

Service Learning in Adapted Physical Education: Connecting the Classroom to the Community

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) undergraduate students' perceptions about working with individuals with disabilities while performing Service Learning (SL) at two community-based sites. Using a grounded theory research design, data from field notes, supervisor evaluations, and focus groups were coded and analyzed to identify five themes of perceptions and level of competence: social emotional climate, prior preparation, delivery of instruction, career readiness, and developing leadership.

Keywords: community engagement, teacher education, teacher preparation, career readiness

SERVICE LEARNING PEDAGOGY

Service learning (SL) is a structured community-based learning experience in which faculty, students, and community organizations collaborate to provide community service opportunities for students (Woodruff & Sinelnikov, 2014). This pedagogical strategy integrates academic course content and objectives into community or voluntary service that extends learning beyond the traditional classroom setting (Miller & Nendel, 2010). SL is also described as a "pedagogical technique for combining authentic community service with integrated academic outcomes" (Erickson & Anderson, 1997, p. 1). Participating in SL activities also provides students with opportunities to foster social interactions between community members, develop empathy for others, and be more civically engaged (Domangue & Carson, 2008). Kolb (1984) has provided an Experiential Learning Model that uses a four-step cycle through which students learn. The

first step is the concrete experience by the student at a community-based site. The second step is reflection, followed by abstract conceptualization, and finally, active experimentation. The cycle continues as the teacher encourages reflection, which serves as a catalyst in developing abstract concepts or hypotheses. This, in turn, provides the student with learning opportunities and ideas in order to return to the community site for further concrete experiences. This type of learning benefits both the student and the community partner. The student is provided opportunities for real world experience, and the community partner reaps the benefits of the students' work.

Celio, Durlak and Dymnicki (2012) conducted a meta-analysis examining the impact of SL programs on pre-service teachers' outcomes while participating in SL opportunities. The meta-analysis included 62 studies involving 11,837 students. There were five statistically significant outcomes including (1) attitudes toward school and learning, (2) attitude toward self, (3)

social skills, (4) civic engagement and (5) social learning. The mean effect size in all five areas ranged from ($ES=.27-.43$), which indicated that being involved in SL increased self-efficacy, improved attitudes toward community involvement, developed empathy for others, and improved social skills.

Researchers in physical education also have investigated how SL impacted physical education teacher education (PETE) undergraduate students' attitudes, perceptions, and motivation to work with various populations including youth from lower socioeconomic families (Galvan, 2010), minority children (Domague & Carsen, 2008), and urban high school students (LaMaster, 2001).

SERVICE LEARNING IN ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Many PETE programs in the United States only offer one adapted physical education (APE) course as a requirement to obtain a bachelor's degree and teacher certification in physical education (Hardin, 2005). In some of these APE courses, students may also participate in an SL component or practicum field experience working with students with disabilities. However, there is a difference between SL and practicum experiences. An SL component integrates academic course content while working within the community, and ongoing reflection is a regular practice throughout the experience. In a practicum experience, implementation of academic course content occurs within a professional environment such as a school. However, there is not a community service component.

Furco's Service Model (1996) states that SL is the collaboration between students and community members in which all individuals benefit from opportunities to work together. Students have opportunities to apply their academic course content in real world settings to explore the "world of work" (p. 9) and build a sense of civic responsibility. Specifically, the PETE stu-

dents' experience working with children and adults with disabilities, which may influence their future intentions to work with individuals with disabilities. The other component of the model suggests that community members directly benefit from the SL relationship. For example, the community members involved in this study were provided with movement and sport experiences that benefitted their psychomotor, cognitive, and/or social skills.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER OUTCOMES IN PRACTICUMS AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Regardless of the instructional technique selected, requiring PETE students who are learning how to teach APE to implement skills introduced in the classroom in an authentic environment is essential. Currently, 12% of children with disabilities are placed in physical education classes with their non-disabled peers in an inclusive environment (Burke, 2013), and the number of students receiving federal funding for special education continues to rise (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Inclusion is a philosophical approach in which students with and without disabilities work together to foster meaningful social interactions and experiences in an educationally beneficial environment (Depauw & Doll-Tepner, 2000). However, one of the challenges for university PETE faculty is making sure that pre-service teachers are adequately prepared for teaching children with disabilities as they enter the profession. Understanding PETE students' experiences in practicum and inclusive classrooms is critical to an exploration of the perceptions of PETE students completing SL as part of their APE class.

