Contextual Hoops and Hurdles: Workplace Conditions in Secondary Physical Education

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Workplace factors contribute to job satisfaction and subsequently to decisions to stay or leave by offering organization inducements. (Yee, 1990, p. 2)

Contextual factors in the workplace can either enhance or inhibit teachers’ ability to do their job. Oakes (1989) emphasized the importance of contextual factors in the workplace, stating, “because classroom interactions take place within a particular school, the characteristics of the school affect the nature of those interactions” (p. 183). Goodlad, Soder, and Sirotnik (1990) summarized the impact of contextual factors in the following statements:

Contextual factors in school classrooms profoundly influence teachers’ instructional behavior. These include the size of the class group, the size of the room, supplies and equipment, the health of the students, the number of absentees, whether the day is Monday or Friday, whether it is raining or snowing and for how many days, the socioeconomic and racial makeup of the class, whether the class is multigraded, how often the principal comes into the classroom and what she or he does there, the frequency and nature of interruptions from outside, the current smog level, and on and on. And there is nothing in the above list about the personal worries of individual students and the teacher, all of which add to the context.

The context of teaching in schools is richly layered. In addition to the obvious classroom elements described above, there are arrangements in schools that strongly influence and set boundaries on teachers’ domains of judgment. These are subject to change by orders of the principal or people beyond the principal. They include promoting and reporting policies, the assignment of pupils to classes and grades, recess and lunch schedules, policies and practices in selecting and distributing instructional materials, playground rules, the use of public address systems, grouping and tracking policies and practices, and more. Beyond the school are additional influences that impinge on the classroom either directly or through the principal, parents, and others. (p. 4)

Various theoretical frameworks have been used to describe workplace conditions in the school setting. One major line of research has focused on
characteristics of schools that correlated with student achievement, and these characteristics have been incorporated into the effective schools literature. Good and Brophy (1986), Purkey and Smith (1983), and Stedman (1985) provided important reviews highlighting findings from research on effective schools. A portrait of an effective school was based on a synthesis of previous research studies (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; California State Department of Education, 1980; Doss & Holley, 1982; Glenn, 1981; Hunter, 1979; Levine & Stark, 1981; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979; Trisman, Waller, & Wilder, 1976; Venezky & Winfield, 1979; Weber, 1971). The following variables were found to be present in effective schools: school-site management; decent, safe, physical working conditions; opportunities for staff development; instructional leadership; respect and support by superiors, parents, and students; staff stability; school-wide recognition and reward for achievements; shared goals and high expectations of success; curriculum articulation and organization; maximized learning time; and regular opportunities for collegial interaction and sharing (Purkey & Smith, 1983; Stedman, 1985). Findings from the effective schools literature have been used to initiate reform efforts in schools (Finn, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; McCormack-Larkin & Kritek, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1985), and more recent studies found that schools that possessed these characteristics of effective schools also had teachers who reported greater job satisfaction, had higher attendance rates, had better attitudes, produced greater effort, and had improved teaching skills (Corcoran, 1987; Firestone, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1985, 1989).

The staff development literature has also addressed workplace conditions in education. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) provided a summary of three separate models of teacher development. The first model was derived from Fuller (1969), who identified three developmental stages of teachers: survival, mastery, and impact. The teachers' focus moved from concern for self to concern for pupils as individuals as they moved through these stages. The second model emphasized changes in teachers' cognitive development, in which they moved from focusing on their own ego to understanding and valuing individuals in their classroom and addressing a broader social agenda (Hunt, 1974; Loevinger, 1976; Witherell & Erickson, 1978). The third model was designed to address teacher needs for their own professional growth through teacher centers and in-service programs. In this model, teachers identified their own views of professional development, and staff development centers offered assistance in helping teachers respond to their self-determined needs. All three models examined the impact of workplace conditions on teachers as they grow and change throughout their career.

Another body of work addressing workplace conditions has been couched in the teacher socialization literature. Contextual factors of the school setting contribute to the overall culture of the school. As a school system is an organization, factors that influence socialization into that organization become important to our understanding of teachers' experiences. "Organizational socialization refers to the process by which a person learns the values, norms and required behaviors which permit him [or her] to participate as a member of the organization" (Van Maanen, 1976, p. 67). Teachers working within the school organization receive messages from the context in which they work. How classes are scheduled, the "adequateness" of the equipment and facilities, and the type and extent of interactions with peers, students, and administrators all contribute to
provide messages to teachers relative to their worth and the extent to which they are valued and appreciated in the school structure.

Louis and Smith (1990) offered practical recommendations for improving working conditions of teachers by focusing on factors that influenced the teachers' quality of work life (QWL). Based on the organizational socialization literature, they identified seven criteria that act as indicators of a quality of work life environment: respect from relevant adults, participation in decision making, frequent and stimulating professional interaction, a high sense of efficacy, use of skills and knowledge, resources to carry out the job, and goal congruence. Lewis and Smith also identified three general categories of a professional model for QWL reform, with specific suggestions to improve the QWL of teachers in the school setting. The first QWL category was social/cultural and included suggestions for professional growth plans, teacher-initiated programs, peer observations, and professional retreats. In the second category, administrative/political, changes were comprised of structures promoting formal participation to determine school policy and decentralization. The third QWL reform category addressed technical/instructional resources such as rethinking the curriculum and grouping of students. In addition, school based leadership and a high degree of parental involvement were factors that contributed to teacher QWL in the school setting.

