The Physical Educator Vol. 72 • pp. 117–138 • 2015

PEDAGOGY

Student-Authored Case Studies as a Reflective Component of Teacher Education

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Abstract

Field experiences are often conceptualized as integral to teacher education programming. However, there are often inconsistencies between the beliefs and values espoused in teacher education and those pre-service teachers encounter in schools that they must navigate to be successful. Among other strategies, writing case studies about their experiences may help pre-service teachers critically reflect on their time in schools. To illustrate the utility of student-authored case studies, data are presented from an investigation involving students in a teacher education seminar course. Results indicate that students believed they benefited from the structure of the writing assignment and thought that writing case studies helped them to prepare more completely for issues they would face in their future careers. A case study written by a student teacher is also presented and discussed. Finally, strategies for introducing and implementing student-authored case studies in PE teacher education programs are examined.

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Field experiences, including student teaching, are integral to student learning in teacher education programs (Schempp & Graber, 1992). These experiences allow pre-service teachers (PSTs) to apply what they have learned during professional preparation and to begin to view classes from the perspective of a future teacher rather than a student. Through a successful field experience, PSTs are able to apply the skills and develop the confidence they will need to transition successfully into the teaching ranks after graduation. However, researchers examining the socializing impact of field experiences have pointed out that the process may be complex. Schools are "custodial bureaucracies" that perpetuate the status quo through formal and informal mechanisms (Lawson, 1983, p. 6). As such, school officials tend to emphasize teaching strategies and procedures that may be at odds with teacher training instructions (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Rust, 1994). Due to this, PSTs are in a difficult position: Should they teach as they were taught to or adopt the practices and beliefs emphasized at the site in which they are teaching?

Among other strategies, writing case studies about field experiences and student teaching may help PSTs critically reflect on the beliefs and practices to which they have been exposed. Similarly, reading cases authored by their colleagues may help PSTs prepare for issues and difficult situations they are likely to face in their field experiences. Over time, instructors accumulate student-authored case studies that relate to specific issues encountered by PSTs in the field to use in seminars and others PST education experiences.

A Note About Teacher Socialization Theory

Zeichner and Gore (1990) highlighted the dialectical nature of field-based learning as well as teacher education more broadly. Such a perspective, wherein socialization is not a passive process and PSTs play an active role in determining their socialization experiences (Templin & Schempp, 1989), is a break from the functionalist view of socialization emphasized by Merton, Reader, and Kendall (1957). Specifically, PSTs assume the lead role in determining what social practices they will adopt or reject (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Some PSTs participating in field experiences may internalize the practices emphasized by their cooperating teachers and other school agents, and others may push back and assert their sense of agency in trying to teach using the practices emphasized during teacher training (Zeichner & Gore, 1990; Zeichner & Grant, 1981).

During field experiences, cooperating teachers (Rajuan, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2007) and students (Conkling, 2003; Hoy &

Woolfolk, 1990) are key socializing agents who influence what and how PSTs teach. To compound matters, PSTs may face conflicting expectations from teachers, students, administrators, and university supervisors, which may cause role conflict (White, 1989). The extent to which PSTs are able to navigate expectations and simultaneously appease school and university partners may be a key in determining their success during field-based learning. In the classroom literature, the cooperating teacher and students have been seen as important socializing agents during field experiences in physical education (PE; Dodds, 1989; Schempp & Graber, 1992; Templin, 1979). Tinning and Siedentop (1985) highlighted the importance of cooperating teachers in helping novices learn teaching behaviors as well as organizational and social tasks within the school setting. Zeichner and Gore (1990) added that since student teachers are often alone with students in the classroom, they serve a particularly important socialization function. Templin (1979, 1981) found similar results in PE and noted that PSTs while interacting with noncompliant students shift their perspective from student learning and achievement to pupil control and compliance.

Case Studies in Teaching and Reflection

Case studies are "richly detailed, contextualized, narrative accounts" of real or hypothetical situations (Levin, 1995, p. 63). The case method is an instructional technique whereby students are asked to read case studies to engage in learning experiences (Merriam, 1988). Through such a vicarious learning approach, PSTs are able to discuss problematic, real-life situations in a nonthreatening environment (Veal & Taylor, 1995). Linked closely to problem-based learning (Collier & O'Sullivan, 1997; Stake, 2000), the reading and discussion of case studies is an opportunity for students to engage in reflection, critical thinking, dialogue, and the development of socially constructed knowledge through group discussions (McDade, 1995; Rovegno & Dolly, 2006).

