

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF  
SPECIALIST AND NONSPECIALIST TEACHERS OF  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ELLIS S. COLES







**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF  
SPECIALIST AND NONSPECIALIST TEACHERS  
OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.**

**by**

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## PREFACE

It was certainly a grueling trek to school each day; heavily laden with books stacked with an unsightly clutter of paper. Life with only academics would have surely driven me crazy! However, the philosophy of our educational system stresses a desire to develop the total well-being of an individual. In addition to the development of our minds, it is the objective of our schools to promote the learning of physical skills through physical movement. Walking two kilometers to school each day, kicking my best friend with the hopes of enticing him into a game of tag, throwing a snowball or some other object at a passer-by who had dared to stick out his tongue at me two weeks earlier, or challenging my next door neighbor to a sprint towards an old picket fence that separated our houses, are certainly all examples demonstrating physical movement. However, it puzzled some people why these "natural" childhood actions such as walking, throwing, and running were becoming a part of our educational curriculum. Personally, only one puzzling and frustrating aspect about my physical education classes existed - why didn't we have more?

Memories of my physical education classes from primary to high school are pleasurable, yet different. During my early grades the regular classroom teacher taught physical education in our classroom. Often the main focus of these lessons would be small group tasks or stationary activities completed by our desks. With no previous exposure to a gymnasium it appeared that I didn't really miss what I had not been accustomed to in the first place. The only thing that mattered to me was that I had a break from the regular routine. At the elementary level, I quickly adapted to a large gymnasium and to an instructor known only as "the gym teacher." Although the routine was different, my enthusiasm and enjoyment for physical education continued.



Memories regarding my high school physical education classes are also positive. It was exciting to read the Physical Education Bulletin Board for intramural schedules, hockey practices, and volleyball tryouts. The reading of that bulletin board was the most important task for me each morning. It was quite clear that my athletic ability had given me a feeling of confidence that I could compete with the best in any sports activity.

With such positive childhood experiences, it really didn't come as a surprise to my parents and friends when I decided to be a physical educator. Over these past nine years as a teacher I have taught physical education in many different settings; from classroom to multi-purpose room, to gymnasium, each teaching situation being truly unique and challenging. My present teaching role involves being a physical education specialist at a school with a population of approximately 240 primary and 200 elementary students. It was puzzling to me that, prior to my hiring, the physical education program was being taught by classroom teachers. This situation, as I learned, was not unique to my school or area, but existed in many other areas in the province as well.

As a physical education specialist I constantly questioned my colleagues about their experiences. My objective was not to compare the quality of their program with that of mine, but rather to attempt to understand their experiences with and perspectives on physical education. Their responses caused me to realize that a comparison of the experiences of physical education specialists with the experiences of classroom teachers teaching physical education in an elementary school would provide an interesting research study.

## **ABSTRACT**

The main focus of this study involved a comparison of the teaching experiences of eight specialist and eight nonspecialist elementary physical education teachers. An interview was conducted with participants to ascertain their experiences in physical education.

A literature review specifically dealing with specialist and nonspecialist educators found that in most facets of teaching physical education, specialists outperformed nonspecialist teachers. Most of these studies involved a comparison of either skill development or a comparison of physical education programs; rarely did studies examine actual teaching experiences.

Findings from the study revealed that teachers of physical education shared many similar and different teaching experiences. These included their experiences with physical education as a student, as a teacher in training, and as a teacher. Similar viewpoints were expressed on topics such as teaching strategies and instruction, evaluation, and staff support. One noticeable difference was the enthusiasm and confidence displayed by specialist teachers, compared to nonspecialists, in the actual planning and implementation of their total physical education programs. The obstacles expressed by both groups of teachers in the teaching of physical education were also quite different.

Based on the findings from this study, recommendations were made for additional support and assistance to all teachers of physical education in the elementary school setting.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This space has been reserved to acknowledge the support and encouragement I received during the completion of this research study. Although this page will signify those individuals who have impacted on this research, the offering of just a thank you seems not enough. I will always be grateful for their assistance.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my chief supervisor, Dr. Greg Wood, who was always there to offer help and friendship. Despite his own busy schedule, Greg always seemed to find time to handle weekend phone calls, schedule meetings between lectures, and still offer me the motivation to keep going. There were times when I felt something in the paper was pulling me down; Greg was always there to pick me up and encourage me to continue.

Sincere appreciation is also extended to Dr. Colin Higgs and Dr. Royston Kelleher who offered their expertise and support by serving as examiners for this thesis paper. Their positive and helpful suggestions kept me on track, especially during times when it seemed I wasn't even on board.

Sincere appreciation is also extended to all the elementary teachers who participated in this research study; without their cooperation such a thesis would not have been possible.

A special thank you to my family. My wife, Rosalind, who spent many hours typing and unselfishly checking over my paper, and my little boy, Ryan, who continually haunted me by constantly asking one question "Can you play with me Dad, or are you working on that thesis again?" Finally I can reply without any hesitation "Let's Go!"

A final thank you to my parents. They greatly supported my endeavor of completing a master's program.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

#### **Introduction**

Physical education is regarded as an integral part of the school curriculum. Although activities may vary from school to school depending on location, equipment, and resources, the basic philosophy of the physical education program remains the same. According to Nichols (1990) elementary physical education programs should have specific aims and objectives. The program should be structured so that each child is provided with the opportunity to:

1. Develop an understanding in the study of human movement.
2. Acquire the fundamental motor skills - locomotor, nonlocomotor, and manipulative - and higher level sports and dance skills and provision for their use now and in the future in a variety of activities.
3. Develop an understanding of the importance of health-related physical fitness and the tools to assess, acquire, and maintain fitness throughout one's lifetime
4. Develop the appropriate attitudes and social skills essential to successful participation.

(p.8)

Meeting these objectives are the responsibility of all educators, but are particularly the responsibility of the physical education teacher.

This research study was designed to analyze the experiences of specialist and non-specialist physical education teachers. The intent of this research was not to compare

physical education programs, but rather to seek out the values and viewpoints of teachers. By conjuring up their memories and feelings, a clarification of their teaching perspective and outlook on physical education might evolve. Even though physical education programs differ among elementary grades, one influential factor determining a program's effectiveness would be the experiences of the teacher.

Research on this topic was scarce. It was, therefore, interesting to study the physical education teaching experiences of both specialist and nonspecialist teachers, and to compare their experiences and positions on related topics concerning physical education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

At a very early age children need movement activities to physically mature. The role of the elementary physical education teacher is to help children understand the need for an active lifestyle and to help them find physical activities which, if they desire, can become lifetime leisure pursuits.

The primary purpose of this study was to analyze, through their experiences, the perspectives of elementary physical education teachers with regards to the physical education program. More specifically, the study dealt with the teaching experiences of elementary physical education specialists and the experiences of nonspecialist classroom teachers who were responsible for the instruction of physical education as well as other subject areas.

A second purpose of this study was to try to understand the teachers' positive and negative experiences, if any, in the implementation of their own physical education program. When analyzed, these experiences might result in suggestions which might help others in the delivery of physical education in elementary schools. Thus a goal of

this research was to compile, document, and analyze the teaching experiences of these individuals in an attempt to understand what it was like to be specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers.

This study also allowed specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers the opportunity to comment on their teaching experiences, specifically dealing with such topics as evaluation, discipline, resources, and teacher training. Allowing teachers the opportunity to express their viewpoints should reveal commonalities and/or differences among specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers.