For example, Hodge, Davis, Woodard and Sherill (2002) analyzed whether the type of practicum experience influenced attitudes and perceived competence with 37 PETE undergraduate students. The participants of this study chose to complete the 15-hour practicum at on- or

off-campus sites as part of the APE course requirements (n=22 off-campus, n=15 campus). The Physical Educators' Intention toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities (PEITID-III) scale, which was a modified version of the original scale, was used to measure the PETE students' attitudes and perceived competence prior to and after completing the practicum experience. The findings of the study indicated that perceived competence increased significantly for both practicum experiences. However, no differences were found in attitude scores from the pre- and post-assessment.

Ellis, Lepore, and Lieberman (2012) investigated the effects of a practicum experience on students' attitudes and perceived competence while working with children with disabilities. In this study, 596 PETE students enrolled at three major universities and completed the PEITID questionnaire over a three-year period (Rizzo, 2007). The ID measures students' intentions to teach students with disabilities, opinions about inclusion, value of teaching inclusive classes, factors and conditions that affect teaching students with disabilities in general physical education, and student perceptions about what will happen when teaching these children.

Participants were assigned to one of three groups: Group 1 (Pre-PE) consisted of physical education undergraduate students who were new to the program and had not taken any pedagogy courses yet; Group 2 (PETE) consisted of students who were formally accepted into their PETE programs and had completed at least one APE course with a practicum component; and Group 3 (CAMP) consisted of students who were completing advanced APE courses to obtain a minor and/or take the Certified Adapted Physical Educator (CAPE) certification test.

The results of the study indicated significant increases among all of the groups for overall intentions to teach children with disabilities. However, further analysis indicated the students in the CAMP and PETE groups had higher intention scores than the Pre-PETE group. Overall,

the CAMP group, when compared to the Pre-PETE group, had higher mean scores when analyzing attitudes, perceptions, and competence mean scores. The findings of this study agreed with past research findings that suggest educational background and experience positively influenced students' intentions and attitudes toward working with students with disabilities (Hodge & Jansma, 1999; Stewart, 1990).

Elliot (2008) analyzed the effects of teachers' attitudes while working with children with disabilities and the students' levels of success in inclusive physical education classes. The Physical Educators' Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities (PEATID-III) scale was used to measure the physical educators' attitudes. A second measure was student success and was evaluated by direct observation of a series of skill practice sessions. The researchers found that teachers with higher attitude scores provided their students with more practice attempts at a higher level of success than teachers who were not as positive about working with children with disabilities. Ammah and Hodge (December 2005-January 2006) completed a similar study in which they investigated secondary physical education teachers' beliefs and practices about working with students with profound disabilities in inclusive classes. Qualitative analyses suggested three major themes: (1) teachers reported that including students with profound disabilities with regular students was challenging; (2) their level of teacher efficacy varied; and (3) it was difficult to plan experiences that helped all students be successful. While research on the effects of practicum and inclusive classroom experiences on PETE students' attitudes, intentions, and beliefs about working with students with disabilities has supported increases in pre-service teachers' dispositions, there is little research on the impact of SL on PETE students teaching APE in the field.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to explore PETE undergraduate students' perceptions about working with children and adults with disabilities in two SL community-based settings. A secondary focus of this study was to investigate if participating in an SL experience helped prepare PETE students to teach students with disabilities upon entering the physical education profession.