One recent outcome of the call for school improvement in the United States (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986, 1990; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), has been the creation of schools in which teachers have opportunities for professional development and participation in leadership roles and in which the overall goal is improving teaching and learning for all. The concept of a professional development school (PDS) was described by The Holmes Group (1990) to mean "a school for the development of novice professionals, for continuing development of experienced professionals, and for the research and development of the teaching profession" (p. 1). Professional development schools were designed as collaborative efforts between school and university personnel to address needs of those involved at a particular site. Some suggestions for effective schools and recommended changes to improve teachers' QWL were incorporated into the development of the PDS.

Review of Literature in Physical Education

Physical education researchers have placed their study of workplace conditions primarily in the organizational socialization paradigm. This paradigm provides an umbrella for research on teachers and the factors that influence their lives as professionals. Characteristics of teachers who entered the physical education profession have been examined (Bookwalter, 1941; Dewar & Lawson, 1984; Dodds et al., 1991; Hutchinson, 1993; Pooley, 1970, 1972; Sage, 1980, 1989; Stroot, 1993; Templin, 1979; Templin, Woodford, & Mulling, 1982; Woodford, 1977). Researchers found that former coaches and physical education teachers influenced prospective physical education teachers to enter the profession (Bain & Wendt, 1983; Dewar, 1989; Dodds et al., 1991; Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Hutchinson, 1990, 1993; Lawson, 1991; Pooley, 1970, 1972; Sage, 1989; Templin et al., 1982), and students entering physical education have scored low on academic achievement tests (Lawson, 1983, Templin et al., 1982).
We know little about the influence of teacher education in physical education, though Doolittle et al. (1993) found that teacher preparation had little impact on changing beliefs of preservice teachers as they moved through the program. Several recent studies have examined the induction process of physical education teachers and reported feelings of isolation, marginalization, and role conflict (Cruz, 1993; Smyth, 1992, 1993; Solmon, Worthy, & Carter, 1993; Stroot, Faucette, & Schwager, 1993; Williams & Williamson, 1993).

Personal and professional lives of teachers and the environment in which they work have also been examined. Lawson (1989) provided a framework identifying multiple factors that influence workplace conditions. To illustrate how workplace conditions affected teachers, he cited experiences of John and Joan, two secondary physical education specialists who struggled with the lack of prestige for physical education, as indicated by interactions with the principal and faculty, and differential standards of time and grading policies between physical education and other subjects, such as math. Both teachers felt these factors had a negative impact on their ability to be good teachers. Lawson (1989) also acknowledged variability between physical education settings, and encouraged consensus among physical education specialists and others who make decisions in order to provide an environment conducive to improving workplace conditions for physical education teachers in all settings.

In an in-depth examination of the life of one physical educator, Templin (1989) described Sarah, a secondary physical education specialist, and the workplace conditions that influenced her work at Smith High School. Sarah perceived institutional constraints such as minimal state requirements for physical education and limited contacts with students as factors that impeded her efforts to bring a quality program to her students. In addition, a large variety of activities in the curriculum and her desire to coach have created a full workload for Sarah:

She teaches six periods a day and has one preparation period. This schedule included four PE classes (10 activities per semester) and two health classes. In addition, she coaches one spring sport which ran from February through May. She starts the school day at 7:30 and is usually home between 5:00 and 9:00 at night, depending on her coaching responsibilities. (Templin, 1989, p. 177)

Sarah’s workplace was summarized as an unfocused, recreational program that centered on management rather than instruction, demanded long hours with insufficient planning time and multiple roles, provided limited equipment and facilities, consisted of routine work that provided few intrinsic rewards, and lacked status within the school. She felt isolated with little collegial stimulation or significant staff development. Although Sarah would be perceived as a caring, committed teacher, she was described as “running on ice” because she was not able to move forward in her attempt to create an effective physical education program for herself, her colleagues, and her students.

The life history approach was another methodological strategy introduced into physical education to examine the professional changes experienced by a retired physical education teacher and further examples of marginalization experienced by physical educators from multiple perspectives (Sparkes & Templin, 1992; Sparkes, Templin, & Schempp, 1993; Templin, Sparkes, & Schempp, 1991).
Griffin (1985c) identified four contextual factors influencing a physical education program in an urban junior high school: outdoor activity space, central office policies, school-based professional support, and the unique qualities of urban, multiracial schools. Each factor was examined relative to its impact upon the instructional quality of the physical education program. All four factors had a "corrosive" influence on teacher perceptions of their program. Teachers compromised their own professional goals in lieu of what they felt was possible given the limitations of the context in which they worked. Griffin concluded with the following statement:

Perhaps it is time to face the fact that systemic constraints can make teaching and learning impossible goals to achieve. Perpetuating the myth that we can improve the quality of physical education in the schools by focusing on better instructional skills or more exciting activity units does a disservice to teachers who are doing the best they can, given the contextual factors at work in their schools. If there is to be real hope for change, it lies not in finding the right pedagogical stuff but in acting on the right political stuff. By focusing on and developing strategies for addressing the systemic constraints that teachers work against, we may begin moving toward real change in the teaching of physical education. (p. 165)

Some professionals in physical education are teachers and coaches and are presented with unique challenges considering the diverse environments of the physical education classroom and the athletic practice field (Bain, 1978; Chu, 1981; Locke & Massengale, 1978; Rog, 1984). The two roles of teacher/coach, although similar when considering subject matter, contain numerous contextual differences. These differences are evident when dealing with issues of accountability, administrative support, student interest and ability level, program goals, and occupational reward structures (Rupert & Buschner, 1989). In an attempt to further understand dual role demands placed on teacher/coaches, researchers used interaction analysis systems to describe behaviors of male and female teacher/coaches across both settings and consistently reported more student interaction, questioning, and praise in the coaching environment (Avard, 1988; Kasson, 1974; Mancini & Agnew, 1978; Ormand, 1988). Also, when discussing the roles of coaching and teaching, the coaching role was the preferred role by physical educators and prospective physical educators (Chu, 1984; Dodds, et al., 1991; Segrave, 1981).