The value of physical education and its delivery are sometimes viewed negatively by people outside of the education system, and even by other teachers. A belief exists that physical educators do less planning than classroom teachers, only play games, and have a much easier job than other educators. Therefore, a "hidden" purpose involved in interviewing teachers who did not choose physical education as their area of expertise but yet have the experience to know what teaching physical education is really like, may help address this negativity. These nonspecialist teachers would be in a better position to adequately comment on the teaching of physical education due to the fact that they have experienced the situation first-hand.

### **Research Questions**

Good preparation and organizational skills by the teacher can be one factor leading to an excellent physical education program. Like all subject areas, students need to be exposed to a well-planned and balanced curriculum. Teachers of physical education, who have spent time planning and teaching the program, helped the researcher understand the contrasting teaching experiences of the specialist and nonspecialist

teachers in the implementation of their programs. The following research questions made it possible to examine these experiences:

1. How did the teachers' past physical education experiences affect, if at all, their present physical education program?
2. How do physical educators view physical education? What experiences have influenced these views?
3. What concerns or obstacles were incurred by physical educators in the implementation of their physical education program? What positive aspects were noted?
4. How do physical educators view student evaluation, teacher training, and resources in their present school system? Has this viewpoint remained constant or has it changed through experience?
5. How would physical educators describe their physical education program?

These research questions form the essence of the study. Other questions were discussed, however. It was important for the researcher to keep an "open mind" and permit other relevant topics to become a part of the research study. If additional key points were brought out in the discussions, then further inquiry took place.

### **Operational Definition of Specialist and Nonspecialist Teachers**

The operational definition of a specialist physical education teacher used within the context of this research was provided by Block and Beckett (1990). They referred to a specialist educator as one who has acquired in-depth knowledge about a subject area and, as a result, has possibly developed a better understanding of that subject area. Expertise

would therefore be acquired through sustained experience, study, and practice.

Specialists, as defined by this research, were those who have obtained the minimum of a Bachelor of Physical Education degree from a recognized educational institution. They must have completed an elementary physical education methods course and possess at least one year experience in the teaching of physical education at the elementary level.

The operational definition of a nonspecialist physical education teacher used within the context of the research was also provided by Block and Beckett (1990). They defined a nonspecialist educator as an individual who has not had the focused, intense study and practice provided by exposure to the specialist curriculum. This research, therefore, included those individuals who teach, or have taught, the required elementary curriculum for at least one year, and who have been given the responsibility of instructing physical education to a particular group (class) of students.

### **Delimitations**

The study was delimited to include only teachers who had experience in teaching physical education at the elementary level in a Newfoundland school. The researcher, in selecting teachers, included specialist and nonspecialist teachers from different areas of the province who were responsible for their own physical education program. Overall the participants' teaching service ranged from 5 to 27 years, and from 3 to 20 years of instruction in the area of physical education.

The experiences of the teachers were delimited to information acquired using a qualitative approach through interviewing sessions.

### **Limitations**

Sometimes qualitative researchers choose to enter into an environment where all participants and the actual settings are unknown. These researchers attempt to become a part of the setting. However, in this particular study the researcher and several of the teachers were colleagues. Interviewing my peers and eliciting honest responses was expected to be difficult. My colleagues and friends knew my position regarding the role of physical education in the school curriculum; it was a concern to me that some of them would not "open up" and state their negativity, if any, towards physical education.

The teachers in this research all have different physical education teaching experiences. For instance, some schools provided physical education twice a week, while other schools offered it on a smaller or larger scale. A nonspecialist teacher with only one class of physical education per week will not have the same teaching experiences as a nonspecialist teaching physical education three times per week. Therefore, it is important for the research to focus on the quality of the teaching experiences rather than the quantity.

The availability and condition of the teacher's past and present school facilities may further influence the experiences of the teachers involved. A school that has spent large sums of money on its physical education program may enhance the teacher's experience of the program, while a school that has allowed its equipment to deteriorate may have created negative experiences for the teacher. Even though a quality program can exist in both instances, the experiences of teaching can be influenced by the teaching environment. The teachers in this research may have such contrasting backgrounds. These limitations, therefore, create the need for a qualitative, reflexive approach to the topic.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Through a thorough literature review, a deeper understanding developed regarding the use of a specialist versus a nonspecialist in the instruction of a physical education program. Areas of student attitudes, teacher planning, and effective teaching techniques were researched to see if any differences existed between the two types of instructors. Literature specifically dealing with specialists and nonspecialists teachers received special focus. Even though the purpose of this research study was not to compare specialist and nonspecialist programs, it was helpful to determine if differences exist.

#### **Attitudes Towards Physical Educators**

Teachers at some point or another reflect on and evaluate their own curriculum. This type of evaluation is one step towards ensuring a quality program. Regardless of teacher expertise and experience, teachers must realize and know if their program is one which involves in-depth planning, as well as one which captures the interest of all students. From a teacher's perspective it would be interesting to hear feedback regarding their teaching program. Researchers have used student feedback in studies because the students themselves are the recipients of specialist and/or nonspecialist instruction. The results of such studies are both conflicting and interesting.

According to Figley (1985), students tended to rate teachers as the most important determinant of attitudes toward physical education. Being responsible for the atmosphere of the classroom as well as being the instigator of praise were factors which

influenced the teacher's rating. This finding was consistent with Alston (1981) who compared fifth grade students from school systems which employed elementary physical education specialists with fifth grade students from school systems who employed nonspecialists. The purpose of the study was to determine if any differences in children's attitude toward physical activity existed. Results showed that students taught by specialists had more positive attitudes regarding the social and physical domains offered by physical education. Activities promoting risk and thrills, promoting the beauty of human form and movement, promoting the importance of relaxation, and promoting the importance of health in fitness were all viewed more positively by students taught by specialists.

These aforementioned studies conflicted with Patterson and Faucette (1990) who claimed that student attitudes towards physical activity were similar for the children in their study, whether the teacher was a specialist or nonspecialist. They found that most children exhibited a positive attitude toward the fitness and social domains of physical education but viewed the risk taking and hard training aspects less favorably. Children taught by both specialist and nonspecialist teachers felt participation in physical activities gave them a good opportunity to meet and be with friends. A child's participation in physical activities was also viewed as a good outlet for reducing stress, improving health, and providing opportunities to display beautiful, graceful movement. It would appear from Patterson and Faucette's study that the qualifications of physical education teachers were of secondary importance.

Roche (1974) conducted research on students who were involved in teacher training programs. The intention of his study was to analyze and compare future physical education specialists with nonspecialists. It was found that both male and female



physical education specialist students displayed more positive attitudes towards physical activity than either male or female nonspecialist physical education students.

A study regarding the image of the physical educator in public schools showed a startling result. According to Goc-Kays (1985), prior to studying physical education in college, students viewed physical educators as being fun, easy going, and open people. Only 34 % of these students felt that physical education teachers were equal in status to other teachers. Once in the college program, 78 % of the students gained more respect for the skill and knowledge required to be a physical education teacher. When asked how they thought other teachers and people in the community viewed physical educators and the role of physical education, about 60 % felt other teachers regarded physical education teachers as "jocks," "players for play," and "easy going." Although this particular study did not deal specifically with specialist and nonspecialist teachers, it does confirm that physical educators are sometimes viewed negatively by society.