METHODS

Using a grounded theory research design with a constructivist approach, the researchers used a systemic procedure for collecting data, identifying categories, and connecting these two categories to theoretical conclusions (Charmaz, 2000; Educational Research, 2015). The constructivist approach is focused on the "views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals," the meanings ascribed by the study's participants (p. 432). The approach also values the role of researcher in the process and allows for the researcher to make decisions regarding categories in the data collection and analysis. Qualitative data was collected from researchers' observations, supervisor evaluations of the participants and focus groups to address the following research questions:

1. What were the participants' perceptions about working with children and adults with disabilities during their SL experience?
2. Did the participants feel more competent and prepared to teach individuals with disabilities in inclusive and self-contained physical education classes after completing the SL experience?

Participants of the Study

The participants in this study were 17 undergraduate students (10 male, 7 female) from a 400-level Adapted Physical Education (APE) course at a mid-sized, regional university in the Northeast region of

the United States (18-27 years of age). Ten of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian, three Hispanic, two Asian American, and two African American students. All of the students participating in the study had similar academic standing (juniors and seniors) and were pursuing a bachelor's degree and teacher certification in physical education.

The Service Learning Experience

The SL experience was developed by the primary researcher, who also served as the APE professor at the university. The APE professor formed a partnership with two community organizations that provide services for individuals with disabilities. Chapter 126 is a sport, fitness, and physical education facility for children and adults with disabilities, and CCARC is a non-profit agency that provides services to adults with intellectual disabilities.

The participants in the study were required to complete 20 hours of community service at the two facilities (10 hours at each site) as part of their APE course requirements. At Chapter 126, the participants worked one-on-one with the individuals who signed up for sports clinics (e.g., tennis, wheelchair basketball) and assisted the APE teacher while teaching classes for individuals with profound disabilities. The individuals ranged in age from 5 to 18 years old and had conditions or impairments such as cerebral palsy, autism, Down syndrome, traumatic brain injuries, and profound behavioral issues. Due to the nature of their disabilities, the participants assisted the lead teacher rather than leading lessons for safety and liability reasons.

At CCARC, the participants were the lead teachers for the Wednesday "Exercise and Movement" and the "Sport Saturday" sessions. The participants were required to plan and teach two lessons during the semester (one Wednesday and Saturday session), and assist their classmates when they were not scheduled to teach. CCARC is a non-profit organization that provides day and residential services for

adults with intellectual disabilities. The adults in the exercise and sport sessions were a diverse group of males and females who had various disabilities such as Down syndrome, autism, traumatic brain injuries, cerebral palsy, or multiple disabilities.

Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected for this study using the following: observation session field notes, on-site supervisor evaluations, and focus groups. The data collection methods, description of the collection process, and frequency are described in Table 1.

Observation Session Field Notes

The researchers took field notes at the Exercise/Movement and Sports Saturday sessions at CCARC, and during the PE and Sport classes at Chapter 126. Saldaña (2016) describes that field notes written in the first person merit coding since “they both document the naturalistic action and include important interpretations...rich for analytic insights” (p. 17). The researchers completed 30 observation sessions. At each session, the researchers recorded text descriptions that documented the activities, behaviors, interactions, and events that occurred. The researchers rotated to both sites observing all of the PETE students weekly. Each student was observed two to three times.

On-site Supervisor Evaluations

Both of the supervisors from Chapter 126 and CCARC completed evaluations of the PETE students using an evaluation form (Table 2). The form was a rating sheet with five categories: Initiative/Proactive, Enthusiasm, Dependability, Improvement, and Professional Appearance/Demeanor. Each was rated using the following rating choices (Poor, Fair, Good, and Excellent) along with a comment section.

