Beliefs of Pre-Service Teachers toward Competitive Activities and the Effect on Implementation and Planning for Physical Education Classes

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Introduction

Pre-service teachers (PSTs) consistently rely on previous knowledge, values, and beliefs that can play an instrumental role in the way they instruct students (McCaughtry, Sofo, Rovegno, & Curtner-Smith, 2004) during activities that have a competitive curricular focus. Teachers may have prior beliefs before they enter pre-service programs (Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993), and these beliefs might be translated into how teachers implement their lessons, intentions, and the principles they find important to follow (Tabacbnick & Zeichner, 1984). Previously learned sport experiences can influence content, curriculum (Rovegno, 1993, 1995), and planning of tasks (Doolittle et al., 1993; Placek et al., 1995). Although curricular models can vary, competitive activities can be incorporated into many of the activities that students experience in physical education (PE). PE

can serve as an important part of introducing physical activities to youth for the first time (CDC, 2012) and help cultivate an interest in regular physical activity. This is especially important to consider when instructing middle school students, as physical activity then often declines (Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000).

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is the framework for this study. TRA, or attitude theory, suggests that teachers' affect and cognition or knowledge may influence how an individual interprets an activity (Ajzen, 2005). Attitudes may affect teachers' perceptions and beliefs about PE, and these perceptions and beliefs may affect how teachers might implement lessons (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). While PST programs and how these programs can affect the beliefs of teachers have been studied (Biddle & Goudas, 1997; Graber 1998; Kulinna, Silverman, & Keating, 2000; Munby, 1984), teachers' beliefs and their actual practice have not been fully explored (Tsangaridou, 2006). Beliefs can be difficult to define (Pajares, 1992), and literature on teachers' beliefs influencing action is limited (Kulinna et al., 2000; Pajares, 1992; Tsangaridou & O' Sullivan, 2003). Teachers may hold salient or strong beliefs regarding competition (Ajzen, 2005), and these beliefs can influence how teachers carry out certain actions or behaviors, especially in their instruction. McIntyre, Byrd, and Fox (1996) found that pre-service teachers considered their teaching experiences during their pre-service training to be of value. Understanding teacher beliefs regarding competitive activities, and if those beliefs affect instruction, can be key to unlocking a more productive learning environment.

Planning is an important part of shaping the students' experiences in PE classes (Placek, 1984; Rink 2003; Stroot & Morton, 1989). Thus, the beliefs that PE teachers hold are an integral part in how they plan and implement competitive activities in their gymnasia (McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2003). The teachers' prior experience can affect their instruction. Teaching can be a combination of knowledge of subject matter, curricular knowledge, and of teaching methods (Eraut, 1985; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1986). Instructional variables included in planning that create successful learning opportunities for students have been identified as time and appropriate practice (Carroll, 1989; Silverman, Tyson, & Morford, 1988), skill progression, and accountability (French et al., 1991; McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2003; Rikard, 1992; Rink, 1994, 2003; Silverman, Kulinna, & Crull, 1995) and can not only increase students' success in an activity, but may also be incorporated into PST planning.

While the study of beliefs is difficult (Pajares, 1992), researchers agree that beliefs should become an integral element in the study of PE (Graber, 1998; Graham, Hohn, Werner, & Woods, 1993; Kulina et al., 2000). There has been little investigation, however, into the beliefs that PSTs hold regarding competitive activities. The purpose of this study was to determine if PSTs' prior beliefs about competitive activities affect their lesson planning, and how pre-service teachers incorporate their beliefs and pre-service training when implementing competitive games during middle school PE classes.

Method

Pilot Study

The interview guide for this study was developed after an extensive review of literature focusing on attitude and semi-structured interview protocol (Bernstein, Phillips, & Silverman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Siedman, 2012; Subramaniam, & Silverman, 2002). The pilot study was performed to assure data saturation. The questions were first piloted with teacher educators in the field of PE. The questions, observations, and field notes were further pilot tested with two PSTs, one male and one female. They were observed teaching two lessons of competitive activities. Interviews were conducted before each lesson and after the last lesson. Interviews lasted 20-to-25 minutes.