### **Classroom Teachers' Views of Physical Education**

The value and importance of physical education for any individual is difficult to measure. Many children will crave physical activity and will want a program which will capture their interest as well as satisfy their desire for movement. In an attempt to provide students with a structured and diversified program, it is advantageous for educators to remain focused and motivated.

Research by Faucette and Patterson (1989) pointed out that classroom teachers do not really want nor enjoy the responsibility of teaching physical education. Some nonspecialist teachers felt that classroom subjects demanded too much teacher attention and planning and, as a result, areas like physical education could not be effectively

taught. Other nonspecialists cited physical education as low in priority compared to academics. They stated that physical education was sometimes utilized as a make-up class for students to finish their work. In some schools physical education classes were scheduled near the end of the day; many felt academics were necessary in the morning when children were more fresh and attentive. Other negative responses centered on a lack of resources in the teaching area, and a lack of knowledge concerning gymnasium equipment, curriculum, and activities.

This study clearly reflects a specific group of classroom teachers and their opinions on teaching physical education. Although these findings may not be common to other schools with a similar setting, it does send a negative message to society regarding the role of physical education in some schools.

In a study by Kerr and Rodgers (1981) the focus was on initial preparation of primary teachers and their commitment to further in-service in physical education. Teacher attitude toward physical education was also considered. Results from this study found that even though these nonspecialists viewed physical education positively, their professional preparation as teachers in this area of the curriculum was a concern. Even though primary teachers appeared confident with their initial training, many were willing to attend in-service courses and were willing to allow a physical education specialist to take over responsibility for their physical education program.

All teachers can be in-serviced and aided in their preparation to instruct physical education. According to Morrison and Harrison (1985), by using film and videotape, teachers can effectively identify and correct movement skill errors of groups of children as well as individuals. This finding was consistent with both Robinson (1974, cited in Morrison and Harrison) who indicated that nonspecialist teachers could learn to detect movement differences as well as specialists, and Biscan and Hoffman (1976) who found

that there was no real difference between specialist and nonspecialist in analyzing unique movement skills. Since skill analysis is one important teaching aspect for those engaged in teaching physical education, it is positive to know that all teachers can take an active role in evaluating this component if given sufficient background.

In another study, Allison (1990) pointed out that classroom teachers can become better observers if they learn to focus their attention on specifics. In other words, if these teachers could distinguish between relevant and irrelevant visual information, this would add to their effectiveness in the gymnasium. According to Allison, teacher educators must help classroom observers understand that there is more to movement than just observing the body and how it rolls or changes direction. Instead, the components of movement should be stressed as well. It is not enough for classroom teachers to just observe physical education lessons, they must also be helped to understand what and how to observe.

### **Effective Instruction**

Becoming an effective teacher is by no means an easy task. Qualities which one individual might consider effective might not be shared by others. Dauer and Pangrazi (1986) felt that there was no single most effective teaching strategy, but suggested some common attributes teachers might consider concerning effective teaching. These include:

*the ability to use a number of different styles or strategies, even within a single unit, in response to changing circumstances. ... the teacher monitors the students' responses as the activity patterns unfold and guides the next procedures towards target goals. If the first presentation seems ineffective, another approach can immediately be implemented. The aim is always high-*

*quality teaching, rather than application of a particular teaching strategy* (p. 77).

One possible assumption regarding specialists would be that they are similar to experts and as a result are supposed to have a deeper understanding as well as a richer knowledge of their discipline. Therefore, a physical education specialist should possess a good background in such components as movement and exercise, and the relationship these have with the body. This knowledge, along with a motivation to stay abreast of current literature in physical education, might aid in teacher effectiveness. In addition, it would be reasonable to assume that this movement background is not shared by all nonspecialist physical education teachers since it is not a part of their teacher training. Even though specialists might have this edge over nonspecialists in teaching physical education, there are many other attributes necessary in determining one's ability to be an effective teacher.

A study by Bressan and Weiss (1982) seemed to suggest that an instructional cycle exists in the development of student competence, self-confidence, and persistence in physical education. Bressan and Weiss suggest that increased competence leads to increased levels of movement confidence. This heightened self-confidence in movement-related situations in turn positively affects an individual's choice of activities, the amount of effort expended at the task, and, most importantly, persistence under challenging circumstances. The cycle is completed as increased persistence results in further gains in competence and enhanced levels of movement confidence.

In comparing specialist and nonspecialist teachers, more concise similarities and differences pertaining to their instructional effectiveness were noted. In a very recent study by McKenzie, Sallis, Faucette, Roby, and Kolody (1993), the effects of a curriculum and in-service program on the quantity and quality of elementary physical education classes were examined. This particular study compared physical education

classes taught by differently qualified teachers, noting such components as student activity level, curriculum content, and teacher behavior. The three groups included classroom teachers who had received no training, classroom teachers who had received training and follow-up consultations, and physical education specialists. Results from this study showed that trained classroom teachers conducted significantly superior classes than untrained classroom teachers in all three aspects, even though these classroom teachers devoted less than 50% class time to active pupil participation. Both groups, however, did not match the quality of classes taught by physical education specialists. Furthermore, data indicated a significant difference in the average length of classes with specialist teachers exposing their students to an average class of 26.7 minutes. The trained classroom teacher had a class duration of 23.4 minutes while the regular classroom teacher's was 18.9 minutes. Each class was scheduled to be 30 minutes in length.

Grant and Martens (1982), however, found no significant difference between the teaching effectiveness of specialist and nonspecialist student teachers when teaching physical education lessons with the same theme. In this study teacher effectiveness was assessed by the percentage of time students were on-task as opposed to being "talked-to" by the instructor.

The study also listed qualities which distinguished a more "effective" teacher from a "less effective" one. The most effective teachers tended to provide each child in the class with approximately three times as much "on task" activity as the other teachers. They spent a larger percentage of their time helping students during the lesson rather than observing from the perimeter, giving less directions, and providing more on-task practice for the students. Finally the most effective teachers exhibited a more versatile behavioral pattern which included giving less negative feedback than the less effective teachers.

A study by Faucette and Patterson (1990), comparing the teaching behaviors and student activity levels in classes taught by specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers, contradicted the study by Grant and Martens (1982). Faucette and Patterson found that specialists used such teaching techniques as feedback/rewarding, questioning, directing, and explaining more frequently than nonspecialists. Even though many activities did not warrant large amounts of feedback, the specialists' style was positive and encouraging. The nonspecialists, on the other hand, spent more time monitoring and provided little direction or information to the student. Additionally, significant differences in activity levels of children taught by specialists versus nonspecialists were noted. It was concluded that children taught by specialists were more active. Classroom organization as well as the type of activities selected appeared to be the main reasons for this difference.

Placek and Randell (1986) also compared the academic learning time of elementary students in physical education classes taught by specialists with those taught by classroom teachers. One specific area of focus in this study concerned skill practice and games. The results indicated that although specialists selected more appropriate learning activities, knowledge of content may not be the most significant variable in organizing for maximized student participation and success. Although similarities existed both within the context and routine of a lesson, as well as the learner involvement level, some differences were noted. For instance, the students of specialists spent 36.7 % of their time in skill practice and only 14.4 % in game play. In contrast, the nonspecialists' students spent the greatest amount of time in game play (40 %) with less time devoted to skill practice (26.2 %). Placek and Randell also noted that since feedback by the teacher appeared to be more common during skill practice and scrimmage sessions, quality

learning would probably be more evident under the direction of the specialist teachers since an emphasis on skill development existed.