Beginning in the fields of medicine and law (Engel, 1992), problem-based learning and the case method are now tools in education and are now components of curricula in teacher education programs in the United States (Collier & O'Sullivan, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Shulman, 1992). The shared inquiry model (Thomas & Oldfather, 1995) has been linked to the effective use of case studies (Harrington & Garrison, 1992; Richards, Hemphill, Templin, & Eubank, 2012). The emphases of this model are the introduction of a focus of inquiry (e.g., a case study), open time and space for discussion, involving students as valued participants in learning, multiple sources of data and information (e.g., learning from reflection, peers, and the instructor), and reflection and discussion.

Student-Authored Case Studies

Although many teacher education faculty ask students to read and engage in discussions about case studies, emerging evidence indicates that student-authored case studies may be used as a reflective tool. Such an approach is grounded in research, indicating that students may use reflective writing to analyze their teaching and socialization experiences, thereby developing generative knowledge, which is the ability to analyze situations, solve problems, reason, and learn (Langley & Senne, 1997; Resnick & Klopfer, 1989). Richards et al. (2012) noted success in introducing student-authored case studies in a methods course for PE PSTs. The class was structured around the reading of case studies using a shared inquiry approach, and the students were asked to author a case study as a culminating experience. In reflecting on the experience, Richards et al. noted, "Although it may be impossible to prepare PSTs for every situation they will encounter in the field, it may be possible to encourage the development of reflection and critical thinking skills through the case study approach" (p. 52). Also in PE, Wilson and Williams (2001) tied the writing of case studies to reflective practice during student teaching. They noted that students responded positively to the experience and believed that through writing case studies, students were able to deeply explore significant issues that arose during their student teaching. Writing case studies was also an opportunity for students to connect the theory taught during the teacher preparation curriculum to the realities of teaching in the context of schools.

Building upon the work of Wilson and Williams (2001) and Richards et al. (2012), we believe there are numerous benefits to asking students to author their own case studies as part of field-based learning and student teaching. Specifically, we posit that by using such an exercise, students are able to reflect more critically upon issues they perceive to be pertinent during their field experiences. Students may also feel empowered to critique school practices they encounter and discuss the implications of these practices for their socialization and development as aspiring teachers. Furthermore, with the assistance of instructors and peers, students may edit, critique, and rewrite, leading to further reflection and cognitive growth (Richards et al., 2012). The result of this process is the production of a case study that may be shared with future PSTs who are likely to experience problems similar to those encountered by case authors. Wilson and Williams (2001) noted that student-authored "case studies have enhanced credibility with preservice teachers, since the context of the stories is very similar to what their own future field experiences could be like" (p. 50).

The purpose of this study was to document students' perception of writing case studies and to highlight the case studies that PSTs produce. Three research questions guided the investigation: (a) How do PSTs view the process of writing case studies, (b) what benefits related to case study authorship do PSTs perceive, and (c) what are examples of topics and issues that student authors focus upon in writing a case study? To answer the research questions, we interviewed students in a junior-level PE teacher education seminar, who were asked to author case studies. Then, to illustrate the concerns raised through student-authored cases, we included a case study written by Wesley, a recent graduate of the teacher preparation program at our university.

Method

Participants and Setting

To explore PSTs' reactions to writing case studies, we organized an investigation in which data were collected from 19 PSTs (six female, 13 male) enrolled in a junior-level PE teacher education seminar course. Each student was required to author a unique case study related to their experiences working in schools during early field experiences. The course instructor and teaching assistant also participated in the study as informants.

In accordance with the procedures outlined by Richards et al. (2012), case studies were written in steps to facilitate student progress throughout the semester. PSTs were introduced to the student-authored case study assignment midway through the semester and had 1 week to write a proposal for a case topic that included an outline of the major issues that would be included in their cases. Two weeks after the proposals were due, PSTs submitted a preliminary draft, which was read by the instructors and returned with comments. After making changes based on instructor feedback, each student conducted a peer review by reading a partner's case study and providing feedback. Prior to submission, PSTs met with the instructor to discuss final improvements they could make to their cases.