The purpose of this study was to examine high school physical education specialists’ perspectives of the contextual factors that influence the culture of their workplace. As researchers examined workplace conditions in secondary schools, four major categories emerged: career choice and purposes; workloads, routines, and challenges; status of physical education; and collegial interactions. These categories are discussed relative to teacher perceptions of their meaning and influence on the lives of participants and the physical education programs in which they work.

Methods

Participants

Data supporting this section of the paper is a part of a high school study conducted during the 1991–1992 academic year. Participants included 11 physical
education specialists (3 males and 8 females). Of these 11 physical education specialists, 7 were also coaches (3 males and 4 females).

Data Collection

Multiple data sources were used to gather information on the impact of contextual factors in the workplace of secondary physical education specialists. A 40-item questionnaire was initially used to elicit information about teachers/coaches' perceptions of their dual role in the secondary school physical education and sport setting. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) encouraged researchers to examine "how teachers define their own work situations" (p. 505) as a means to better understand the world of teaching. In attempt to incorporate teacher voices with researcher observation into the data collection for this study, data sources included formal and informal interviews (group and individual), teacher reflective journals, and observational field notes. Interview sessions with teacher/coaches further clarified and enhanced information gathered through a questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Survey data were gathered to initially examine dual roles of coaches/teachers and were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In order to observe the daily workload and routines experienced by teachers, each participant was shadowed for one entire day, with an interview following the shadowing episode. Journals were kept by some participants in this study, and they were asked to identify topics for discussion within journal entries. Participants were encouraged to address additional issues as they emerged. During the individual and group interview processes, participants initially responded to predetermined questions. However, questions were open ended, and participants were encouraged to identify issues or concerns not addressed by the interviewer. All interviews were audiotaped, and each tape was later transcribed verbatim.

Data sources were compiled and analyzed by the researchers. Topics and categories were determined inductively as they emerged from data. Researchers looked both for consistency of information to identify categories and for negative cases that might provide alternative views. Triangulation of data sources utilized in this study involved cross-checking multiple sources of data to improve the probability that data and researchers' interpretations of data were credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data from surveys, journals, interviews, and observations were cross-checked during data analysis. The process confirmed information and identified inconsistent or unclear information that could be clarified in a subsequent interview. As similar perspectives from multiple participants and multiple data sources emerged, topics and categories were determined. Researchers then returned to data sources to confirm existing categories and to search for negative cases and alternative views. Participant anonymity was protected in this study through the use of pseudonyms chosen by the participants.

Findings

Contextual factors in this study have been separated into four major categories. The first section provides information about why participants entered the
profession and what they perceived as the major purpose of teaching physical education. The second category describes the daily workload of teachers, the dual role of teachers/coaches, and rewards and challenges found within the teaching and coaching settings. The third category addresses the status of physical education, with teachers' perspectives about students, faculty colleagues outside of physical education, administrators, and parents. In the fourth category we discussed the extent of collegial interactions among co-workers and the impact of these interactions on their physical education programs.

The questions that focused the discussion for each of the themes emerged from analyses of data. These questions were then used as a framework to provide a meaningful focus to the factors impacting workplace conditions of high school physical education teachers in this study.

**Career Choice and Purpose**

Findings in this next section describe the teachers' reasons for entering the physical education profession and the purposes of physical education in the setting in which they work.

**Entry Into the Profession.** Three patterns emerged within these data relative to this question. First was the importance of significant others upon participants' decision to become physical educators. Several participants in this study identified family members or former physical education teachers as influential people in their decision to become a physical educator:

I think I chose teaching because of my [movement] background and because of a very important person in my life, which was my physical education teacher at that time. She was an extremely dynamic woman, and I have always loved moving. When you put the combination of something you really love to do with someone who you love to learn from, it just makes it inevitable that you're going to end up doing that. (Sandy)

I had a very good physical education teacher, and I had a health teacher that was also very good. Basically because of their influence I decided that I wanted to be a phys. ed. and health teacher. (Leigh)

Believe it or not, because my mother told me [laugh]. It's really true! My Mom is the one who really encouraged me to do this. (Molly)

Well my parents told me "You are going to be a teacher. What kind do you want to be?" It was either between art and phys. ed., and my mother told me you will always be able to do your art work, and maybe you don't want to do that during the day because it will take away the creative process later, and being a phys. ed. teacher will keep you in shape and be beneficial forever. So voilà! Here I am! (Pucky)

One teacher contradicted the view of a family as a supportive factor. Penelope was actually influenced to enter another profession by a family member but ultimately chose a career in physical education:

Originally I did not think I wanted to be a teacher. I grew up in a family where my father was an educator, and I highly admired him, but I was not encouraged by my mother to be an educator because of the [lack of] money back then.
The second major pattern appeared to revolve around love of sport and physical activity. Positive experiences in sport and physical education encouraged participants to choose a profession in an area that had been rewarding throughout their lives. Statements from Penelope and Jocko represented these teachers' views:

I always enjoyed phys. ed. in high school, always played intramurals. I was at the age when my school district did not have interscholastic sports, so we had intramurals, and I always participated and had a great time. It was just something that sounded good to me to do, and the more I got into it, the more I really did enjoy it. (Penelope)

I always have been [interested in sport], and I think I made the right decision going into this area because, as I tell people, I think I have the best job in the world. Somebody has to be good at it. Somebody has to basically teach other people how to play. And I'm good at it, so I like it. (Jocko)

Sandy chose teaching because it was one of the few career choices for women at that time: "I also grew up in the '60s where the greatest majority of women followed the traditional roles of nurse and secretary and teaching. So being a rocket scientist at that time did not exist in my mind because I wasn't that adventuresome."