Procedures

Participants and Setting

The study received clearance from the New York City Department of Education and institutional clearance. Ten pre-service PE teachers (6 male, 4 female) who were enrolled in a student teaching course in a large urban university consented to participate in this study (see Table 1). Both the volunteer participants and the participating urban and suburban schools' administrators signed consent forms. All participants chose a pseudonym. All were observed teaching competitive lessons using the multi-activity model. This model allowed sports units with short periods of skill practice followed by modified game play. The observed sports were basketball, volleyball, tennis, lacrosse, handball, and soccer.

Table 1
Teacher Characteristics

Teacher	*Ethnicity*	*Age Range*	*Sport*	*Played Competitively*
Females				
Amanda	Caucasian	21-25	Hockey	High School
Leanne	Asian	21-25	Basketball	Middle School
Madeline	Caucasian	21-25	Basketball/Softball	High School
Rita	Caucasian	31-35	Volleyball/Tennis	High School
Males				
Charles	Caucasian	21-25	Basketball	College
Chris	Caucasian	21-25	Baseball	College
David	African/Amer.	26-30	Basketball	College
Frank	Caucasian	21-25	Football/Basketball	High School
Leo	Latin Amer.	21-25	Soccer	College
Paul	Caucasian	21-25	Basketball	College

Non-Participant Observations and Field Notes

Non-participant observations and field notes (O'Hearn-Curran, 1996) were used. Each teacher was observed twice instructing competitive activities. In one case, only one class was observed, as the PST could not schedule another observation. The observations of the classes were scheduled for the convenience of the volunteer participants. The observed lessons were 45-50 minutes in length. Lesson plans were collected prior to each lesson.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The participants completed two 20-to-25 minute semi-structured interviews (Siedman, 2012), one before the first observed lesson and one after the second observed lesson. The background interview included questions regarding the participants' beliefs about competition and was held before the observed lesson. These questions related to their background in competitive activities, their views on competition, and their views on teaching competitive activities. For the interviews prior to teaching each observed lesson, questions included: What types of competitive activities have you planned during the school year? What competitive activities have you planned for today? What would you like the students to gain from these activities? How have your own experiences influenced the way you planned this lesson? What have you incorporated from your academic experiences in terms of competition? Have you planned for different types of students, and how? Clarifying questions were asked in the post observation interview after the second lesson.

Data Analysis

Data were transcribed and entered into N-Vivo 9 (QSR International, Victoria, Australia). Observations, field notes, semi-structured interview transcriptions, and teacher lesson plans were analyzed for emergence of patterns and themes using the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The first two authors coded all of the data separately and then met to discuss the themes that had clearly emerged. To ensure trustworthiness of results, all the transcribed interviews were member checked by the volunteer participants and changes were implemented. All data, interviews, observations and field notes, and lesson plans were triangulated and checked for negative cases. In addition, an independent peer reviewer, the third author, was assigned to review themes. The document went through three separate rounds until the process was completed. When the themes had been finalized, the volunteer participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the conclusions reached by the researchers. The volunteer participants were encouraged to agree, disagree, or elaborate on the findings. All participants agreed with the findings as presented.

Researchers' Backgrounds

The first two authors of the study, who collected the data and carried out the analysis, are professors in a large, public, urban university. They have both had over

20 years of experience teaching PE with diverse populations in large urban settings. The first author also has had extensive training in the martial arts. To make sure that the researcher checked bias, the third author served as an independent peer reviewer. She is a professor in a large urban university with extensive experience in teacher education and a background in playing professional competitive basketball.

Results

Four themes were found regarding PSTs' beliefs concerning competitive activities and how they implemented their pre-service training experiences. The first theme was planning modified competitive activities creates structure. This theme was highlighted in the PST training course and reinforced by the teachers in their background interviews. The second theme, planning to teach different ability levels, was highlighted in the PST training program and incorporated into planning, but at times challenged the teachers in actual instruction. The third theme, incorporating respect and sportsmanship, was also highlighted in the PSTs' program and was considered important to the teachers. The fourth theme was competitive game play creates excitement, but can one play without skill? PSTs believed that competition was motivating and exciting for students, but their PST training program was more focused on skill development, so there was a disconnect between teachers' beliefs and their training when it came to planning and implementing competitive activities.