Finally, a study by Walkwitz and Lee (1992) concerning the role of teacher knowledge in elementary physical education instruction may aid in understanding the importance of training to a program's overall effectiveness. Eight teachers were selected in the study, four of whom were assigned to a four-hour knowledge training session while the other four underwent no knowledge training. Both groups were videotaped during instruction and later interviewed. It was found that knowledge acquired during training was associated with different patterns of skill observation. The knowledge concepts the teachers acquired during training formed the basis of many of their thoughts and this was reflected in the instructional lesson. In fact, the knowledge-trained teachers' classes demonstrated more than twice as many proper skill techniques (i.e.: opposite foot throwing) during the unit than the untrained teachers' classes. Even though a four-hour course could possibly be given to all untrained personnel, one important question arises: how much of an impact, if any, does teacher knowledge through specialist training have on an elementary physical education program?

### **Physical and Cognitive Domains**

The physical and cognitive benefits of students needed to be considered when evaluating the performance of both specialist and nonspecialist teachers in physical education. Evaluating students using only their physical abilities must be approached cautiously. Although a student might be able to jump higher or run faster than another student, key questions arise concerning the validity of the test and how much the test was

duplicating the physical education curriculum of either the specialist or nonspecialist teacher.

Hallstrom (1965) found that the degree of achievement in physical fitness and motor skill development of fourth grade students depended on the type of instruction they received. It was found that a specialist teacher, in comparison to a classroom instructor, was more effective in improving these attributes in children. In a similar study by Clarke (1971) it was concluded that students exposed to a specialist teacher, in comparison to a nonspecialist, showed significant differences in fitness levels. Boys and girls who were instructed in physical education by specialists demonstrated more strength and cardiovascular endurance than those instructed by regular classroom teachers.

Another study, conducted by Yeatts and Gordon (1968), concluded that students who had exposure to a physical education specialist during elementary school performed significantly higher on a standardized physical fitness test than students taught by a nonspecialist. It should be noted that the specialist group showed a fitness level higher than their own expectations. The students from the nonspecialist group, on the other hand, viewed themselves differently. Their fitness self-image was higher than their actual fitness score. Even though a difference in perceptions existed between the groups, it was suggested that the above results could be related to a re-test factor in the specialist program.

Van Wieren (1973) compared elementary physical education programs taught by classroom teachers with combination instructional programs where classroom teachers consulted with physical education specialists. The sample consisted of 382 fifth grade students. Results showed that children in a combination instructional program demonstrated significantly greater muscular strength and endurance, cardiovascular endurance, throwing, kicking, and running ability than comparable students in a



classroom teacher directed program. Pissanos and Temple (1990), on the other hand, examined classroom teachers' ability to improve their students' health-related physical fitness under the guidance of a physical education specialist. Findings showed that elementary school classroom teachers, with the appropriate curriculum and professional guidance, could improve the fitness levels of their students.

In contrast to these findings, Smith (1981) compared the physical and mental capabilities of fifth grade students under the instruction of specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers by testing their muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and mental achievement. Results showed that specialist teachers were not more influential in maintaining acceptable fitness levels among Grade 5 students, nor did their presence automatically result in a superior physical education program. The qualities of leadership and the program itself appear to be the major components.

Graham, Metzler & Webster (1991) conducted a comprehensive study comparing specialist and nonspecialist teacher effectiveness using two school districts at the primary, elementary, and intermediate levels. One school had acquired the services of a physical education specialist, while the other used classroom teachers in the instruction of physical education. Although the research focused on many different aspects, one of the aims was to test children by observing their motor skills. More specifically, the skills of kicking, throwing, catching, striking, and batting were analyzed. They concluded that although some differences existed, there were no significance differences in skill level between the two groups of children.

Metzler (1991, cited in Graham, Metzler, & Webster)) came to the conclusion that students who have physical education only twice a week for 30 minutes from specialists, will not show improvement on measures of health-related fitness over children who have only sporadic instruction from their classroom teachers. He was quick to add that

because of the limited amount of time allotted to most physical education programs, a significant improvement in fitness seems unlikely, regardless of the instructor.

Other studies comparing specialist and nonspecialist programs using a physical skills checklist were analyzed. Ritson (1979, cited in Graham, Metzler & Webster, 1991) led a team of investigators and compared several schools using physical education specialists and classroom teachers on a variety of variables including motor skills, physical fitness, and attitudes towards physical education. Ritson's team found that the only difference was that students taught by specialists were generally superior on motor skills performance, whereas in other areas the students demonstrated no significant differences. Workman (1965) had earlier reached a similar conclusion. On five motor skill tests (basketball dribble, basketball throw, standing long jump, shuttle run, and softball throw) sixth grade girls taught by specialists scored significantly better than those taught by classroom teachers. The same was true for sixth grade boys with the exception of the standing long jump.

In a similar study, Zimmerman (1959) compared students taught by specialists and nonspecialists and found that both boys and girls taught by specialists exceeded the performance of those taught by nonspecialists. According to Zimmerman, it seemed that boys instructed by specialists scored better on physical tests requiring leg strength, power, agility, and cardiovascular endurance, while girls seemed to develop greater agility, leg strength, and power.

Nestroy (1979) completed a study involving 86 second graders hoping to compare the fitness levels of those taught by physical education specialists with those taught by classroom teachers. He used a modified AAHPER youth fitness test involving sit-ups, flexed arm hang, softball throw for distance, standing broad jump, shuttle run, 40 yard dash, and the 400 yard run-walk. Nestroy found that specialist-taught girls were

statistically superior to nonspecialist-taught girls in all seven tests. Specialist-taught boys were superior on six of the seven test scores.

However, in a study by Ross (1960) on 240 fifth and sixth grade students, no significant difference was found between those taught by specialists and nonspecialists. His testing involved the short potato race, the 30-yard dash, and the standing long jump. With the exception of the latter event, there was no difference between the groups of students.

### **Planning Effectiveness**

In terms of planning a lesson in physical education, experienced teachers adopted a much different approach than their inexperienced colleagues. According to Taheri (1982, cited in Housner and Griffey, 1985), experienced teachers planned more comprehensively and efficiently than inexperienced teachers. The experienced group rarely perceived problems with the lesson, considered few alternatives, and made few changes during instruction. In contrast, inexperienced teachers frequently perceived their lesson as going poorly, often considered alternatives, and deviated from their plans. The latter two characteristics must be interpreted cautiously as they could be considered a good component of teaching effectiveness.

Housner and Griffey (1985) found similar results. They showed that both experienced and inexperienced teachers included in their lessons such components as speed, direction, partners, and obstacles. Both employed drill activities such as dribbling, tag, and relays. Differences were noted in the teachers' use of equipment. Experienced teachers used equipment in a flexible way and employed additional equipment such as hoops, ropes, and paper when developing instructional activities.

Inexperienced teachers, on the other hand, used only the basic equipment and taught the skill in a less flexible manner. Finally, experienced teachers focused mostly on student performance as their main objective and attempted to provide students with information that would facilitate motor skill acquisition. Inexperienced teachers focused on student interest and did not make as many instructional strategy decisions during their planning.

In accordance with Faucette and Patterson (1990), the above findings on experienced and inexperienced teachers appeared to be consistent with that of specialist and nonspecialist teachers. They found that nonspecialist physical education teachers did not teach using activity units, but instead selected different game activities that did not require or include skill progression. The nonspecialists often selected large-sized team games in which only a few children were active at any one time. One comment made by these teachers was that "they were running out of things to do." In schools with specialists it appeared that children were more active and activities were planned to promote maximum participation. It was found that specialists had significantly more effective teaching behaviors such as feedback/reward, questioning, and informing, and significantly less effective teaching behaviors such as monitoring/attending.