Wesley, the author of the example case study, participated in the junior seminar and expressed interest in authoring a case study following his student teaching. In introducing the case, it should be noted that Wesley was among the top graduates of the teacher education program the year in which he completed his student teaching. His professors noted his academic accomplishments and evaluated him to be a highly capable young teacher. During his student teaching, Wesley taught elementary PE for 6 weeks as well as middle school health and PE for the subsequent 6 weeks. He wrote this case study about his middle school student teaching experience, where he worked with two cooperating teachers.

Data Collection

Student and instructor interviews. To understand PSTs' impressions of authoring a case study, we conducted end-of-semester interviews with each of the 19 PSTs enrolled in the PE teacher education junior seminar class, a voluntary focus group interview (*N* = 4 male PSTs) during finals week, and supplemental interviews with the course instructors (*N* = 2). Individual interviews lasted for approximately 30 min and were in a semistructured format (Patton, 2002). Student interviews were focused broadly on the case study method as a teaching tool, with a specific set of questions about experiences authoring case studies. The focus group acted as a follow-up to the initial interviews and lasted for 90 min. To provide another perspective, we conducted instructor interviews, which were focused on the instructors' view of the case study method and perceptions of students' reactions to authoring case studies. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis.

Student teacher case study. Wesley authored a case study and delved into concerns that were raised during his student teaching experience. Having authored a case study during the seminar course, Wesley had a foundational understanding of how to write case studies and needed only minimal assistance. We have included Wesley's case study as data in our study to illustrate issues that student teachers may raise as well as how student teachers may critically examine their experiences using student-authored case studies.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Interview data were analyzed using a combination of inductive analysis and the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, student statements related to writing case studies were separated from the dataset. Once these statements were isolated, they were coded into evolving categories through which the researchers attempted to capture the essence of PSTs' experiences. These categories evolved throughout the coding processes as new data were coded. The final set of themes shows the essence of the PSTs' experiences in terms of the process of and associated benefits related to authoring case studies.

To derive meaning from Wesley's case study, we read preliminary drafts and provided Wesley with feedback. Feedback was focused on clearing up ambiguities, adding detail, and elaborating on underdeveloped elements of the plot. Once Wesley decided upon a final version of the case study with which he was comfortable, we read the document and made notes related to prominent issues presented throughout the case. These interpretations were the primary form of analysis related to the written case and follow Wesley's case study.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the results, several methodological decisions were made to enhance the research design (Patton, 2002). First, multiple coders were involved in the analysis of the data, which provides for researcher triangulation. Second, data triangulation was achieved through interviews with multiple participants (i.e., PSTs and course instructors) about the same phenomenon using multiple interview styles (i.e., individual and focus group interviews). Focus group interviews were used to conduct member checks with some of the participants and to further discuss emerging themes. Finally, a trained qualitative researcher not involved in the initial coding of the data acted as a peer debriefer by reading the emerging themes and providing feedback related to the degree to which they were logically derived from the data.

Results

We will first report findings from interviews with PSTs in the junior-level teacher education seminar course. As themes are presented, we will provide representative quotations. When quotes are included, we will identify the speaker with a pseudonym. Following the themes, we present Wesley's case study that he wrote in response to his student teaching experience.

Themes Derived From Interviews

Through data analysis, we found that PSTs generally enjoyed writing case studies. Comments such as "I am into my case, I enjoy thinking about it" (Thomas) and "The thing I liked most about this class was writing the case study" (Juan, focus group) are representative of the PSTs' overall response. The two first order themes that were derived from the data analysis were related to the process of writing case studies and the benefits of writing case studies. Each first order theme had associated subthemes, which are described below.

Process of case writing. In discussing the process of writing case studies, the participants noted two strategies used in the class that helped them to write more effectively. First, the PSTs believed that receiving feedback on their writing helped them to make important refinements to their case studies. The PSTs specifically mentioned feedback from the course instructors and peer reviewer. Derek explained,

> The progression was very helpful. From the point of the rough draft to my final paper I added like three pages onto it. I got feedback from [my classmate] when he reviewed my paper and when I met with [course instructor]. I thought it was very helpful.