Planning Modified Competitive Activities Creates Structure

All the participants in this study had extensive experiences with competitive activities before entering the teacher training program. These experiences included full-fledged game play and no modification of activities. The teachers believed that competitive activities created structure in the gymnasium. The idea of modifying the structure of competitive activities was taught in their pre-service training courses to attain skill and to maintain structure during the class. When students were playing in games and were organized by positions, rules, and the skills performed in the game, the activity was modified and students could participate.

If many of the students, however, could not play the game, because it was not modified, or there were too many children on the court playing at once, or the students' skills were not developed enough, the teachers understood that the activities could lose their purpose and structure. Therefore, as taught in their pre-service instruction, planning to keep the students active through modifications was crucial and important for the structure of the lesson. Frank did not want children waiting on the sideline of a basketball lesson, for he feared they would get bored and act out. He commented on what he learned in the pre-service program, "Keeping everybody active is a big thing." He was observed modifying game-play and having two teams playing, while the third team practiced their skills on another court to get ready for game play. All the students were active;

the way he structured the task controlled both the game and the students who were waiting for game play.

Madeline felt strongly that the traditional structure of competitive activities of "…hav[ing] one team sit on the side…did not work, because then they get out of hand. They all need to be active at one time." It was important for Madeline to plan for a "competitive situation," as she believed it "motivated" the students and created structure. When the time came, however, to set up the soccer game, and many students from one team were absent, Madeline modified her lesson in a way that was different from what she had planned but maintained the structure of the lesson by having some students play on the full court.

Madeline planned to have two small-sided games at once, so that all students were playing and half of the children were not just sitting on the side. Since so many children were absent, only a few would end up waiting, and those playing would have a better chance to work on their skills due to the larger playing area. When questioned about this, she commented,

> I think at that point, because I had to change the lesson around, [practicing their skills] was more important. The competition was secondary at that point for me. It was more to let me put them in the best situation for them to succeed, for them all to be involved [in successful skill and game play].

The modification of her plans changed the focus of the lesson, with competition taking a secondary role in her lesson. She learned modification from her pre-service preparation program.

Madeline stated in her background interview, "I think you have to be careful in the middle school age group, because their competitive nature, to me, comes across as wild or out of control." She added that, at that age, "their competitive nature has to be watched or put under control, because when you say competitive to middle school kids, they run amuck." This might be due to fact that the students did not have the basic skills to play in full-fledged game play. Madeline added,

> When kids are put into a game, they go bananas. So, it's important, first of all, that they always know that my presence is there, and, secondly, to remind them of the cues that they should be doing. I taught them how to pass with the inside of their foot. I taught them how to do a proper throw-in. But, for whatever reason, when they get into game play, they, I don't want to say, forget those skills, but [they] rush those skills. They don't take the time to go through each maneuver properly. So they need that constant reminder.

When planning her lessons, she thought "that some of the key things in middle school [is] to keep [the students] in smaller groups. If you have a huge game, to me, it just gets out of hand." She wanted them to be able to properly use their skills, and with too many children on the court, she felt the children may not have that opportunity.

As highlighted in the pre-service training, teachers planned the activities

to maintain structure and stressed the use of basic skills. They kept the students active, while not losing the structure of the class, as they focused on the skills of the activity.

Planning to Teach Different Ability Levels

The PSTs spoke about modifying and planning competitive activities for the individual skill levels. While they had planned for modifying activities for different skill abilities in their lessons, for example, letting students serve closer to the net in volleyball and tennis or shooting closer to or at lower baskets in basketball, addressing individual needs of students was rarely seen in the actual lesson. Although differentiating instruction was stressed in many of the interviews, in most cases, this was not translated to the actual lesson.