A study by Faucette, McKenzie, and Patterson (1990), indicated that game-type activities such as relays, kickball, and dodge ball were common components of the nonspecialist physical education lesson. They noted that children had few opportunities to engage in skill practice, gymnastics, and dance activities. In fact, many classroom teachers dropped physical education classes from the day's schedule altogether. Another common occurrence in physical education classes taught by nonspecialists was the opportunity for children to take part in "free play." This curricular choice actually accounted for approximately 50 % of the lesson in many cases.

Placek (1984) examined the concept of teacher planning specifically involving physical education specialists. It appeared that classes were basically well organized and students participated as directed by the teacher. Discipline problems were minimal. The study found that students participated in the activities offered by the specialist with the intention of improving certain skills, and that teacher feedback was a positive component of instruction. It was found, however, that physical education specialists spend brief amounts of time planning. According to Placek, specialists tended to focus on the present and thus did not concentrate on student's future goals. It appeared the immediate act of teaching became more of a concern for specialist teachers than the ultimate goal of student learning.

### **Verbal Ability**

According to Twa (1982), in a study concerning verbal and nonverbal behavior used by specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers in an elementary setting, no significant differences were found. Through classroom observation, these teaching behaviors were closely monitored and analyzed using a statistical analysis of variance test. Another team of researchers studied the verbal usage of both groups. Block and Beckett (1990) analyzed the language used by specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers using the simple task of describing a throwing skill. Results showed that specialists demonstrated more knowledge about the skill in that their protocols were longer. Their instruction was longer both in terms of words and sentences, and direct skill description was lengthy and more elaborate. Deeper probing revealed that specialists generated more movements and connections in their descriptions and seemed to have a richer vocabulary of body parts than the nonspecialists. Although it would

appear that specialist teachers have a broader range of vocabulary to draw from, researchers must be hesitant in formulating a hasty conclusion. A longer protocol doesn't always mean "better." It could indicate a boring explanation, or it may mean that the description may be too detailed for the students to understand fully.

Block and Beckett noted that the knowledge of the specialist was not necessarily more organized or elaborate. Despite the specialists demonstrating more knowledge of a skill, the findings enticed the researcher to ask several important questions about the teaching of physical education. Did longer protocols take more time away from actual on-task practice? Is in-depth analysis of a particular skill, especially at the elementary level, necessary to ensure that concepts are easily grasped? Would similar results be obtained in the teaching of other specific skills?

### **Conclusion**

Students want a physical education program to meet their physical, social and mental needs, and the quality of the program and the instruction will determine if these objectives are fulfilled. The review of literature reveals that in most cases specialists outperform nonspecialists in several components of teaching physical education. Although conflicting studies existed, very rarely did the literature indicate that nonspecialist physical education teachers outperformed specialist physical education teachers in aspects of instruction. It is apparent that most of the research was related to skill development and/or physical education programs and not specifically to actual teaching experiences.

To be more specific, research pertaining to teacher planning concluded that specialists, in their planning, concentrated on the use of activity units with an emphasis

on skill practice. The nonspecialists, on the other hand, tended to include new activities daily and relied heavily on games as a dominant teaching strategy. Although some of the literature dealt with experienced and inexperienced teachers, as opposed to specialists and nonspecialists, the results appeared similar for both sets of instructors. Some research indicated that a specialist's verbal ability may have contributed to his/her effectiveness, but this finding was not shared by all researchers.

Specialist physical educators appeared to have had a strong impact on the motor skill development of students. Numerous studies noted that specific skills were grasped better by students taught by a specialist than those who received instruction from a nonspecialist teacher. Although several researchers found no significant differences, these studies were few in number.

Although many nonspecialist teachers provided children with a good physical education program, some were not enthusiastic about teaching this specialist area. Their classroom work load as well as their lack of exposure to physical education may have been two key reasons for this view.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

A phenomenological methodology was chosen to analyze the experiences of both specialist and nonspecialist teachers instructing elementary physical education. A study of this sort involved in-depth probing as well as a comprehensive analysis of the research data. According to Merriam (1988) a descriptive case study is "usually inductive in nature and it is impossible to identify all the important variables ahead of time. Results are presented qualitatively, using words and pictures rather than numbers" (p. 7).

Qualitative research generally involves fewer people than quantitative research, but the method and approach of gathering information is more intense. In this study semi-structured interviews were used to investigate the perspective of each teacher, and an attempt was made to understand what was "happening" in their teaching situation(s). Sometimes, through these open-ended sessions, it was possible to delve into the participants' perspectives and go beneath the surface of curricular and instructional events. This "ability" is an important and valuable attribute of any qualitative research. According to Wilson (1977):

*human behavior often has more meaning than "observable facts." A researcher seeking to understand behavior must find ways to learn the manifest and latent meanings for the participants and must also understand the behavior from the objective outside perspective. (p.253)*

In this particular study, in-depth questioning allowed the researcher to collect the teacher descriptions of their teaching experiences of physical education. To assist in



analyzing their experiences, material was gathered through the use of tape recorded interviews. Although the recording of interview data had potential risks, such as malfunctioning equipment and the participants' fear of being recorded, it ensured that all information was preserved for analysis. The task of gathering information from each of the participants was a complex, but interesting endeavor.

In qualitative methodology, a long period of time is usually required for the interviewer to uncover the informant's experiences of a particular topic or situation. According to West (1980, cited in Lofland & Lofland, 1984) the "real bulk of participant observation is probably gathered through informal interviews, supplemented by observation" ( p.13). However, in this research, observation was not essential since the objective was to interview the participants and have them reveal their own teaching experiences. Through analysis, it was hoped that the data would provide a richer understanding of the experiences of teaching physical education.

### **Sample Selection**

A total of 16 teachers were selected to participate in the research. It was projected that this sample size would be adequate to allow an in-depth study of the research questions. A larger sample selection would have produced an exorbitantly large volume of data. A smaller sample size may not have captured a broad enough set of perceptions and experiences necessary to complete a thorough study.

Ensuring that the participants selected had acquired teaching experience from different areas of the province added to the breadth of the research. This was important since physical education may be stressed more in one area of the province than in another, and to limit the selection of participants to just one school district might not give a true reflection of teaching experiences throughout the Newfoundland school system.

Another consideration involved an equal distribution of male and female teachers in the study as their experiences may vary. One final factor concerned the years of teaching service of the participants. Although the age range varied, an emphasis on selecting physical education teachers with numerous years of teaching experience was preferred since their experiences would be broader.

All teachers interviewed were professionals in their teaching specialty and were required to have teaching experience in elementary physical education. The specialist teachers, as a prerequisite, were required to be responsible for the implementation of their own physical education program. The nonspecialist teachers, on the other hand, were required to be both teachers of physical education and teachers of other subject areas in the curriculum.

From the 16 teachers selected, eight were physical education specialists who had experience in the teaching of physical education at the elementary level. The teaching experiences ranged from 5 to 20 years of physical education instruction. The remaining eight participants were elementary classroom teachers who had experience in teaching the required elementary curriculum as well as responsibility for teaching their own physical education program. Their teaching experiences ranged from 9 to 27 years of instruction.