Purposes of Physical Education. An examination of data regarding purposes of teaching physical education resulted in one main response and two secondary responses. The main response focused on exposure to lifetime activities and fitness with the hope of continued participation. Most teachers believed introducing students to physical activities was the most important issue and student expertise was not the ultimate goal:

I try to give them a basic exposure with basic techniques and some fundamentals [to] whatever particular activity it might be. If it struck their interest, they can pursue [the activity] on their own or come to me and get additional help. I am willing to go out and work with kids on tennis, golf, or whatever it might be. (Jocko)

I think it is important that they understand some principles of fitness and how to go about doing that in different ways, as well as activities that they can participate in and carry on knowledge and basic skill. As an adult, if they ever choose to continue tennis, volleyball, or golf, or softball, they [would] have some basic background from us to get them started. Whatever they continue to further on their own, that's good. I guess if they spent a little time with us, then hopefully they learned some of these things they can take with them as an adult. I see that as our basic role at this point in time. (Mary)

My personal opinion on that [the purpose] is giving them a lifetime sport. Some things that they can do inexpensively . . . and something they can do in the backyard. I teach recreation [activities] so that we do not necessarily have to go to a health spa or to a fitness center to play racquetball. We could put a hoop out in the backyard or we can go to the tennis courts right here at the high school and hit the ball back and forth over the net,
or we can play a backyard game of volleyball just over a rope if need be. As long as we have some basic skills, we could do some recreational kind of things for the rest of our life. (Molly)

Different views came into play relative to the incorporation of fitness into the purpose of physical education. Two views about fitness as a major focus in the curriculum are as follows:

I used to be oriented towards more fitness—they had to do sit-ups and push-ups and everything like that, but I found myself fighting [the students] all the time, and they would cheat all the time. Unless I stood there counting [students'] sit-ups I never knew how many [they did]—that's why I no longer do that. We run. I can tell if someone is running, and it is much easier to keep tabs on [students]. I'm much happier, the kids are much happier, and I think that I get more out of them because we aren't in a constant struggle that you have to do 20 sit-ups. I guess I'm leaning more toward a recreational [approach] and not so much physical fitness. (Molly)

I think the major purpose of high school physical education is lifetime fitness, and teaching students what they can do to maintain a fit life through adulthood. Encouraging [lifetime fitness] and striving for that—it's pure and simple for me. (Leigh)

Lastly, in regard to the purpose of physical education, Pucky and Sandy held the belief that their role was also to develop responsible citizens:

I think it is a piece of the whole. I think it is part of learning that should incorporate what they are doing in the other disciplines. It is just that movement is the medium to accomplish what learning is, what responsibility is, what leadership is, what cooperation is. It is just that we do it physically. (Pucky)

[I] look at educating a child through a subject. The world doesn't just revolve around the physical education class—physical education is just a part of a person's day. There are many, many things [for students] to do just getting out and growing and maturing. So my view of physical education is more broad. (Sandy)

**Workload, Routines, and Challenges**

*Daily Workload of Teachers.* A theme that emerged as important in the lives of teachers revolved around their daily workload. There were certain factors within that workload that became routine and others that continued to provide challenges. A typical workday for the high school physical education teachers in this study included five instructional periods, a school duty, and a conference period. The conference period was almost always the last period of the day and was intended to accommodate coaching responsibilities. The placement of conference periods as the last period of the day for most teachers ensured this time was more likely to be spent on coaching details or, when tired, cleaning up the office to go home. A number of these teachers no longer coached but were still scheduled for conference periods at end of the day. This frustrated Pucky who felt that she was too tired by the end of the day to be productive in planning
for her upcoming health or physical education classes. Indeed she often used this time to complete her daily exercise before leaving for home:

I don’t want a planning period ninth period. I don’t plan anything ninth period. When it rolls around, I quit. I want it in the middle of the day where I can use it and be more effective. Now I run, but I can run at home you know. So by ninth period, I don’t want to do anything related to work anymore.

The field notes from shadowing these teachers during a typical day provided a general overview of their daily workloads. It was clear the teachers’ days were full and busy. Tasks that filled their schedules had less to do with instruction and more to do with a myriad of activities that included organizing, interacting, and even counseling students before, during, and after instructional episodes. Instruction seemed almost to interrupt the multiple interactions teachers had in managing and organizing students to move in and out of the physical education space. Instruction revolved around brief encounters with physical activity at a basic introductory level of game play, with little attention to skill or strategy during the lessons. Penelope’s fencing unit and Leigh’s tennis unit were two exceptions to this scenario. The instructional ecology of these programs is described in the companion article in this monograph by Siedentop, Doutis, Tsangaridou, Ward, and Rauschenbach.