This was seen clearly in the case of Leanne. When asked prior to teaching her lesson about what she gained from her academic experiences in terms of planning, Leanne stated,

> My own experience with competition is different…I don't like to play under pressure, but I want [the students] to be competitive. [My training has taught me to] modify certain things for certain students, who aren't at the highest skill level yet. As an example, there's this one boy who cannot bump a ball too well, or serve at the service line, so I have [him] move up to the yellow [line]. I learned how to modify [in my pre-service training program] at the college for high, medium, [and] low [skilled] students.

However, in her observation lesson, Leanne never mentioned the modifications for serving. The students were never told that they could or should move up to a different colored line, so that their serves would be more likely to go over the net. Many students in the class would have benefitted from such a modification.

For Chris, it was his intention, also, to plan for students of different abilities based on what he had learned in his pre-service program, as he stated, "…for the lesser challenged students, maybe I'll put them at the beginning of the line. This way they can work on throwing, instead of having to work both at throwing and catching" with sticks in lacrosse. Yet, in an observation of his lesson, Chris did not tell the students where to stand on the line when he developed the activity. Students placed themselves on the line, and Chris began the activity. Chris did not specifically begin from one side based on the ability of the students. While the competitive nature of the drill, getting the ball from one end to the other quickly, was highlighted, the modifications were not carried through.

Although his pre-service training program prepared Charles to plan for students of different levels of ability, in observing his basketball lesson, nothing was done differently for students of various abilities. Students were placed on teams of mixed ability levels, and there were no differences in the baskets used for the games to accommodate the various skill levels of the students. When discussing the lesson he had just taught, he mentioned,

> I didn't plan much at first. I'll be honest, that was a mistake I made. So when I did realize that I had to plan [for lower skilled students], I sort of cushioned it. So, for example, the lower hoops I could use for my beginner players, and for my more advanced players, I could let them shoot at the higher baskets.

Overall, Charles felt uncomfortable with students who had less skill. He stated, **"**I struggle a little more with the beginner players." When asked why he said that, he added that he "…can't relate to [low skill students]. I have been around…a lot of more advanced skilled players…and it's hard to relate to someone who maybe [is] not as skilled." He used examples of aggressive players in game play and discusses his previous competitive experiences.

> My competitive background and experience did affect today's lesson in the sense that, when I saw certain players playing aggressively, I didn't see anything as being malicious. I saw it as being competitive or highly competitive. So I didn't want to criticize, by any means, that student that was playing aggressively, even though some of the other students thought they were being malicious or fouling. What I did in place of that was explain ways around the aggressive play for the opposing player, like the V-cut. When there is an aggressive player on you, V-cut. Things like that.

While it is clear from his interview after the lesson that he believed he used the aggressive and skilled players as an example for the low skilled students to use the "V cut" to get open, it is not clear whether he planned for this to help the low skilled players, or if his uneasiness with low skilled players had him focus on the more aggressive students. Charles' plan for low skilled students was there, but he did not understand how to adjust the lesson to focus on the low skilled students.

It is interesting to note that in only one instance did a teacher plan for and carry out an example of instruction for different ability levels. Rita believed it was important to plan, so that "everyone was successful…so that students that don't have the ability may be able to [still] succeed." Ability levels had been a running theme throughout her interviews. This belief was seen in her planning, as there were various progressions she was planning to implement.

> They toss the ball to their partner, and they have one racket in a hand, and they catch it. And then they turn to the side, drop it, and hit it back to their partner. Well, if they're successful at that, we let them have two rackets, and they're trapping it with two rackets, turn to the [dominant] side, and they're popping the ball back up to the partner. If the partners…exhibit control with each other, we allow both partners to have two rackets, and then they are both going back and forth rallying.

During her lesson there were several students who worked together successfully. Rita spoke with them, and they were able to progress to the next level of using two rackets for one student, and then they progressed to the next level of both students using two rackets. Rita observed them each time she moved around the gym, to make sure they were performing the skills properly. She "liked [her students] to gain

that sense of accomplishment" as this was something she believed was important regarding these activities.