“Initiative/Proactive” assessed the student regarding his/her ability to take risks and make decisions on his/her own, to be assertive and have an assertive presence while leading the class. “Enthusiasm” referred to the student’s ability to be energetic and show positive energy while teaching. “Improvement” was determined after the first teaching experience in regard to how the student made the recommended changes in his/her teaching provided after each class. “Professional appearance and demeanor” referred to whether or not the student was dressed in the required activity clothing with athletic footwear while also possessing a professional demeanor and positive communication skills related to the field of APE teaching. Completed evaluations were e-mailed to the APE teacher and the student the following day. A short conversation occurred between the primary researcher and the participant to promote reflection throughout this process.

Table 1

Data Collection Overview

Method	Description	Frequency
Observation Session Field Notes	Text descriptions of the participants recorded by the researchers	30 observation sessions
On-site Supervisor Evaluations	Text evaluations of participants conducted by site supervisors using evaluation form	Site Supervisor evaluations of each participant for each session in which he or she served as a lead teacher or assistant
Focus Groups	Group interviews conducted with guiding open-ended questions	4 focus groups consisting of 3-4 participants each

Table 2

Evaluation Form

Teacher Candidate	School
On-site Supervisor	Email
Date	Phone
Category	Descriptors

Please indicate the level of achievement in the following categories (Circle):

Initiative/Proactive	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Enthusiastic	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Improvement	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Professional	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Appearance and Demeanor	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

Comments:

Focus Group Interviews

All 17 students participated in one of four focus group interview sessions after completing the 20-hour service requirement. Focus group attendance ranged from three to four participants in each. The investigators of the study asked a series of questions about the participants' overall experience and perceptions about participating in the SL project (see Table 3). Other questions related to their thoughts about working with individuals with disabilities in elementary and secondary grade settings (i.e., preparedness, training, etc.). Each focus group session lasted approximately 20 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Three sets of qualitative data were gathered in this study: observation session field notes, on-site supervisor evaluations, and focus group transcripts. To analyze each of the three data sources, the researchers employed the same process. Each data source was coded independently by each researcher using the following steps. Each set of field notes, evaluations, and focus group transcripts was read through once. Next, each was read through in order to code the data. Each researcher manually coded each data source using inductive reasoning to create codes. In order to increase the reliability of this method, both researchers completed the coding process. By having more than one researcher code the data, the researchers were better able to deter-

Table 3

*Focus Group Questions***Open-ended Questions**

1. What are your thoughts about participating in the course?
2. What are your thoughts about the practicum experience?
3. Do you feel prepared to teach students with disabilities in a regular classroom? A separate classroom? Explain.
4. How would you rate your overall experience in the class?
5. Does anyone have additional thoughts or suggestions about the practicum experience?

mine if the codes identified are similar, increasing interrater reliability within the data analysis process (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010). Additionally, trustworthiness of the data was achieved by completing member checking, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement with the data by the two researchers throughout (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Ary et al. (2010) describes codes as “units of meaning—words, phrases, sentences, subjects’ ways of thinking, behavior patterns, and events that appear regularly and that seem important” (p. 483). In addition to coding relevant and salient words and phrases, the researchers also engaged in analytic memoing. According to Saldaña (2016), analytic memoing refers to a process by which the researcher documents reflections on data gathered. Coding and memoing occur concurrently and allowed for the continued development and understanding of the phenomena while coding.

Once the coding cycle was complete, all the codes were reviewed and merged into categories that were noted in the analytical memos or created as a result

of code strength and similarities (see Table 3). Then, the categories were continually refined as the process moved through multiple iterations (Ary et al., 2010). Next, the codes were analyzed to find patterns and themes of the participant’s perceptions and level of competence after completing the SL experience as seen in Figure 1.

RESULTS

The researchers identified a number of categories within the five themes of perceptions and level of competence after completing the SL experience including social emotional climate, prior preparation, delivery of instruction, career readiness, and developing leadership characteristics. The categories within each theme are noted in Table 4. Each theme is defined and the results for all three data sources, as they related to each theme, are discussed in this section.