There seemed little intensity in teachers’ daily schedule. Usually no more than two instructional classes in a row were scheduled, followed by a duty, a conference period, or lunch. Four of the 11 teachers taught another subject in the school: two taught health, one taught biology, and the fourth taught in the quest program. Quest is a curriculum that focuses on the development of adolescents’ social skills and is offered at several local high schools. It is common practice to have physical education teachers assigned to teach this program, though it was not designed to be part of the physical education curriculum. There seems to be an assumption that physical education teachers are best suited to this because of the perception that physical education emphasizes social interaction skills more than other academic areas.

Although there are a myriad of duties for teachers to attend to in a typical high school, we found these physical educators were assigned similar tasks. They included one of three duties: study hall, lunch room duty, and/or supervision of “open gym.” Only one teacher, Sandy, had duty in the central office. Without exception, all disliked the lunchroom duty. They found it physically exhausting, and the constant monitoring of student behavior left them with little energy for afternoon instructional sessions. Several teachers felt they were assigned this duty year after year, despite repeated requests for a change of assignment, because the physical education teacher was perceived by the central administration as the school disciplinarian and as someone who could best handle this assignment. Carrie’s entries in her diary about this topic reflected the views of many of these teachers: “Cafeteria duty will be the death of me . . . too many kids, not enough space. . . . It’s such a waste of a professional’s time to baby-sit kids at lunch.”

Routine and Challenge in Physical Education. When studying the ecology of the gymnasium, Locke (1975) stated, “In the midst of complexity is routine, in the midst of change is repetition, and in the midst of challenge is boredom”
This paradox appears applicable to the lives of physical education specialists in this study. Locke (1975) noted that, "What happens in a school is not determined by actual events of learning as it occurs in the clientele population, but by the clock" (p. 9). Lives of participants in this study were driven by predetermined time blocks. Students entered the gymnasium, changed clothes, moved through the instructional period, changed back into street clothes, and left the gymnasium. This cycle was repeated approximately four to five times throughout the day, and the routine remained constant, given schedule changes for assemblies, and the like, throughout the year. These routines were predictable and provided the structure for the daily lives of high school teachers and their students. Sandy stated, "Everything in my life seems to be on a 50-minute schedule, so I know that something different is going to happen in 50 minutes. I think my day is just that."

Researchers, who acted as observers in this study, described daily activities of participants relative to the routine and sameness of the day-to-day schedule. This observed sameness resulted in feelings of boredom for the researchers. However, what was boredom to trained observers, was described as variety and challenge by the high school teachers. Teachers felt there were differences within and between classes due to a variety in student personality, skill level, class size, and contextual factors. As Penelope stated, "I never find any period or any day as a sameness, believe me. Every class is so unique to me that I look at teaching class every day as a joy or a challenge. I don't find any monotony in teaching."

Mary reemphasized this point:

It is not like going to a factory, and you put the same nut and bolt together in an assembly line. Your kids, each different personality shows up, and each one of those personalities can interact or behave differently from one day to the next. So the challenge is to coordinate all of those personalities and try to get them headed in the right direction of whatever it is that you are teaching that day. For me, teaching is not ever boring from that respect.

Teachers may have been describing what Locke (1975) suggested was "what the tourists never see" (p. 1) in the gymnasium, and it was the subtle differences that replaced boredom with challenge for participants in this study. The challenges of providing a positive experience for a diverse group of students overshadowed the daily routine and structure that seemed to describe their teaching lives. These high school specialists saw each class as a separate challenge and students as individuals with different personalities and varying abilities. The "tourists" were unable to establish the intimacy with the environment or with students in order to understand the subtle differences that created challenge from routine.

Rewards and Restrictions of Teaching Physical Education. Rewards discussed by all participants in this study tended to be intrinsic (Lortie, 1975). Intrinsic rewards were identified as "subjective valuations made in the course of work engagement" and were "constrained by the nature of the occupation and its tasks" (Lortie, 1975, p. 101). Intrinsic rewards tend to be subjective in nature and to focus on positive occurrences in the teaching setting. Teachers in this study emphasized the interaction with students as being most important. Seeing students learning and having fun in physical education was a central response. Comments from several of the teachers described this view:
Having kids learn, having them get excited. (Pucky)

I see a lot of kids today who are very troubled. When they have fun enjoying themselves, or learning, or going through a game situation, they are able to be themselves and not put on some kind of facade as they do in the hallway. (Penelope)

Seeing John, who hasn’t been able to hit the shuttlecock for a week and a half, to finally hit it and get excited about it. You know, that to me is the reward of teaching. (Leigh)

I love interacting with the kids. I need that interaction, and so that is probably what I enjoy most about teaching. (Sandy)

Being a life-long learner as a teacher seemed to emerge as a secondary reward. Sandy and Penelope presented views similar to most of the other teachers:

I enjoy learning about myself, about kids, about society. Every day, every minute, I am amazed at some of the things that I learn, and so my teaching is just more about learning. (Sandy)

It’s a wonderful job. It is very intrinsically rewarding. . . . There is always potential for growth. Just a lot of potential for self-growth and the growth of others. . . . I think a lot of it is that I am learning a lot. . . . what kind of a parent to be. I am getting those things out of it [teaching]. (Penelope)

Molly and Mary voiced the view that their rewards included the physical educators’ role as a counselor.

A student coming up and saying I’ve had a bad day, they unload all this on you—not that I like them to tell me all their problems, but for them to feel comfortable telling me as opposed to some other teacher—that makes me feel good. (Molly)

They [students] for the most part feel comfortable with you, they will say just about anything, they will talk about anything. . . . I like that kids feel comfortable. (Mary)

In addition to rewards in teaching, teachers were asked to identify specific factors within their work environment that enhanced or inhibited their ability to do their jobs well. The most commonly mentioned factors included facilities and equipment, a supportive administration, and teamwork and cooperation among colleagues. Less frequently mentioned as job enhancers were students, professional autonomy, lack of paperwork, and interaction with the university.