In the focus group, Glen explained, "I wrote a draft and edited it and edited it. I kept adding stuff to it after talking to people and stuff… it helped a lot." Neal (focus group) added, "The peer review was a lot more helpful than I thought it would be." Joseph was surprised by how helpful he found the peer review: "[My partner] gave me a lot of advice that I did take and make changes. I think working with a peer is always a beneficial experience." One course instructor agreed that the PSTs "seemed to help each other out with the peer reviews." It appears the PSTs felt the feedback they received from each other and the course instructors helped them develop their case studies beyond the initial draft to produce a more meaningful final product.

In addition to feedback, the PSTs believed they benefited from the structure of the assignment and the progression from outline through final draft. Felix noted, "The checkpoints helped… if there had been nothing due until today, I honestly would have probably sat down and started it last night." By having due dates structured throughout the semester, Carey believed that her case study "was better than it would have been if it was just all due the last day." Thomas (focus group) confirmed Carey's sentiment: "My final copy would have been my rough draft if we didn't have these steps. I seriously would have turned in exactly what I had on the rough draft which was like two pages." Ray noted, "[I want] to make my paper better, which is what the deadlines are there for," and D'Andre agreed that having deadlines throughout the semester "impacted the way [he] thought about writing [his] case study." Felix noted, that he liked "the steps and [he felt] like [he was] going to turn in quality work because of the steps." Even the PSTs who failed to keep up with deadlines or procrastinated in starting their work recognized the benefit of the deadlines. When asked how he would advise someone who would be taking the class in the future, Joseph said he would recommend "getting started on your case sooner." Patty added,

> I got started on it [the case] in the beginning and then I waited until the last week before it was all due and tried to complete it. If I had completed it ahead of time, then I could have gotten more feedback and tried to make it stronger.

For the PSTs in this study, the structure of having due dates throughout the semester helped them to keep on task and write higher quality case studies.

Benefits of writing case studies. In addition to the benefits of the assignment structure, PSTs believed that they benefited from writing case studies. First, PSTs enjoyed being able to delve deeper into an issue that they saw as important to their future careers. D'Andre noted that writing case studies "builds your knowledge a little more because you are writing it yourself. Others who read it may also find it interesting." Patty noted that writing a case study helped her to understand the complexity of real-world situations that occur in school: "I think it helped me realize that there is always more than one problem to each scenario and that… there are always three or four side problems that will also occur because of the one main problem." Ray added,

> When you sit down and have to stretch out the case study and fill in the details… You have to think like a teacher. There were things that I wrote about that I didn't really consider before starting this assignment.

Neal agreed that writing a case study forced him to think more critically about the realities of life in schools because

> it forces you to draw back on your experiences and other things we have read. There can be good things that come out of pulling from all these experiences and thinking about it and then pulling it all together in one paper.

One of the course instructors confirmed the PSTs' sentiments related to delving deeply into a particular issue: "Writing a case study… gives the students the opportunity to compose something on a topic surrounding a situation, linked to the literature, which has meaning to them."

Beyond delving deeply into a particular issue, participants also believed that through authoring a case study they were able to consider future situations that they may encounter in school. Felix explained that writing his case study helped him think more critically about the role a teacher plays not only in the school but also in the larger community:

> As a teacher, you are part of a community. You have a government job and you are part of a school, you deal with students…people look up to you and people know who you are. You have to be a good person in school and you have to be a role model outside in the community.

In reflecting on his case study, Juan noted, "It kind of got me to thinking about how I would handle it if something like that were to happen to me in the future." Joseph (focus group) added, "I think that having us make our own case studies helped because it made you think about what you might encounter in the teaching field." Sandy agreed, noting, "it helps me think about how this is actually something that could happen and how I should handle it in the future." She went on to add, "Writing the case just made me brainstorm so many things that could happen in my first year or five years down the road." The PSTs' sentiments related to future preparation was confirmed by one of the course instructors, who explained that writing cases prepares PSTs for the realities of working in the complex social settings of schools:

> They realize that issues are complex and that they can't just focus on solving one aspect of an issue without considering all of the angles involved. One decision often leads to numerous other consequences, and I think it is beneficial to their future development to see that as they write.