Social Emotional Climate

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning

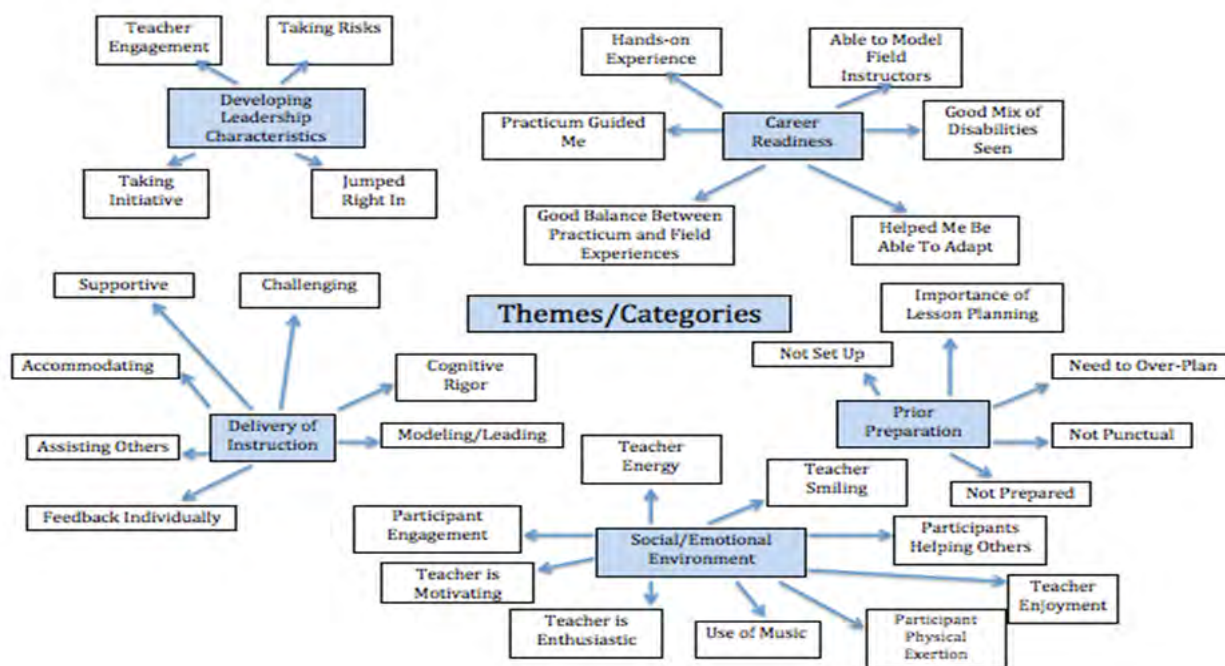


Figure 1: Themes and Categories

Table 4

Themes and Categories

Social Emotional Climate	Prior Preparation	Delivery of Instruction	Career Readiness	Developing Leadership Characteristics
Use of music	Not set up	Modeling/leading	Practicum guided me	Jumped right in
Teacher is motivating	Not prepared	Feedback individually	Helped me be better able to adapt	Taking initiative
Teacher enthusiasm	Not punctual	Assisting others	Fair	Taking risks
Teacher Enjoyment	Need to over-plan	Accommodating	Good mix of disabilities seen	Teacher Engagement
Participants helping each other	Importance of lesson planning	Supporting	Able to model field instructors	
Participant engagement		Challenging	Hands-on experience	
Teacher energy		Cognitive rigor		
Teacher smiling				
Participant physical exertion				

(CASEL, 2017) as a process through which individuals learn and apply skills such as empathy, responsibility, maintaining positive relationships, setting goals, and making responsible decisions. CASEL states that these skills are necessary for students to learn effectively in school settings as well as outside of school. The researchers noted several different techniques, strategies, and skills that produced a positive social and emotional environment during the Wednesday Exercise/Movement and Sport Saturday SL sessions.

Observation Session Field Notes.

The data showed that the pre-service teachers used appropriate music, exhibited enthusiasm, and motivated the participants. A second finding was that student engagement and on-task behavior increased when the pre-service teachers provided one-on-one assistance. Finally, the data indicated that

when participants helped each other, a supportive environment was observed.