There seemed little consensus on factors inhibiting job performance. Scheduling was identified by three teachers, with two specifically identifying nonteaching duties as one of the greatest inhibitors. Two teachers identified the administration and the fact that they have to grade students. The following factors were identified by only one teacher as inhibitors to teaching performance: the teaching partner, little parental support, equipment, lack of staff development in physical education, and discipline. Leigh commented, “Really, the only thing that prevents me from doing a good job is myself.”

Multiplicity of Roles. Seven of the 11 teachers had extracurricular roles as coaches in their schools: Sandy, Jocko, Carrie, Bill, Phil, Kay, and Mary. The 4 female teachers coached girls only, and Bill coached a female volleyball team.
Jocko and Phil coached boys only. All had supplemental contracts. Jocko earned the most for these responsibilities, and it amounted to an additional $10,000 a year. This involved coaching three sports, including the boys’ varsity basketball team. It was the most prestigious coaching position at Maple High School, and Jocko had a very successful program with a great deal of community recognition for his efforts, including “Coach of the Year.”

In addition to coaching tennis in the fall and softball in the spring, Carrie officiated women’s basketball in the winter for Division I and II National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) teams. This took her on the road several nights a week from January through March. She loved this work, though she was often exhausted during the day and took a nap during her conference period. In January alone she refereed 18 games, traveling after school and on weekends between 1/2 hour and 4 hours to a game. In February she officiated 17 games. Carrie earned about $10,000 for officiating, though she told us that her male counterparts in men’s basketball earned about $30,000.

Although questionnaire data did not provide any differences between groups relative to their perception of their dual role as teacher/coaches, interview data provided further information relative to the inherent demands of these roles. There seemed to be an intense desire by these coaches to be effective in their physical education classes, and they tried very hard to continue to maintain their teaching patterns in the gymnasium. However, in spite of their efforts, the intensity of demands placed upon them as coaches did impact the teaching environment at various times. Jocko provided an example of these overwhelming demands:

I understand the coaching is supplemental and that [it] is extra income. I have to look at it that way; that I am paid to teach first, coach second. . . . I did not know how much demand could be placed upon my time by having success. I had to speak at several places, do this, do that, get phone calls. I think my PE classes suffered, and I think I am honest enough to recognize that I did not give [students] the instruction that I thought they should get.

Other teachers also felt their personal time and sometimes their teaching were compromised due to the intensity of demands during the coaching season:

Sometimes you do compromise the teaching atmosphere to a certain degree when you are in a certain sport. But not all the time—I guess you have your days. (Phil)

Personally as a coach, I don’t think I let my phys. ed. classes suffer because of coaching. Maybe a little bit sometimes because of some duties you had to do for coaching that you would normally not be doing. . . . When I was coaching the hours were unbelievable. Having to plan and still having to coach. It probably changed my whole time schedule. You know, staying up until 1 or 2 o’clock in the morning because you had to do the lesson and coaching plans, statistics, and so on and so forth. (Kay)

School and teaching are my top priority [over coaching and officiating], and I’ll do what I have to do to get back for school the next day. . . . Too many long evenings, working on a field that gets abused by the neighborhood kids, taking kids home after games, never enough time to get things done for myself. I just don’t have time for myself at all. I’m mentally drained. You
know what—I honestly wish I didn’t care so much about my kids, my job, and how to do it, because it’s got to be easier not to care. (Carrie)

As we attempted to understand why these teachers chose to put themselves through these struggles, the obvious answers seemed to be those stated in previous literature—teacher/coaches received extra rewards, recognition, and satisfaction for their role as a coach that they did not receive as a teacher. Kay clearly stated her understanding of the expectations of a coach:

I do think that coaching does come first. It is a priority. As a lot of us know, we were hired first as a coach, not as a teacher, even though they say the opposite. Depending on the job you have as a coach, if you are not producing—if you are not winning—you are going to lose your job. That becomes a priority, so the teaching suffers.

Phil spoke about the rewards that he gets from the motivation and skill level of student athletes that he does not receive in the classroom:

Coaching is like teaching seniors—coaching is like teaching French 4. They want to be there—everyone is in there, they want to learn, and you can work with them a little bit more. You are basically teaching advanced kids who really want to work, and a lot of kids are not that way. It is tough to motivate those kids who don’t want to do anything.

In addition, Jocko and Carrie appreciated the extra income that was available through coaching, as Jocko has four children and Carrie enjoys her own home, car, and vacations in the summer.

Status

We sought information from participants in this study relative to the degree of support and recognition for physical education from students, school faculty, administrators, and parents. It was clear from teachers’ comments that physical education was not respected as a legitimate subject area in these secondary schools.

Students. None of the participants believed physical education was challenging for their students; rather, it was relatively easy to do well. For some it was considered counterproductive to have tough standards for physical education because teachers felt it would alienate the less skilled and be seen as a haven for the athletic elite.

School Faculty. A major concern of these teachers was the little support by faculty colleagues for physical education and the importance of their role in the overall education of high school youth. Sandy’s views of collegial support reflected those of the other teachers:

I would like to work along with the other teachers in the building as far as educating an entire child rather than [them] just looking at me or the classes that I teach as recreation. And when they look out the windows and see the kids having fun and laughing and that kind of thing, they automatically think of it as recess.

