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A buddy peer-review process within Physical Education Initial Teacher Education

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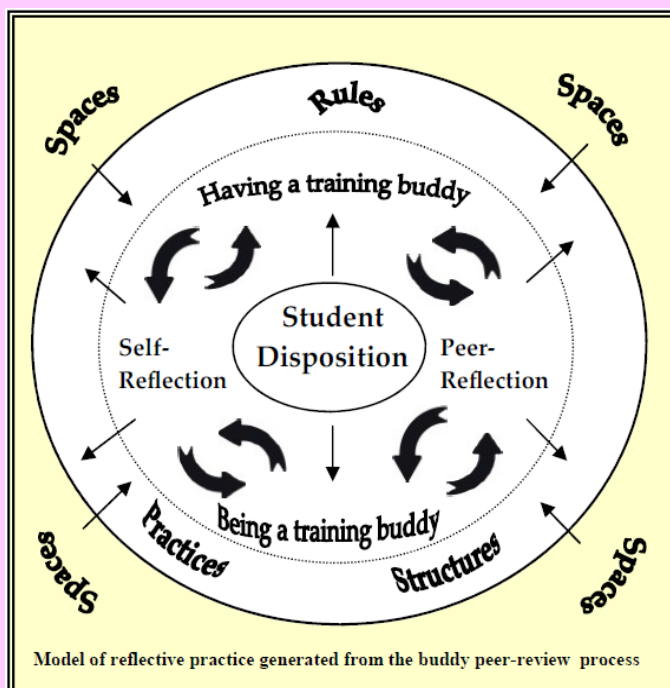
Aim:

Innovation in enhancing the reflective abilities of physical education trainee teachers was explored through establishing peer 'training buddies' during their school placements. The impetus to the study was to extend provision already in place within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) for trainees' reflection by placing specific emphasis on their ownership of the process and to explore their development in becoming reflective practitioners. The project was timely in view of previous work identifying the difficulty of fostering trainee teachers' critical reflection (Gore, 1990; Placek & Smyth, 1995; Rovegno, 1992), and because pre-service teachers often have limited opportunities to reflect on their own teaching (Lee & Wu, 2006).

The project aimed to add further empirical evidence regarding the impact of reflection on teaching in physical education (Carlson and Parry, 2003; Graber, 2001; Jung and Schempp 2007; Macdonald and Tinning, 2003; Tsangaridou, 2005). Trainees decided as a pair, using digital video, how best to conduct a peer-review process in order to explore the dynamics of reflective practice. Central to the study's aim was to determine if working and learning together autonomously as a pair would extend their ability to reflect.

Method:

- ◆ 23 full-time Post-Graduate Secondary Physical Education trainee teachers were assigned the dual responsibility of *being* and *having* a peer training buddy whilst on school placements.
- ◆ When being a training buddy, the trainee acted as both a critical friend and a supportive extra pair of eyes to feedback to his/her peer.
- ◆ When having a training buddy, the trainee assumed the role of reflective practitioner, acting upon feedback received from his/her training buddy.
- ◆ Trainees visited each other's school and recorded each other teaching a lesson.
- ◆ Immediately following the lesson the trainees watched the recorded lesson together, engaging in a joint evaluative conversation.
- ◆ Data was obtained through surveys, focus group interviews and the use of the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- ◆ Analysis of the material was based on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).



The model representing the peer-review process identifies connections between the dispositions of individual trainees, the *structures* of ITE (university, school, mentors and peers), the *rules* of the formal assessment processes associated with achieving qualified teacher status and their subsequent *practices* on placement.



Findings:

As a result of having and being a buddy:

- ⇒ 75% of the trainees felt their reflective abilities had developed as a result of the peer-review process and 25% indicated 'maybe' they had developed.
- ⇒ 75% felt that the task had helped develop reflective skills in relation to observing other practitioners teaching physical education.
- ⇒ 69% believed they had consciously changed elements of their classroom practice in response to *having* and *being* a training buddy.

Findings:

Trainees fostered and shaped an environment of mutually supportive *spaces*.

⇒ **SAFE ... non-judgemental and sense of solidarity**

'You trust your buddy and they can point out improvements to be made in a non-judgemental way.'

⇒ **RELAXED ... non-pressured and conversational**

'It was probably a more relaxed observation in comparison to a qualified PE teacher.'

⇒ **PEDAGOGIC ... collaborative, sharing of ideas**

'Knowledge from your own observations allowed you to be much more self-critical and provided an awareness of the areas needing improvement and why this was the case.'

'First placement feedback [from my buddy] consisted of lesson structure and organisation advice and opinion, where second placement feedback commented on the overall rapport with pupils and success of the lesson in terms of learning.'

⇒ **EQUAL ... the same stage, position and status**

'It was good to get someone else's point of view who is on the PGCE course and is on the same level as us as opposed to qualified teachers.'

⇒ **NEGOTIATED ... ownership of organisation and structure**

'I wanted to focus on the positives of my peer's lesson. However I understood that he wanted a genuine evaluation and that would only realistically be achievable through a giving of both positive and constructive feedback on potential areas of weakness. I found it easy to give this feedback as we had agreed to be honest and rigorous in our evaluations.'

⇒ **ALTERNATIVE ... different school environments**

'It got me into a different school and you could see a different school environment as well, which helped me think, when it comes to jobs.'

Conclusion:

Mutual and collaborative spaces created by training buddies enhanced reflective ability and practice. The extent to which trainees developed a sense of professional identity expanded their ability to reflect effectively on their own and another's practice and increased their capacity to distinguish appropriate generic and subject-specific skills.

Key References:

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- Tsangaridou, N. (2005). Classroom Teachers' Reflections on Teaching Physical Education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* 24(1), 24-50.