On-site Supervisor Evaluations.

On-site evaluations written by the field-based supervisors at both sites indicated that pre-service teachers were “enthusiastically encouraging,” being “very energetic,” “enjoying themselves,” and “participating fully” during the sessions.

Focus Group Transcripts.

Evidence from the focus group interviews showed that many of the pre-service teachers felt that making individual accommodations aided learning. Mary said, “Seeing how you [the pre-service student] accommodate everyone is extremely important.” She also found it challenging to make the lesson fun and challenging for the individual students.

The only difficult thing about the practicum is that you are around a lot of different people, so you can’t

really build a relationship. I think a relationship makes a real difference. I think having two or three progressive courses over time at CCSU could help tremendously. And keeping us with the same people, we can see development over time. (Mary, focus group interview)

Prior Preparation

It is expected that senior level students in an undergraduate program would portray some characteristics of professional educators such as the ability to arrive on time with the necessary planning and equipment needed to deliver an effective lesson. Prior preparation is a necessary task to meet the needs of all learners. Another theme that emerged was the lack of preparation that some of the participants displayed during their lessons at the community-based sites such as not setting up for lessons in a timely manner, being late, and inadequate lesson planning.

Observation Session Field Notes.

Field notes data indicated that many of the participants did an excellent job planning and implementing their lessons. For instance, it was noted that "John arrived a half-an-hour early for his lesson and did a great job planning developmentally appropriate lessons." And, "Debbie was ready to go with all of her equipment spread out prior to her lesson. Also, her transition time between activities was quick and efficient." For several participants, a lack of preparation was evident. One researcher noted, two participants "could have come a bit earlier to set up the equipment." Also, data indicated that during a Sport Saturday session, two participants did not spend time planning their lesson to include fun and engaging activities. They were not prepared. Field notes included suggestive points for follow-up with the participants including, "Can we modify the activities to make a game out of it, instead of doing traditional drills?" as well as, "it seems like an old school PE lesson. Need to be a bit more creative."

During another Wednesday Exercise/Movement session, field notes indicated participants arrived late for their lessons. One participant was late and "seemed to be a bit disoriented. He didn't bring enough exercise bands. Struggled to get the participants' attention. He should be better at this point." Jenn showed up to her lesson right when the class was starting. The field notes indicated that,

She needs to plan more. I'm okay [researcher] with providing some tips and suggestions, but Jenn did not spend enough time planning activities for the whole hour. I had to give her activity ideas for her to complete during the last 15 minutes of the session. (Field notes)

On-site Supervisor Evaluations. A comment written by one of the on-site supervisors indicated that John "arrived early for Saturday morning sports. He carried in all of the equipment he brought and offered to help [the on-site supervisor] and her group carry in their equipment as well." Additionally, Amy "got in touch with [the on-site supervisor] several days before the event to ask how many individuals there might be so she would be sure to have enough equipment for everyone." Chuck and Dave "arrived late to their session and seemed disoriented. It took several minutes for the two students to get acquainted with their group members and attempt to have a flow in their lesson."

Focus Group Transcripts. During a Focus Group, Donna shared that her planning could have been easier had she had more background information regarding specific disabilities prior to arriving at Chapter 126.

I felt a little ill-equipped to work with the students at Chapter 126 because I have had no experience working with special education students before this class. The Chapter 126 students were a lot more low-functioning than CCARC. It may be beneficial in the future to talk about some specific strategies for working

with this population so we can plan better. (Donna, focus group transcript)

Delivery of Instruction

Delivery of instruction was an important aspect of teaching the individuals with disabilities. The researchers considered delivery of instruction as demonstrating Best Teaching Practices based on prior experiences and knowledge acquired in previous coursework and supervised practicum experiences (e.g., use of skill cues, demonstrating motor skills, and corrective feedback). Participants had an opportunity to implement Best Teaching Practices that they have been learning during the past three years.

