

• PTs experienced a struggle of values in teaching a student-centered unit which was in contrast to the experience and values of the middle school students.

Students were a strong socializing agent for the majority of the PTs and the student resistance they encountered was not expected.
Discussion

• Having support from peers and University Supervisors was important in the face of the student resistance.

• The professional socialization gained during PETE programs can challenge the majority of the PTs ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975) and prior beliefs about physical education (Schempp & Graber, 1992).
Findings – PCK in ABL

• Four themes:
  – trusting the sequence,
  – knowing your students,
  – facilitate don’t dictate,
  – processing the experience.
• I think that it [sequence] is highly important... watching other groups that didn’t follow the unit exactly... ran into instances later on where they would have name calling or put downs’ (Alan, I2)
Knowing your students

• My first group has problems cooperating and can’t work together. My second group has come along great in working together...The first group will have to stay with the cooperation games longer, the second group seems ready for trust activities’ (David, CF D4).

Physical Education
Facilitate don’t teach

- I gave them just enough information to understand what their task was and I let them figure it out as a team without my input. If I felt they were having problems, I would give a few verbal cues (Amanda, ABL).
- At times I should have given the students more freedom and less structure ... The sense to know when to sit back and let the students go is a learned skill’ (Ryan, ABL).
• I was sometimes too vague with my questions, and they [students] were not sure how to respond. When I was able to crack through with a question they understood, I was able to receive excellent answers’ (Colin, ABL).
Discussion

• As the unit progressed the PTs became more aware about who the learners were and how that factored into planning and teaching ABL.

• Similar to previous research (McCaughtry and Rovegno, 2003; Rovegno, 1995), the PTs in this study experienced growth over the course of teaching the ABL unit in understanding the importance of their knowledge of the students.
Discussion

• The PTs shifted from thinking that the same unit and lesson plans could be followed for each group to realizing that they would need to individualize the lessons based on the uniqueness of each group.
Implications

• To better equip PTs:
  – they have the opportunity to “live the curriculum” (Collier, Oslin, and Mitchell, 2001) in their PETE program
  – gain in-depth knowledge of the specific content of the model,
  – have the opportunity to observe an expert teach the model to students,
  – provide PTs with an opportunity such as *critical friends* to purposefully reflect on their teaching and learn from their students.
Conference Outlets

- American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- American Educational Research Association
- Association of Experiential Education
- AIESEP
Publication Outlets

- Sport, Education and Society
- Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy
- Journal of Teaching in Physical Education
- Research Quarterly in Sport and Exercise
- Journal of Experiential Education
- Journal of Outdoor Education and Recreation Leadership
Where Next?

- Using ABL to combat bullying
- How do student’s make meaning of their ABL experience?
- How do students transfer this meaning to other areas of life?