Wesley's Case Study: What They Don't Tell You About Student Teaching

As I sat behind my cooperating teacher's desk and waited for my sixth period health class to come back from lunch, I could not help but feel sorry for myself. This was the third week of my student teaching, an experience for which all of my previous education had supposedly prepared me. If I was a well prepared as I believed, then how did it come to this? Two of my sixth grade health classes refused to participate in my activities while my other was more motivated, but too talkative for the class to run as effectively as I would have liked. That week I had already sent one sixth grader to the office, asked another to leave the classroom for being disruptive, rearranged the seating chart, called several parents, and talked to the students about being respectful more times than I could count. I was losing sleep and the fact that the other sixth grade teachers assured me that this sixth grade cohort is the worst they had ever seen wasn't helping. The greatest lesson I learned was that I didn't know as much as I thought I did about teaching and classroom management.

For my student teaching experience, I taught three sixth grade health classes, a seventh grade health class, and two seventh grade PE classes at Community Middle School. Community Middle School was a large school, with over 2,000 students in grades six through eight, and served a small city in the American Midwest. Most students at Community came from low socioeconomic backgrounds and were predominantly white. Students rotated between health and PE every quarter, having class for 42 minutes on a daily basis. My cooperating teachers were Mr. Kramer and Mr. Webster, who were the school's two health and PE teachers.

In order to gain my footing in this school, I spent some time carefully observing my two cooperating teachers for a couple of days before I started teaching. The first thing that I noticed was that my sixth and seventh grade health cooperating teacher, Mr. Kramer, had a different classroom management style than the one I was developing. He seemed to rely most heavily on raising his voice and scolding the students. Mr. Kramer would call out the offending student and either demand that the inappropriate behavior stop immediately or instruct the student to sit outside the classroom. My second cooperating teacher, Mr. Webster, with whom I taught the two seventh grade PE classes, shared Mr. Kramer's affinity for authoritative management. I knew right away that this was going to be a challenge for me because my cooperating teachers' authoritative approach was different than what I was taught at my university, where a student-centered, preventative approach to class management was emphasized. Was it really that much more effective to yell at kids?

After getting the opportunity to observe both of my cooperating teachers for a few days, I was thrust into the teacher role—ready or not. I met my first day with cautious optimism. My strategy was to adopt a similar organizational setup and classroom rules as my cooperating teachers while maintaining the commitment to a student-centered approach to classroom management I had learned in my methods classes. In this way, I hoped to seamlessly transition my instructional style into the existing organizational system.

Seventh grade PE was my first class and I planned to pilot my lifetime sports unit with them. I chose the sports of table tennis, shuffleboard, and bowling. In order to stretch our limited supply of equipment, Mr. Webster and I decided to teach all three sports at the same time using instructional stations. From a management standpoint, I struggled with how I would teach skill progression for each individual activity if my students were going to be doing all three at the same time. While efficient in terms of space and equipment use, the station setup led to my first classroom management challenge: How can I teach and give feedback while monitoring the entire class participating in three different activities?

I brought my concern to Mr. Webster, and he suggested that I teach the rules and basic skills for each activity on the first day and then break the students up into three groups and send them to each station and have them play. I asked how we would work toward skill development and assess learning. Mr. Webster scoffed and mumbled that this was the “real world” and that not everything worked the way they said it would at my university. Beyond the fact that I didn’t see how the students were going to learn by just playing games, it was obvious from day one that classroom management would be a huge issue for my unit with the seventh grade PE classes. The students were rowdy, were inattentive, and did not seem interested in learning.

Feeling a little disheartened, I left the gymnasium at the end of the class to teach my first health lesson to a class full of talkative seventh graders. I will admit that for the most part, I really enjoyed my seventh grade health class. While they were a little disruptive at times, they also eagerly participated in most of my activities and seemed interested in learning. They were my easiest class to manage, and for the most part, instruction went on without a hitch.