The teachers were selected for this research based on a number of factors. Some specialists and nonspecialists were professional acquaintances whom I had come into contact with during my own teaching career. Others were teachers who had played a positive influence on my childhood. The remainder were teachers I did not know but had met my research criteria. A total of 18 teachers were approached personally and asked to help with this research. Only two nonspecialist teachers declined to become a part of the research. Both of these appeared to be uncomfortable with the method of gathering data.

### **Collection and Analysis of Qualitative Data**

The bulk of the data used to analyze the experiences of specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers originated from individual interviewing sessions which lasted approximately two hours each. The interview, after being tape recorded, was transcribed for closer scrutiny. To draw comparisons between the physical education teaching experiences, a coding system was established which enabled the researcher to logically organize the information once it was gathered. According to Patton (1990) "The challenge is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals" (p.371).

The analysis process began with a search of the data for patterns which would lead to the formation of categories. To be more specific, the data were arranged in a logical and organized manner to allow easy access to those experiences which were deemed important and would contribute to the major focus of the research. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984) "the devising of categories was largely an intuitive process, but it was also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's personal training and background, and the constructs made explicit by the participants of the study" (p. 191).

### **Interviewing**

The study was designed to be a series of interactions between teacher and researcher where the latter was to play a minor role in terms of speaking input. During the interviewing it was important for the researcher to be organized and to allow teachers the freedom to express their feelings on selected topics concerning the teaching of physical

education. Good communication and sensitivity were other components necessary in ensuring a quality research. To be able to "reach within" an individual's thoughts in an attempt to try and probe his/her feelings was no simple task. Although standard questions were used with each subject to ensure that all relevant information was acquired, this type of research necessitated flexibility on the part of the researcher to ensure that participants had the freedom to talk about other issues and concerns relating to physical education. The researcher in a qualitative study must be interactive with the participant but not interventive; quantitative research is also non-interventive, but one contrasting feature is that most of the data is collected through an instrument which is usually completed in the absence of the researcher.

During the interviews it was crucial to take notes and highlight the important phrases and words. This was necessary to remain focused and to ensure that key statements were remembered. It also gave the researcher a chance to further probe and question. It was a concern before the interviewing began that some participants would be nervous considering the type of data collecting being used. However, all interviews were conducted without any obvious tension; instead a relaxing atmosphere seemed to exist between the interviewer and the interviewee during each session. Merriam (1988) stated that "most researchers find that after some initial wariness respondents tend to forget they are being taped."(p. 81)

A total of 16 interviews were conducted. Each interview started and finished with a very general question which allowed the teacher to gain confidence at the beginning, and provided them with an opportunity at the end to express their opinions on topics not addressed by the research questions. The researcher must be conscious that each interview is distinct and be prepared for other issues to surface. It is important that these "newer" issues then become a part of the research data if deemed to be worthwhile.

It was the role of this researcher to ensure that the interviewing was carried out in a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. With 11 interviews taking place in the homes of the participants it would appear that this objective was achieved. The remaining 5 interviews occurred in the work place of the participant at a time when students and most other colleagues were not in the building. In familiar surroundings it was felt that participants would open up more to their feelings, and as a result this would provide better quality research data.

Arranging the questions chronologically helped both researcher and teacher. It was important to have them reflect on their past school days and to continue to their present teaching situation. Since questions were open-ended, this encouraged the teachers to relate their experiences resulting in further probing by the researcher. Overall, the interviews were conducted without any problems.

### **Confidentiality**

During the interviewing stages, teachers were reminded that all responses would remain confidential. Through the use of a private interview, it was hoped that teachers would divulge information and relate experiences which they might otherwise find difficult to express in front of others. It was felt that this anonymity would lead to a more "open" and "relaxed" atmosphere between researcher and participant; both of which are important characteristics of qualitative research.

To ensure confidentiality, each teacher was informed that under no circumstances would their names be used or their specific school be mentioned. Pseudonyms for both would be used instead.

### **Research Bias and Researcher's Position**

All research is susceptible to close scrutiny. In the preliminary stages of any study, researchers attempt to construct a bias-free methodology but often find that it can be a difficult, if not impossible feat. After all the data has been collected and analyzed, one task is to make generalizations or conclusions. It is therefore important for researchers to open up and divulge any personal beliefs about their research before the data is gathered. In this particular research study comparing the experiences of specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers, I have made known to the reader my personal background. Being a physical education specialist and teacher would, for some readers, imply bias. However, stating my own beliefs should create a better understanding of my position on this topic.

Teaching physical education for the past eight years has been a rewarding and challenging experience for me. Through these experiences I have formulated a basic philosophy and perspective dealing with the subject area; therefore, what follows summarizes my own personal beliefs about the teaching of physical education.

After having taught in three different schools, it has become evident that the role of physical education in our educational system may not be fully appreciated or understood by educators, students, and parents. In addition to classroom instruction, most physical education teachers spend countless hours with students participating in extra-curricular programs. Hopefully, both learning environments exert a positive influence on each child and aids in the development of their confidence and self-concept. If such an atmosphere exists in a school setting, then realistically the educator is providing positive teaching experiences. It was my belief however, that nonspecialists would not provide as extensive an extra-curricular program as a specialist.

Physical educators will remember their positive and negative teaching experiences, as well as the selection of activities in their program. These activities help students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for an active and healthy lifestyle. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the students if the teacher of a physical education program had a background in such aspects as games, dances, fitness activities, and team sports. It was my belief that most nonspecialist physical education teachers would have more negative teaching experiences to share since they would probably have a smaller repertoire of activities to select from, and would be more likely to repeat the same games and activities with their classes.

As a physical education specialist, I have other concerns regarding the teaching of physical education by nonspecialist teachers. Based on my experience working with elementary teachers, nonspecialists generally dislike their role as a physical education teacher. Those nonspecialists who enjoy physical education would probably possess a good sports background or would associate physical education as a "break" from their heavy workload. It is my belief that some nonspecialists might even find it difficult to include physical education in the same breath as mathematics and language arts.

The teaching experiences of nonspecialist teachers, in my opinion, would reveal their frustration with long term planning in physical education. Resources might also be another issue where discrepancies might exist. Unless they have acquired a personal collection of resources through interest or professional development, or have an abundance of funds at their school to purchase resources ( highly unlikely!), then such materials might be difficult to attain. A specialist would probably have more resources than a nonspecialist, as many resources have been acquired through their university program.

Being a teacher who comes from a "traditional" mode clearly presents many challenges. Having a strong belief in traditional sports and skill development because of my teacher training, it is crucial that as a researcher I try to understand and evaluate new physical education trends. My own teacher training programs structured my thinking process towards an emphasis on organized games. Many other components such as body awareness and fitness were emphasized but it seemed to be all geared toward traditional sporting activities. Other programs, such as movement education, are now being stressed as important components of the elementary curriculum and should receive some attention. Therefore, I must attempt to minimize my teacher training background from influencing the collection and analysis of data, especially when analyzing programs where these newer concepts are a part of the program.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative approach to research, the main objective is to understand the experiences of each participant. According to Locke (1985) "the researcher enters the world of the participant(s) as it exists and obtains data without any deliberate intervention to alter the setting.... the researcher's goal is to describe and understand a social situation, event, role, group, or interaction (p. 35)." An additional role showing the complexity of a qualitative researcher is mentioned by Merriam (1988). This individual stated that in this type of research both researcher and participant:

*...engage in an interactive process throughout which the investigator is concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings... rigor in a qualitative case study derives from the researcher's presence, the nature of the*



*interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretations of perceptions, and the rich, thick description. (p. 120)*

Being a colleague of some of the teachers proved to be a positive motivator in completing the research. Besides the actual interviews, it was possible to talk informally to some of my teaching colleagues about their physical education experiences and as a result assisted me in the triangulation of data. This not only provided for a more in-depth and richer analysis but also aided in the sample selection process since quality discussions with these colleagues had previously taken place. Being friends with some of the physical education specialists might imply researcher bias, but it served as an advantage when selecting teachers for the research. In many cases, these specialists were leading promoters of physical education and active living - not only in their respective schools but in their communities.