Incorporating Respect and Sportsmanship

The idea of sportsmanship was reinforced in the teachers' pre-service training course. Game play allowed them to introduce students to ideas of respect. The teaching of respect in competitive play was stated by Rita,

> I think we're…parenting. The schools…do a lot of jobs, morals, ethics, and being polite, being good [at] sportsmanship, so I think it's important to take…a minute before you start a competition and remind the students what it is to compete.

Madeline stated that competitive game play allowed an introduction to "the rights and wrongs, when it comes to competition. Like shake your hand after the game is over." Madeline, in a soccer lesson, had paired students to increase "good behavior" as middle school students could get "wild." By pairing the students, so good behavior took place, there "were more touches on the ball." This was something she learned from her pre-service academic experiences. David believed that being on a team was one way to control behavior "through the game," because

> . . . middle school is a different monster, because [the students] can be very disrespectful. There is certain etiquette and certain philosophies that have gone on, and you just lay them out, and ask them to respect the game. Then if they can't respect the game in a certain way, they can't participate until they are ready to change their behavior and meet the expectation that you set for them.

Teaching sportsmanship and fair play to their students was important to the teachers and was also taught in the pre-service teacher training program. It was only partially seen, however, in the observations of their lessons. Paul voiced that he wanted students to learn "respect [and] sportsmanship." He was consistent during his lessons in making comments to the students regarding sportsmanlike and appropriate behavior. He instructed the students about working together and encouraged them to shake hands and give high fives after each game. When their games had finished, he also gave them high fives. However, because he was unaware when some games had finished, sportsmanship and giving high fives was not carried out by his students, even though he spoke about its importance at great length. While his instruction stressed sportsmanship, as emphasized in his PST training, it is unclear whether sportsmanship was self-initiated by the students.

Teachers believed that being on a team could be a vehicle for helping to reinforce respect and sportsmanship. When students were on a team, Amanda stated that they "respected each other and the teacher." On a team, the students did not get out of control. As she said, "the students…are always representing our team." Respect was defined by Amanda as "controlling [one's] behavior." She stated, "We just won a game 9-3, and we could have won the game 15-3, but it's about respecting the other team."

Being on a team could encourage students to help each other, as Amanda stated in a later observation,

> There are going to be kids who have lower ability levels within your team, and it's not about screaming at them and saying "how could you mess that up?" It's about helping them,…and I think that's a lot of being on a team, a lot of working together. Not only would students help each other, but as team members they could especially help teammates work on skill practice.

This was observed while the students played modified basketball games. At the beginning of game play, Amanda had to remind the students about sportsmanship and respecting other students. In one group students kept forgetting to take the ball back to the foul line after a rebound. At first the students got upset, when they lost possession. As game play progressed, the students could be seen reminding each other, so they would not lose possession.

Sportsmanship encompasses both winning and losing. Leo commented that in his pre-service training professors stressed that,

> . . . you have to teach [the students] how to lose, 'cause it's part of sports. Sometimes you miss, and it's all right to practice and learn. So I still want them to be able to…say, 'Okay, so I can miss'. You just have to try your hardest to perfect your skill.

During an observed lesson in tennis, Leo asked each team of students (East and West Coast) to announce their scores. He then announced to the entire class that the "East Coast won." He never used this winning/losing situation as a teachable moment. When the students complained about losing and made disappointed comments, Leo did not take the opportunity to discuss the importance of learning how to lose, even though he had stated that his pre-service training taught him both winning and losing could teach students about the game.

There was only one instance, however, where winning and losing was not emphasized during a lesson. Amanda had not planned for scores in her lesson, and this was apparent in the observation. Amanda commented, "I just don't focus so much on the results. I won't go and say, 'Okay, the winning team, you get to do this' or 'The losing team, you get to do this.'" In her lesson there were no occasions where the scores of the lead up activities, or even the modified games, were discussed. Even when the games and lessons were over, Amanda dismissed the class with no mention of the results. Amada felt that scores, and ultimately winning and losing, was not the focus of competitive play. Amanda stated, "I will take the emphasis off the score of the games and put the emphasis on team building, and the stuff involved about being teams, and the stuff about competition." Amanda did not plan for scoring and did not have it in her lessons.