My first lunch break came as a relief as I could finally relax a bit before my first bout with the sixth grade health classes. Sitting in the break room with the rest of the teachers left me with mixed feelings. I heard story after story about what happened that day, how many behavior referrals they wrote, and what management strategies they tried that didn't work. Since I was new to the school I stayed quiet, but I listened to the other teachers and soon came to a shocking realization: The seasoned teachers at Community seemed to be having just as much trouble with their classes as I felt I was having with mine.

After lunch, I went back to the health classroom for back-to-back classes of sixth grade health. From the first day with these students, I knew that classroom management and discipline were going to be critical in determining how much I was going to be able to teach and how much the students would learn. Besides the classes being generally talkative and engaging in off-task behavior, there were about eight students in each class who were extremely disruptive on a regular basis. I tried using some of the classroom management strategies I had been taught at my university, but they did not seem to be working as effectively as I thought they would.

At the end of my first day, Mr. Kramer and I sat in his office and talked for almost an hour. I vented about my frustrations of not being able to teach effectively in the two sixth grade health classes that followed lunch. He advised me to take a more authoritative approach to classroom management and to send students to the office if I felt it was necessary. He also insisted that I shouldn't be afraid to raise my voice when the students got out of hand. I found myself increasingly confused because none of the approaches he mentioned seemed to make it into the textbooks that I read. I had been taught only to use extreme measures of discipline as a last resort and not as primary classroom management since teachers are charged with helping all students to learn. A focus on learning becomes difficult if we constantly send students out of the room. Instead, my professors recommended a preemptive approach to discipline that would promote on-task behavior and reduce the need to use reactive classroom management strategies. I should change the educational climate to one that students would be more excited about by keeping them busy by using active learning strategies. If not successful, then I should create a more individualized curriculum to limit the off-task behavior of particular students. If these steps didn't produce the desired effects, then I must keep trying different approaches and communicate individually with students about their behavior. Beyond these strategies, my classes really didn't cover the type of behaviors I was seeing during my student teaching experience.

In PE, I gave into Mr. Webster's advice and made adjustments to better manage my classes at the cost of lowering my instructional standards. I decided to focus on teaching skill progression for the groups that came to table tennis and as long as I never had my back turned on the rest of the students, I felt like I could monitor the gymnasium effectively. I felt bad about not focusing on skill development in all of the groups, but I didn't know how else I could teach effectively and still manage student behavior. The drawback was that I wasn't able to provide any feedback to the bowlers or the students playing shuffleboard. However, this did not help to ease the feeling that the only group I seemed to be reaching was the seventh grade health class.

My relative success with my seventh grade health class was tempered by the constant reminder that my fifth and sixth period sixth grade classes were always looming. Taking my cooperating teacher's advice, I began to be a bit more vocal in my use of classroom management and I scrapped many of my active learning tasks because I perceived they couldn't handle the responsibility of working in groups. For example, I revoked the privilege of using the computer lab to compare fast food caloric and nutritional content online and instead gave them homework activities from their textbook. I also had to stop playing review games before tests because a majority of the students didn't follow my directions, so I had them review terms from their textbooks to study. While I felt as if my college instructors would have frowned upon my decision to let the students direct my management style, Mr. Kramer seemed to approve.

Toward the end of the second week of my experience, I started opening up to the other teachers during lunch break. As I got to know them better, I realized just how frustrated and tired they were of the off-task behavior they encountered in their classes. Mrs. Coleman, a sixth grade math teacher, constantly vented that the students would not finish any homework and never applied themselves in her lessons. The sixth grade social studies teacher, Mrs. Reese, recounted how a tardy student argued relentlessly about being late to her class. Mrs. Reese and Mrs. Coleman agreed that this was the worst sixth grade class in their 20 years of teaching at Community. The sixth grade chemistry teacher, Mr. Craig, shook his head and lamented about the "better days" in years past when parents were actually invested in their children's education.

During these discussions, something really resonated with me. Throughout my teacher preparation we focused primarily on internal factors related to classroom management (teaching strategies, classroom organization, etc.), and often failed to discuss the important role that parents play in the educational process. I decided to take an active role in connecting with parents and, with Mr. Kramer's permission, I called the parents of four of my most disruptive sixth grade students. Unfortunately, I was unable to get in touch with any of them. When I complained to Mr. Kramer, he laughed and explained that he had given up on calling parents some time ago. I left the school that day feeling more dejected than ever.