### **Research Validation and Reliability**

Ratcliffe (1983) concluded that there is no one universal guarantor of validity, but that there are only "notions" of validity (p. 158). He seems to believe that what constitutes validity at one period of time in research does not necessarily imply validity at another time. As validity is determined by an implied set of human rules they will always be open and susceptible to question. Ratcliffe goes on to conclude that all approaches to inquiry are inherently qualitative in nature and as a result he offers several perspectives on assessing validity in all types of research. One technique deals with the notion that "data does not speak for itself; there is always an interpreter, or a translator... Validity, then, must be assessed in terms of interpreting the investigator's experiences, rather than in terms of reality itself (which can never be grasped)" (p. 148-49).

A physical education specialist conducting research in the area of physical education could, from some readers' perspective, imply bias. In this study, the researcher has strived to adopt the role of a competent researcher by using a consistent measuring instrument (interview guide) and has attempted to remain impartial throughout all data collecting and analysis. To ensure that information is accurately gathered it is important that each participant be given the opportunity to read the transcribed version of their interview. This will ensure that all data was correctly summarized and was not taken out of context. This triangulation of data will contribute greatly to the confidence of the research findings and will allow the interviewees to make changes, if necessary. These factors should add to the credibility of the research as well as to its validity.

Interviewing provides an opportunity to collect and analyze the participants' experiences, feelings, and opinions about a topic. According to Merriam (1988) the term reliability in research is based on "the assumption that there is a single reality which if studied repeatedly would give the same results" (p.170). In this study both specialist and nonspecialist teachers gave a detailed verbal description of their experiences in teaching physical education, and from this, valuable insight was obtained. Analyzing the data through the use of a consistent framework enabled the researcher to disclose specific findings regarding these teaching experiences. I feel the findings were reliable for the teachers and the schools they represented, and the results could be duplicated if similar or further research was conducted. Through this qualitative research, it is hoped that readers will interpret these findings and judge for themselves the implications for other similar or dissimilar contexts.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE PARTICIPANTS**

#### **Introduction**

Research, in most cases, is not possible without participants. Even though their time, effort, and contribution varies depending on the type of research study, it is logical to assume that without this cooperation and support, data collection might not be possible. However, the extent of participant involvement depends on the study itself. For instance, the participants may become subjects in a scientific study attempting to find similarities and differences in the target heart rate of world-class athletes or they may be subjects in a study attempting to find the percentage of people in the general public who chew gum. In either case, the participant may be asked to perform a physical test, to complete a written or verbal task such as a questionnaire, or to participate in another capacity deemed appropriate by the researcher. Whichever type of human research methodology is chosen, the importance of the participant is invaluable.

The following list is comprised of the nonspecialist and specialist physical education participants involved in this research.

#### **Nonspecialist Physical Education Teachers**

**Joyce-** An elementary classroom teacher for the past nine years on the Avalon Peninsula. During her own school days Joyce was an active member of many youth organizations and as a result found her relationships with peers and adults quite positive. Her warm and pleasant personality is certainly her strongest attribute. With a solid background in sports during her teenage years, her keen

interest in physical education and fitness continues. Joyce spends much of her leisure time in this area and as a result has found her two year teaching assignment in the area of elementary physical education quite interesting and enjoyable. Joyce, however, will admit that physical education is one area of the curriculum that is sometimes viewed negatively by others and even feels that not enough emphasis is placed upon it. Joyce firmly believes in the importance of remaining physically active.

**Kelly-** A Grade 5 classroom teacher for the past 10 years on the Avalon Peninsula. With a concerned and positive attitude Kelly continues to seek and provide a quality educational curriculum for her students. Taking initiative is her strongest characteristic, and her pleasant and helpful personality makes her a valuable attribute to her school. Kelly is a strong organizer and her voluntary involvement with various committees shows her genuine concern for progress. Attending a large school as a student has taught her that it is sometimes difficult to be noticed, and as a result, personal goals sometimes need to be changed. This was particularly evident in her childhood physical education program as some negative experiences affected her outlook and perspective on various activities. Three of her teaching years have included physical education as well as regular classroom duties. Although Kelly feels that physical education is important for students, she feels it is crucial that teachers be given some exposure to this area in their training program. This she feels is necessary in promoting their enthusiasm and interest.

**Frank-** An elementary classroom teacher for the past 19 years on the Burin Peninsula. With a background in all areas of the curriculum, Frank has also spent time as a principal in an elementary setting. He is very concerned with the quality of education and the effect of government cutbacks on schools. His concern for the smaller school and its program is clearly evident. During his career, Frank has spent five years teaching physical education along with regular classroom duties and has displayed a mixed reaction towards his physical education teaching assignments. A lack of training, an apparent lack of teaching objectives, and the lack of exposure to a childhood physical education program are some reasons for this negative feeling. Although Frank does enjoy teaching his own physical education program and considers it as an essential part of a child's development, he still feels quite uncomfortable teaching this subject. Frank credits the physical education coordinator as a positive motivator in the success of his program.

**John-** As one of the most experienced classroom teacher in this study, he has spent all of his 23-year career on the Burin Peninsula. With experience in both small and large schools, John has observed and taught all aspects of the elementary curriculum. Even though he had no exposure to physical education during his own school days, and contributes this to his lack of athletic skills during organized games, he feels that all aspects of the curriculum are essential - including physical education. During his four years teaching physical education at the elementary level he has found the experience to be quite positive and he sees the subject as one which strongly motivates the children. John pointed out that although he sometimes views the teaching of physical education as a "break"

from the regular routine, the real success of his program can be measured not by the fact that children are "doing gym," but by what they take with them as a result of the program. John feels it is important to stay abreast of current trends in physical education and feels that today's youth suffer from inactivity. His use of the term "active living" clearly shows his knowledge and interest in such trends.

**Patricia-** As an experienced elementary teacher for 7 years and primary teacher for 10 years, teaching has been a challenging and rewarding experience for Patricia. She is a very friendly and pleasant individual, and has enjoyed her teaching duties throughout the different regions of the province. When told that she was responsible for her own elementary physical education program, Patricia remembers a feeling of nervousness. She credits this feeling to a lack of exposure to such a program both during her own school days as well as during her professional training. In fact, it was only during her last year in high school that she remembers receiving some instruction in the area of physical education. Patricia is quick to point out that she is very proud of her accomplishments in teaching elementary physical education for three years, and felt she did her best in delivering the program. She feels that physical education is important in the school system and is instrumental in bringing out the positive qualities of fitness and competitiveness in today's youth. Patricia is concerned, however, with the low skill level obtained by the children and the impact it will have on their performance when they reach high school.