Competitive Game Play Creates Excitement, But Can One Play Without Skill?

The teachers in this study overwhelmingly believed that competition was a necessary part of life. Competition allowed students to use skills to compete against

each other, as Madeline stated, "[the students] learn how to play against each other and compete against each other, because that is ultimately what life is about." David commented on the value of learning skills during competitive play,

> I think a lot of kids are learning what it is to actually just compete on a daily basis in any field, whether it's sports,…getting into school, and college, and life. Kids are [finding out]… what it is to work hard at something, and [to] try to achieve goals.

Teachers believed that by putting the students into competitive game play, the students would learn and enjoy the activities. Game-like situations helped students to learn how to play a sport and were also more interesting for the students. Teachers believed authentic game situations as an opportunity for students to acquire skill. This belief, however, was challenged as students entered game play and did not have the skill to participate fully. Skill development, appropriate practice, and modified games were components they had learned in their pre-service program and conflicted with what they believed. This brought the teachers to reevaluate game play and introduce skill acquisition tasks.

All the teachers stated that competitive activities were important. David said that in regards to his students, they "like any little type of competition. Planning for competition in an activity" was inherently more interesting, "because… I was learning how to make it competitive …for the students." When observed in a competitive shooting game, where many of the students had difficulty controlling the ball, he understood that "lack of skill might hinder game play, but [might] make the students realize they need to work on skill development." He remembered that his pre-service training did "a great job at teaching me skill development and how to progress at skills." He continued, however, to "mostly rely on [his] own experience…trying to create really competitive scenarios." David was observed stopping a competitive game of basketball several times, when students lost the ball. As he said,

> No one really wants to start chasing the ball for too long, because…you can spend more energy that way, so…the kids figure that out, and then it forces them to work on the proper technique of passing and shooting the ball.

Stopping the basketball game, this clearly showed he understood the need for skill development rather than competitive game play. While the assumption that students enjoyed competition was prevalent, David also understood that students might not be ready for competitive activities. He believed that students might love competition, but their actual skill to participate in activities might not match their desire to play the game. In this observation David did not focus on skill development.

Frank stated that by placing students in competitive activities he wanted students to "feel that game." He continued, "I really want them to get the feel for the game, because they haven't played many games yet." When asked what 'feeling the game' meant, Frank stated that it was "the competitiveness part of really trying to

win the points and being able to control the ball [skillfully], which is a big issue at [this] level."

Frank modified the volleyball rules and mentioned to the class that they were allowed to hit the ball more than three times before hitting it over the net. He then stated that he might have put students into game play too soon, because

> …I thought that they were at a higher level of understanding…about implementing more than three hits. [However], they didn't even get to use three hits, [because of their lack of skill]. So that was a miscalculation on my part of incorporating all the skills into the game.

Frank's intention was to promote passing and have the students use the skills they were previously taught. But his students did not have the skill to pass the ball under control. By further modifying game-play, as stressed in his pre-service training, his students would have had more opportunities to hit the ball over the net. Frank was dissatisfied that the students were not able to achieve three hits on their sides of the court, because as an athlete it had been important for him to have "that…chance…[to] get better." By not having the skill, the students did not have that chance, and, therefore, could not successfully play the game.

Paul suggested that competitive activities inspired the students to try harder, since

> …the kids have fun, and they love activities, they like competitiveness. I noticed when I taught them to do drills, they get somewhat lethargic and very bored. But when you give them a [competitive] goal in mind, they really try harder and really put forth the maximum effort that they can.