Leigh suggested, “We are still fighting the age-old theory that all you do in the
gym is roll the ball out.” Jocko believed that although he has earned the respect of fellow teachers by working hard, perceptions of physical education as a legitimate subject matter were nonexistent:

They think about it [physical education] as a nonacademic subject—the old stereotype of a PE teacher—just dumb jocks. I think they know what I stand for and what I try to do personally as a teacher. I think I got the respect for that. They know I work hard with whatever I am doing.

For Carrie there were small but consistent signals from her colleagues about what she termed the “stigma” of her profession. Teachers would kid her about whether she was going to play today. Even her roommates, teachers in other schools but not physical educators, would ask her whether she was going “to roll out the ball” this week. Carrie noted that “They [her roommates] see it [weak physical education programs and poor teaching] in their own schools” and though they only tease her, Carrie still feels hurt.

All programs in this study were activity based. Unlike teachers in New Zealand, Australia, and Britain, teachers in this study have not considered an academic component to their programs that may raise the status of their subject area in the eyes of their colleagues.

School Administrators. These teachers perceived the support for physical education by their principals and other administrative personnel as weak to nonexistent. The principal at Colonial High School was the only one perceived to strongly support physical education. Leigh said of her administration:

I get great support from our administrators here in this building, and I think a lot of it is because they understand that I’m trying to do a good job and also because I think they understand the importance of physical education, and that is real important. . . . I think it would be very difficult in a building where you did not get good administrative support.

In other school settings, there was a neutrality and even neglect towards physical education by the administration. The scheduling of physical education by central administration (little concern for size of classes or for inappropriate groupings of students) demonstrated implicitly that physical education was rated quite low in the overall scheme of things in the school.

Parents. Teachers perceived even less support for physical education from parents. They had parents who openly admitted they hated physical education when they were at school and parents who perceived physical education as “recess” and less important compared to other subjects in the curriculum:

Parents have the same perception of a lot of people—oh, it’s gym . . . so you know. . . . Usually the only time I get to talk to a parent is when their child gets a C, D, or F, and they can’t figure out why they got an F in gym. (Leigh)

Penelope and Carrie held even more negative views of parents’ perceptions of physical education, suggesting they received little support for physical education at home. Penelope said, “These kids probably have parents who were in physical education [programs] that were a nightmare. So you are still dealing with that stereotype with parents.” During an open house at Kinney, when Carrie asked
a parent about her daughter's absences from physical education, the parent responded, "You know, I hated PE." Lack of support from her co-worker in preparing for the evening's parent-teacher conference and the responses of parents left Carrie feeling frustrated.

**Collegial Interactions**

In 9 of the 10 high schools in this study, at least one other physical education specialist worked with participants to implement the physical education program. Leigh was the only physical education specialist in her school. Comments referring to the working relationship between participants and their co-workers repeatedly occurred during formal and informal individual interviews, in journals kept by some participants, and during a group interview toward the end of the study. Extensive observation also supported statements made by participants.

Co-workers in the physical education setting seemed to have a definite impact on teachers' perceptions of the work environment, but the extent and direction of that impact varied. Throughout the time spent with these high school physical education teachers, various philosophies were played out in the working relationships of these teachers and the degree to which participants interacted with their co-workers. The extent of this interaction ranged from completely separate programs from those of their co-workers with no interaction relative to teaching taking place, to high interactivity within the program as indicated by a great deal of communication and team teaching. Thus, participants seemed to develop working relationships with their co-workers that fell into one of three categories.

In the first category, participants indicated that the physical education teachers within their departments were a cohesive group and contributed to the enhancement of the physical education programs. These teachers stated similar philosophical perspectives and a team effort approach that was functional for them. Although there were sometimes differences between teachers, those differences were beneficial and enhanced overall program success. They were able to have positive interactions in a social and professional manner, and each member of the physical education faculty contributed to the overall success of the program.

I think in our particular school as a faculty, we work well together. . . . I mean we talk—we know what we are teaching. We know what day we are going to test and [give] handouts. It is pretty much a cooperation. So we do not hinder each other in what we are trying to accomplish. (Mary)

Mr. Adams used to be the basketball coach, and when he teaches [basketball] I always learn from him. Team teaching is a plus when we can go on each others' strengths. I think in that respect [teaching] we all complement each other, and we try very hard to make sure that we all work on the same thing. (Molly)

The second category seemed to indicate a relatively high level of social interactivity, though there were some philosophical differences. Teachers in this category experienced differences in disciplinary or instructional strategies and often felt they did more than their share of the duties in the program.
I think you do have to realize different teaching styles, and you can't expect them to teach like you do. As long as we are reaching our goals and the goals are being met. (Kay)

... not a whole lot of specific instruction or lesson-plan type of teaching [from his co-worker]. More like we are going to play basketball this week, instead of specifics. ... So, yeah, we do have differences. (Phil)

Although differences were acknowledged in the second category, they did not seem to limit the overall program goals.