At the beginning of the next week, two students in my first period PE class forget their uniforms. Per my cooperating teacher's grading policy, I gave them a zero for participation for the day. By the end of the week, one of these students claimed to have forgotten his clothes three times. I addressed my concerns with Mr. Webster, and he was prompt to conduct a locker search. When the student opened his locker, there was a clean, unused uniform on the bottom shelf. Mr. Webster began screaming at the student in a way that I would envision a prison guard berating an inmate. After dismissing the student, Mr. Webster again insisted that I consider a more direct management style. "I know what your professors told you," he said, "but these students can't handle the type of responsibility you are expecting of them." I can't help to admit that I was starting to question my ideals. While I wanted to develop a climate of mutual respect with my students, things seemed to get done a lot faster when Mr. Webster and Mr. Kramer stepped in and asserted their authoritative management styles. Perhaps the same would work for me.

Midway through the third week, Mr. Webster verbally disciplined one of the seventh graders for not participating while at the bowling station. As I observed the incident from across the gym, I was relieved that he had helped me, but embarrassed that I was unable to handle the situation on my own. I felt like a failure and asked Mr. Webster for advice at the end of the day. He smiled, patted me on the shoulder, and said, "Don't worry kid, you're getting it." During my drive home that afternoon I realized that this type of exchange had become characteristic of my relationship with Mr. Webster. Very rarely did he give me positive feedback or helpful constructive feedback related to my teaching. This disconnect with Mr. Webster wasn't conducive to improving my ability to manage the classes. My professors at the college always gave me feedback (positive and constructive) and seemed to want to help me to become a better teacher. Without this same type of relationship with

Mr. Webster I started to feel like I was the only one who cared about good instruction and improving my classroom management skills.

I hit rock bottom on Friday afternoon and took an ill-advised approach to class management. The fifth period health class was making presentations on how to promote safety in various emergencies. Eric and Marcus were becoming increasingly distracting and other students began following their lead. The presenter, a quiet, attentive, and intelligent girl named Samantha, was becoming visibly frustrated with the class' show of disrespect. After being interrupted for the third consecutive time, Samantha stopped mid-sentence and made eye contact with me as if to ask if I was going to do anything to stop the off-task behavior.

I stood up, walked to the front of the room and stood next to Samantha and asked her to return to her seat. The class, not seeming to realize that I was now standing alone in front of the room, continued to talk and laugh at a joke that Eric had just finished telling. I waited a couple of seconds hoping they would quiet down on their own, and seeing that they would not, I shouted, "Be quiet!" Stunned, the class went silent and the students turned to face the front of the room and stared at me. "It's about time!" I went on to scold until the bell rang a couple of minutes later. I told the students to leave and went back to sit at my desk in the back of the room, not really sure how to feel about what had just transpired. On the one hand, raising my voice was effective. However, I was still not convinced that I wanted to be that kind of teacher.

As I sat there, Mr. Kramer, who had observed the entire incident from the door in the back of the classroom, came over and patted me on the back. "Good work," he said. "Sometimes, you just have to lay into these kids if you want them to respect you." I shook my head and indicated that I had lost my temper and that I was still hesitant up to raise my voice, but Mr. Kramer was quick to point out that I couldn't let class misbehavior get in the way of my ability to teach. While I agreed with his overall message, I was still not convinced with regard to his methods. As an educator, it was my job to teach the health curriculum so that every student could learn. Up to this point, I had not been very successful in this regard, especially with the sixth grade health classes. While I knew that I needed to get control of my PE and health classes, I also wanted to create an environment in which everyone felt respected and comfortable. This did not seem possible when using authoritative management styles as emphasized by Mr. Kramer and Mr. Webster. How was I going to ensure student learning if I couldn't manage my classes?

Analyzing Wesley's Experience

Wesley's case study is an interesting insight into the lived experiences of a student teacher. Like many young teachers, Wesley had students who were powerful socializing agents (Conkling, 2003; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). Specifically, Wesley perceived he lacked preparation for managing student behavior, which is consistent with the work of Veenman (1984) and Stroot and Ko (2006), who highlighted the problems that many beginning teachers face when taking control of classes for the first time. For Wesley, this was compounded by a disconnection between the principles for classroom management stressed during his teacher preparation program and those supported by his cooperating teachers. Several times throughout his case, he lamented about the pressure he felt to maintain fidelity to the beliefs instilled in him through teacher training while attempting to appease his cooperating teachers (White, 1989). Related to this disconnect is Wesley's concern that he had cooperating teachers who were generally unsupportive and unwilling to dialogue with him about issues he was facing.