Observation Session Field Notes.

Field note data indicated that the participants demonstrated effective modeling, leadership, the ability to provide feedback, and assist individuals when needed. The participants planned appropriate lessons based on level of rigor to make activities challenging, but appropriate to the level of the individuals.

On-site Supervisor Evaluations.

The on-site supervisor at the CCARC site indicated that Amy “demonstrated some simple and easy-to-follow dance moves. She went through them with the class slowly and had the participants do them several times until it seemed everyone knew them, and then the class did the moves to music.” Other data obtained from the same supervisor praised John as he

demonstrated how to correctly hold the ball for dribbling and had the group dribble to a poly spot, hit the spot, then go on to another. He began with very simple drills and they got progressively more complicated. John paid attention to each and every individual, going over things as many times as he needed to and adapting the activity to each individual’s level of ability. (Supervisor evaluation)

Chuck and Dave struggled with providing age-appropriate activities and seemed challenged by recognizing whether the individuals could adequately perform the skills asked of them. The on-site supervisor at CCARC wrote, “The drills were very traditional and representative of an athletic practice with typical peers. The individuals were not skilled enough to complete the activities and you failed to adapt accordingly.”

Focus Group Transcripts. The ability to accommodate for many different individuals with disabilities was challenging for some. Few had worked with individuals with profound disabilities before. John stated,

Your technique has to be so much better. You have to have that much more understanding and that much more empathy. The practicum hours are the most significant thing we do in this class, because it really takes that much more focus to develop and teach these lessons because there is such a range of different impairments and disabilities that you have to take into account. Individualistic instruction to differentiating instruction. You have to be really on your game. (John, focus group transcript)

Career Readiness

Career readiness was another theme that emerged from the data analysis. The researchers considered career readiness as demonstrating characteristics necessary of a future professional educator. Some of these characteristics include the ability to adapt instruction in the moment, be able to provide and receive advice from colleagues, and have a passion and drive to help all students be successful.

Observation Session Field Notes.

The field note data suggested that the PETE students felt the SL project gave them opportunities to adapt to different circumstances and be creative. Since there were two different sites in which pre-service stu-

dents were expected to contribute hours, the students had exposure to both adults and children with various disabilities. This SL experience afforded students an opportunity to see varying degrees of the same type of disability, as well as how a disability can affect an individual differently. For instance, several participants, both children and adults, had autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The characteristics of ASD also were evident at various ages and degrees from mild to severe.

On-site Supervisor Evaluations.

The on-site supervisor at Chapter 126 described attributes of Donna's disposition to be qualities necessary for a professional career in teaching adapted physical education. The supervisor noted,

Her soft, quiet personality changed immediately when the students arrived. She became very bubbly and hands-on with the students. Her guidance and leadership helped the students have a great class experience. As she grows and develops, she will need to become a little more assertive with her instruction. Her professionalism was off the charts and I am really excited to work with her going forward. (Supervisor evaluation)

Focus Group Transcripts. The pre-service students were expected to plan and implement lessons appropriate for all participants by taking into consideration the ages and abilities of each individual. John shared in a focus group that "it was very eye opening to see the multiple disabilities across the course of the year." He also thought, "It was very helpful to understand these symptoms, definitions, and being able to work with these students." Field notes data also indicated that the PETE students enjoyed working with the individuals who had a variety of disabilities.

Many of the PETE students felt the Wednesday Exercise/Movement and Sport Saturday sessions provided "hands-on" experiences that adequately prepared them for a future working with children with disabilities

in physical education. The PETE students also felt grateful to be able to model their delivery of instruction after the field-based supervisors by watching how they led and facilitated activities with the participants. Another category that emerged from the focus group interviews showed that the participants felt that there could be even more preparation to teach students with disabilities in an inclusive and separate adapted PE setting. In response to the focus group question Do you feel prepared to teach students with disabilities in an inclusive and separate adapted PE setting?, Debbie offered, "I think there could be more for our program, another class. I feel prepared because I was placed at a school for autistic children so I feel more prepared. But, I think there could be more."