In the third category, participants professionally separated themselves from their co-workers. They taught their own classes in their own teaching stations and had virtually no professional interactions with their co-workers. Jocko stated his major reason for a separate curriculum and separate classes was his co-worker's lack of expertise, whereas Sandy and Carrie focused on the lack of commitment by their co-workers:

We emphasize volleyball, track and field. She will get a handout of information to the kids and go over it with them, but as far as technically teaching, like a forehand in tennis, she does not have the expertise to teach that. She does not attempt to teach archery or golf, [as] she has no knowledge of those. Part of it to me is that she is not willing to broaden her curriculum. She is kind of narrow minded. (Jocko)

[My] teaching partner has an approach to this [teaching] as a 3:15 to 7 o'clock job—which is a coach—rather than an 8 o'clock to 3:15 person. And he approach each of his classes exactly in that way. (Sandy)

My co-worker is not professional—he only thinks of himself. ... His absences have become a joke around here, and the kids really don't miss him. Things operate quite smoothly without him. Its his lack of responsibility that I question. (Carrie)

Participants in this study seemed to span the entire continuum regarding the extent of interactions with co-workers; however, most teachers fell into the second category. These teachers were able to maintain friendly social interactions with colleagues, but then made independent professional decisions to benefit their teaching environment. They felt they were the ones who pushed their co-workers for a more professional environment. This arrangement usually resulted in more work and an increased level of frustration for participants in this study.

**Summary/Discussion**

An examination of workplace conditions of secondary physical education provided an interesting insight into the lives of physical education teachers. Findings from this study indicated that participants entered the teaching field in physical education because of their love of sport and physical activity and their desire to continue their involvement in a sporting environment. These teachers were also influenced by a significant person, such as a family member or a former physical education teacher or coach. Sandy also stated that teaching was one of few options open to women as she was making her career choice.

When asked about the purposes of physical education, most teachers in this study felt the overall goal was to provide positive experiences in a wide
variety of activities similar to the multiactivity model discussed by Siedentop, Mand, and Taggart (1986), as this would encourage students to continue to pursue activities throughout their lifetime. Other teachers promoted lifetime fitness as a major goal within their physical education program. A few teachers cited the need to help students develop as responsible citizens, using movement as the means to address social issues to meet this goal. The three goals for physical education cited by participants in this study were identical to those identified by Placek (1992) regarding program goals in middle school physical education: to offer a broad range of sport skills, health-related fitness, and cooperation. The majority of secondary physical educators seem to disagree with the notion of offering fewer activities over a longer period of time, as recommended in some of the current literature on improving secondary physical education (Locke, 1992; Rink, 1992).

Although teachers’ schedules were based on a series of 50-minute time blocks, participants in this study did not feel bored with their routines. Rather, they found challenges in their perceived differences in each class, such as varying skill level, student personality, and class size. No teachers felt inhibited by the routines, as they saw each class as a unique challenge.

Participants in this study seemed to have a relatively light teaching load, but they continued to be busy throughout the day with nonteaching duties that completed the responsibilities of these teachers. Most teachers had a duty such as lunch or hall duty or supervision in the gymnasium during open gym. Teachers disliked these duties and felt they were assigned these responsibilities because administrators perceived them as the school disciplinarian. Teachers also interacted with students on a constant basis about organizational tasks, other school activities, or even held informal counseling discussions before and after classes. Teachers felt most rewarded by student interaction, and when asked about the aspect of their environment that enhanced their ability to do their job well, facilities and the administration were most often mentioned. Scheduling limitations and nonteaching duties were most often listed as factors that inhibited teachers in the school setting.

Seven of the 11 teachers had extracurricular roles as coaches, and the dual role of teacher/coach became an important factor for many participants in this study. In spite of the desire to keep teaching a high priority, these teachers found that the demands of time and energy sometimes compromised their ability to maintain their teaching objectives. Teacher/coaches recognized the expectations to produce a winning team, and one teacher spoke of the rewards of working with skilled students who wanted to learn in the coaching setting, an experience he did not find in his teaching environment.

Similar to findings in other studies (Sparkes et al., 1993; Templin, 1989), participants in this study felt marginalized as they spoke about the lack of support by students, faculty, and administrators in the school, as well as the lack of respect for their subject matter by parents. Additional information provided new insights into the working relationships of participants with their co-workers in physical education, as all but one physical education teacher in this study worked with a physical education co-worker in their school setting. The types of interactions undertaken by participants and their co-workers seemed to have a direct impact on the physical education program. Participant interaction ranged from a collegial, cohesive atmosphere in which co-workers supported and enhanced
one another to an atmosphere in which co-workers shared no responsibilities and collegial interaction was nonexistent. Most participants, however, were able to contribute to and maintain social interactions in a positive manner but still remained alone in their professional decisions. These teachers tended to take leadership roles within the program, thus assuming more responsibility for accomplishing program organizational and instructional goals.

A useful framework for further study into the workplace conditions of physical educators was provided by Lewis and Smith (1990). They offered seven criteria that represented indicators of the quality of worklife of teachers. As we examine data from this study relative to these criteria, participants received little respect from relevant adults, had little professional interactions within their school setting, and were not always able to use their skill and knowledge about physical activities, as the multiactivity approach rarely allowed them to get past beginning-level skills. Although teachers were able to make decisions, such decisions were often enacted only in the teachers' own classroom settings, as their co-workers held different philosophical perspectives. Although not all indicators were addressed, data from this study allows researchers to begin to examine the extent to which teachers were able to attend to issues relative to the quality of work life in their school environment. Perhaps it should not be surprising that secondary physical education teachers prefer the coaching role to that of teaching, as it is in coaching that they receive respect, support, and recognition from their work. Although physical education specialists must take some responsibility for initiating change, researchers must also identify strategies to enable teachers to impact the organizational structure in which they work. Griffin (1985c) was right when she spoke of the hopelessness of fighting for a quality physical education program without change in the political and contextual environment in which teachers work. As we examine the secondary physical education curriculum in light of change and reform, perhaps it would be to our benefit to identify strategies to improve the quality of work life of teachers as we begin to make decisions about the future of secondary physical education.
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