Paul "loved competition," although he felt that competitive activities should not be the focus in physical education but rather cooperation. He had also learned through his pre-service training that competitive activities were "not the best thing to do." During one of his observed lessons, Paul structured his class on modified game play and focused on his students' skill acquisition. He stated, in regards to game play, that "I can easily do more than two handball games here to get my tournament moving faster." This was shown clearly as two handball games were played, with the rest of the students participating in skill practice. By emphasizing skill development, the students not playing in the games had activity time and were able to practice their skills in preparation for tournament play. Paul was able to incorporate skill development into his lesson within the game-play structure.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine PSTs' beliefs regarding competitive activities, and how teachers use these beliefs, and their pre-service training, when implementing competitive games during middle school PE classes. As attitude theory suggests, the teachers in this study had prior knowledge that affected and

influenced their decisions during instruction of activities. They had strong beliefs regarding competitive activities based on their prior experiences, and these beliefs influenced their instruction (Pajares, 1992). Strong beliefs regarding subject matter can change over time (Ajzen, 2005), as teachers accumulate different experiences, such as experience in their pre-service teaching.

In this study, the results showed that some beliefs of the teachers were in line with pre-service training, while other beliefs were challenged. Planning, used by teachers for organization of instruction (Stroot & Morton, 1989), reflected the importance of skill acquisition during competitive activities. Teaching variables such as time on task, skill progression, and modified games were considered during planning of task presentation (Rink, 1994). Teachers believed that skill acquisition was important, and this was reinforced by their pre-service teaching experiences.

While skill acquisition was crucial, the way skill acquisition was interpreted by the teachers differed. Teachers having experience with competitive sports relied heavily on game-play when structuring lessons (Rovegno, 1994). Similar to the findings of Rovegno (1995), PSTs believed that students placed in game-like situations acquired a fuller appreciation of the activity and developed skill and enjoyment. Teachers put students into game-like situations before the students had the skill to participate (Bernstein et al., 2011).

It is clear that the teachers attempted to incorporate instructional knowledge from their pre-service program, however, the teachers' strong prior beliefs regarding competitive activities (Chow & Fry, 1999; Doolittle et al., 1993; Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog 1982) and full-fledged game-play could have "washed out" (Lortie, 1975) the teaching variables learned in their program. Teachers wanted students to have an enjoyable experience, but they rushed students into game-play before they had the skill to participate (O'Reilly, Tompkins, & Gallant, 2001). The prior experiences in competitive activities that were important in the lives (Pajares, 1992; O'Sullivan, 2005) of these PSTs affected their lessons. Competitive activities implemented in the PE curriculum were shaped by the beliefs that the teachers held regarding the activity and lesson, rather than the needs of the students they instructed (Harvey & O'Donovan, 2011).

This was seen when planning for different ability levels. Planning for different ability levels was highlighted in the pre-service programs, the teachers believed this was important; however, they did not always implement differentiated instruction. It is interesting to note that when game play was too complex, and students did not have the skill to participate, the PSTs recognized this and considered different ways of structuring the task, thus relying on the instruction that they had received in their pre-service training courses. Teachers, who are already highly skilled, might not take into account the students who are less skilled. This challenged teachers' beliefs, and they were faced with modifying, or refining, the task in order to increase skill acquisition (Rink, 1994), as instructed in their pre-service training program. In addition, sportsmanship can be an integral part of game-play (Vallerand, Deshaies,

Cuerrier, Briere, & Pelletier, 1996). It was apparent as a salient belief of the teachers and reinforced in their pre-service training. Sportsmanship, however, was rarely student initiated. It was seen as almost a reproduction style (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002), as it was commanded by the teacher and reproduced by the students as a teacher initiated activity. This study raises the question did teachers assume that sportsmanship was taught and student initiated, or was it an assumption?

There were limitations to this study. As some of the participants were interviewed three to four months before teaching their first lesson, there could be some overlap between what was believed and what was learned in their pre-service preparation program. Although the background interviews centered on their competitive experiences, connections could have been made to their preparation program that were not intended. While ten teachers in an urban setting might not be representative of all experiences in pre-service training programs, this study gives insight into what is taking place during the implementation of competitive activities.

As teachers often develop competitive activities around their own competitive experiences (McCaughtry, Tischler, & Flory, 2008), which can be very different from the PE environment (Green, 2000; Cutner-Smith & Sofo, 2004), it is important that teacher preparation programs fully understand their beliefs and how those beliefs are incorporated during instruction (Harvey & O'Donovan, 2011). This process will be crucial in creating a productive learning experience in competitive activities.

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