Mary supported Debbie's opinion and provided information specific to learning how to write accommodations on the lesson plan in the first two years of the program. She said,

I agree that there could be more. Especially earlier in the program. Even in the part of the lesson plan where there is an accommodations section. For our first four semesters, I was not taught how to accommodate lessons for a hearing or visually impaired student. It was not until this class that we started learning about all these different disabilities and how you can accommodate. I understand that we're learning about how to write a lesson; however, the more times it is touched upon the more time we can get used to writing accommodations. (Mary, focus group interview)

One of the researchers added, "It is my opinion that we need more practicum hours in APE and a bit less at the elementary level."

Developing Leadership Characteristics

Leadership, as described by Hart (1995) "entails the exercise of influence over the beliefs, values and actions of oth-

ers” (p. 104). This behavior may not look different when one is describing the leadership of a teacher. Oftentimes, educators must show leadership by commanding a group, adjusting student behaviors, facilitating activities, and making appropriate adjustments in instruction to meet learning objectives. Many of the pre-service teachers demonstrated leadership characteristics while working with the individuals with disabilities.

Observation Session Field Notes.

Field note data indicated categories such as the ability to be able to “jump right in,” take initiative and demonstrate teacher engagement as qualities that exemplified leadership characteristics. The PETE students showed enthusiasm, provided one-on-one assistance, and recognized when an activity needed to be modified or differentiated in the moment to keep a particular lesson flowing while still making it appropriate for all of the participants.

On-site Supervisor Evaluations.

The on-site evaluation data included feedback about the participants such as promptness, being set up ahead of time, having a confident presence during instruction, and the developmental appropriateness of the activities. These on-site evaluations documented that a particular PETE student needed to change the obstacle course several times to keep participants safe during the activity. In another on-site evaluation, the supervisor wrote that a different participant increased the level of difficulty gradually while keeping the activities easy to follow. Finally, one of the on-site evaluators noted that some pre-service teachers “need to be a little more assertive” and that “sometimes she was moving a little faster than the young man could handle,” and “she needs to balance having fun with the student with still being a firm coach.”

Focus Group Transcripts. In one of the focus group discussions Allen stated, “I ended up suggesting to Dan to spread everyone out a bit, which he did.” This is an example of leadership as Allen was not the lead teacher during that lesson and was as-

sisting Dan. Dan continued the conversation by claiming, “I welcomed the suggestion because I didn’t notice some people were crowded. I had a lot on my mind running the class.”

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to explore PETE undergraduate students’ perceptions about working with children and adults with disabilities in two community-based settings. The results of this study showed some important findings about the value of SL for pre-service teachers. In general, the PETE students applied many of the recommended teaching practices during the site visits including being a leader, making accommodations, modeling, and providing corrective feedback.

The participants also fostered a positive social emotional climate by displaying enthusiasm and supportiveness, and planned developmentally appropriate lessons. In addition, many of the participants took initiative and risks when planning and teaching lessons, and were able to diversify their lessons prior to and during their lessons. Comments made during the focus group interviews provided evidence that the PETE students believed they can work effectively with students with disabilities based on the SL experience, which is similar to other researchers’ findings (Ellis et al., 2012; Kowasiski & Rizzo, 1996). The primary researchers of this study found that many of the participants felt more prepared to work with student with disabilities, but expressed the desire to have additional training beyond the one adapted physical education class, which agrees with previous research findings (Hodge et al., 2002). While research studies have shown the PETE students’ attitudes and intentions to work with individuals with disabilities improves when participating in SL opportunities, it is recommended that future research should continue to investigate how different types of community sites influence pre-service teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and pre-

paredness to work with students with disabilities. A mixed method design may add to the existing literature about integrating SL in teacher trainee programs.

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