Initially, Wesley exercised his sense of agency in the dialectical process of socialization (Schempp & Graber, 1992) by resisting the influence of his cooperating teachers and continuing to implement the classroom management strategies he had learned during teaching training. Such an approach is similar to what Lacey (1977) referred to as a strategic redefinition approach to socialization in which the individual attempts to change the status quo within the school environment. However, by the end of the third week of his teaching experience, Wesley took actions, sacrificing his beliefs and adopting strategies promoted within the school context. If this trend were to continue throughout the remainder of Wesley's student teaching, Wesley would shift from a humanistic to an autocratic style of management, which has been highlighted as a consequence of student teaching and prolonged contact with children (Templin, 1979, 1981). Such an approach is counter to Wesley's training, which could be evidence of the washout effect in which the values of teacher education are sacrificed because they do not align with the teaching situation (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009).

By expressing their concerns in a case study, student teachers such as Wesley are able to explore more deeply elements of their student teaching they find to be particularly important in shaping their overall experience (Richards et al., 2012; Wilson & Williams, 2001). Through writing a case study, PSTs have an opportunity to engage in critical reflection through reflective writing (Langley & Senne, 1997). Students may experience cognitive growth through this reflection. Bolt (1998) defined cognitive growth as "the ability of PSTs to identify problems in context and to generate possible solutions for those problems while drawing on relevant concepts and personal experiences" (p. 91); cognitive growth is believed to aid individuals in thinking through complex situations that are common in teaching contexts.

Discussion and Conclusions

Authors and educators have used the case study method as a tool to promote reflection among PSTs (Langley & Senne, 1997; Richards et al., 2012). In a study of pre-service physical educators, Bolt (1998) found that through the case study method, PSTs' may think more deeply about problems in context and offer meaningful solutions. Students and instructors in interviews provided support for the notion that authoring case studies may also lead to cognitive growth. In the descriptions of their experiences, PSTs found case study writing to be challenging but worthwhile. The PSTs believed that writing case studies prepared them for the future and allowed them to focus more specifically on a particular issue they encountered during a field experience or view important to teaching PE. Analysis of Wesley's case study showed further evidence of cognitive growth, as Wesley was able to identify and critique numerous challenging experiences from his student teaching experience. Since future preparation and critical reflection show evidence of cognitive growth, we have included preliminary evidence in this study to support student-authored case studies as a pedagogical practice.

In addition to the benefits of authoring case studies, PSTs who participated in interviews noted benefits related to the way in which the assignment was structured. Specifically, the PSTs enjoyed the feedback they received from the course instructor and other students as they refined their case studies. Peer review is another good tool to make the authorship process a social as well as individual experience. PSTs articulated enjoyment related to reviewing their peers' case studies and exchanging ideas that were mutually beneficial. In addition, they appreciated the project timeline and several checkpoints to keep them on track as they wrote their case studies. This is in line with Richards et al.'s (2012) approach to structuring the authorship process. Teacher educators may use this study as an example to extend the use of student-authored case studies in their curriculum. Furthermore, researchers may further define best practices for using case studies to promote reflection.

PSTs now and in the future may benefit from student-authored case studies. In student-authored case studies, such as Wesley's, students may raise issues that concern many PSTs. When asked, other PSTs may choose to write about issues such as including the individualization of instruction, working with diverse student populations, implementing assessment, and other issues that are relevant to young teachers (Stroot & Ko, 2006; Veenman, 1984). Thus, by engaging in the case writing process, PSTs are reflecting on their experiences and developing a catalog of case studies that are authentic and authored by student teachers (Wilson & Williams, 2001). With the authors' permission, these cases may be shared with future PSTs and discussed in courses leading to field experiences. Researchers should examine PSTs' perceptions of and learning through student-authored case studies to examine this notion more critically.

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