**Larry-** As an experienced classroom teacher in a small community on the south coast for the past 22 years of his 27 year career, teaching elementary grades

appeals to Larry. Teaching elementary physical education for approximately six years is not only an administrative decision but is also a choice Larry made himself. He enjoys teaching physical education since it offers a "break" from classroom duties, it has less planning responsibilities, and it seems to help develop a better rapport with students that carries over into the classroom setting. With very little exposure to a childhood physical education program, Larry does recall school-yard activities during recess and lunch-time periods. His main concern with teaching this subject area is determining how far he should push the children and the skill level he can reasonably expect the children to acquire. Larry is also concerned with the differences involved in the teaching of boys and girls in physical activity and the training all teachers receive in this area. Despite these questions, he feels physical education is important and believes that children should be exposed to a daily physical education program.

**Barbara-** An elementary classroom teacher for the past 15 years has enabled Barbara to appreciate all areas of the curriculum. Not only has she spent all of her teaching years in the classroom, she has also taught physical education for six years at the elementary level. Besides having a positive professional relationship with her students, Barbara is also a "staff motivator" whose cheerfulness causes her to be well-liked by her peers. She is actively involved in many outside organizations and approaches every task with enthusiasm and determination. Barbara's experiences in teaching her own physical education program are both positive and negative. She sees teaching physical education as an opportunity to see students in a different light rather than just academically, and her own childhood physical education experiences have shown her the benefits of such a

program. Barbara, however, is quick to point out that although the experience of teaching physical education is a good one, it does have its drawbacks. The safety factors involved in the teaching of physical education, and a feeling of inadequacy during instruction are examples of two such drawbacks.

**Anthony-** As an elementary classroom teacher for the past four years, Anthony has spent three of these years teaching physical education along with regular classroom duties. He enjoys teaching physical education, and feels that although it is important in a child's overall development, the school's priority has to be academics first. Although Anthony never really participated in a varsity activity during his own school days, he has fond memories of his physical education program and feels it assisted him in his preparation as a physical education instructor. He was particularly impressed with the different activities he was exposed to as a student. Anthony continually makes reference to his own physical education program and feels it may lack some skill development from time to time. Although he attempts to provide activity in all his gym classes, he feels that sometimes he is not really teaching. Anthony does, however, look forward to these sessions with his students.

### **Specialist Physical Education Teachers**

**Wayne-** As an experienced elementary physical education specialist for the past five years in Eastern Newfoundland, Wayne is an enthusiastic teacher eager to try out new teaching strategies. Describing himself as a "gym rat" during his own school days explains why he became a physical educator. Although he



recalls fond memories of his teachers and program, he still negatively remembers the unfair treatment that girls received in comparison to boys during physical education classes. He believes that males tended to dominate in almost all aspects. Wayne credits his time at university as one factor which stirred up his interest in physical education and feels that skill instruction was quite good. Presently he shares physical education with other classroom duties and enjoys this combination as the gym helps to relieve the stress of the classroom. Being an elite athlete, Wayne has taken great pride in his physical education program and with his equipment selection. He loves instructing young children and claims that the biggest thrill in teaching is to see a child smile.

**Adam-** Teaching physical education on both the Burin and Avalon Peninsula has been a rewarding experience for Adam. Although most of his 20 years as a physical education specialist have been in one school, his dedication and desire to bring out the best in his students has remained a consistent goal throughout his career. Adam has spent all of his time instructing physical education at both the elementary and primary levels and finds the gym exciting, but sometimes stressful. His extra-curricular program during his own high school days has largely contributed to Adam's belief that good student morale stems from such a program. As a result, he is very concerned with the skill level of his students and takes great pride in their accomplishments. Success is judged both by the high participation level and success of his students. Another highlight for Adam is the personal satisfaction he savors when former students comment on their enjoyment of his program. Adam would like to be relieved of all classroom duties and be strictly a physical education teacher. He feels such a move would

benefit both teacher and student. Sport and competition are popular topics of discussion with Adam and he strongly believes that they play an important part in a child's education.

**Betty-** As a physical education teacher for the past 19 years on the Avalon Peninsula, Betty believes that being an active individual rather than a "jock" in high school was the main reason for her decision to become a specialist. Overall, it was simply the excitement of sport. Betty remembers her own school days in a positive manner and has fond memories of the extra-curricular program. Her career has been devoted totally to elementary and primary physical education and she has never taught any other area of the curriculum. However, in the past four or five years Betty has come to appreciate classroom instruction and would regard it as a refreshing change. Betty is concerned about her program as it sometimes seems to put too much pressure on herself as a teacher. She would like to see more student involvement in her own school program, and even sometimes feels she lacks confidence and enthusiasm when teaching physical education. A desire to offer the best program to her students appears to be her major objective.

**Gloria-** Gloria is an experienced physical education teacher of seven years on the Burin Peninsula. All of this time has been spent working with elementary children and she feels an important part of her program involves intramural and extra-curricular activities. Gloria remembers being a part of a large school and sometimes not being able to take part in physical education classes because of an administrative decision asking students to choose physical education or science. During her junior high and Grade 10 physical education program, Gloria

recalls having good teachers and her success competing against boys during competition as two positive experiences. Her love for sport was heightened by her involvement in an elite sport program. Being a gifted athlete is certainly one reason why she chose a career as a specialist. Gloria enjoys both her gymnasium and classroom duties and feels that this teaching situation allows her the opportunity to see children from different perspectives. She sees physical education as an outlet for children to remain active, and as a result, can help improve their academic performance.

**Brett-** With 16 years of involvement in physical education from a teaching and administrative perspective, Brett has enjoyed both roles. He is very well respected as a specialist by his colleagues and is quick to offer them assistance and advice on physical education. Brett grew up in a small community and was forced to commute to a larger centre to attend high school. He has no fond memories of sport during his school days, and therefore credits his relatives who guided him in this direction: a move Brett has not regretted. From an elementary perspective Brett has taught 13 years and has attributed his success to a simple teaching philosophy - to provide lifelong activities which will motivate the student and give them the confidence to participate. In other words, teaching with the focus on the student. Brett credits his teacher training programs for part of his success and has nothing but respect and good memories of this program. His involvement in an elite sports program influenced his teaching philosophy and he found the experience invaluable. Brett has been a community leader and his involvement in sport has allowed him the opportunity to promote his discipline

**Steve-** As an physical education teacher for the past 16 years on the Burin Peninsula, Steve hoped that through studying physical education he might someday organize and teach such a program in his hometown. Although this did not materialize, Steve has become an advocate of physical education and continues to passionately promote the importance of an active lifestyle. Receiving his education in a small school, Steve's only exposure to physical education came during his high school days. He claims that an orientation to school sports started to gear up at that time and he vividly recalls participating in various cross-country running competitions. His enthusiasm for running has continued to this day. Steve is responsible for classroom duties and looks forward to this setting as it offers a rejuvenating break from the gym. Steve also sees himself as a facilitator and organizer of sport and feels intramurals are vital to any physical education program. His involvement in various organizations promoting intramurals clearly shows this commitment. Steve's mission is to give physical education a higher status in our school system.

**Bob-** Teaching as a specialist in Central Newfoundland for the past eight years has been a pleasant experience for Bob. Although it took several occupations before he realized that his true passion involved teaching physical education, both his colleagues and students have been the true benefactors of his decision. During his own school days, Bob only received an orientation to physical education during his junior high program and it was at that time that he realized the enjoyment and potential of physical education. He feels he was exposed to a good quality program and credits his physical education teachers as an inspiring force. Bob enjoys interacting in sport and helping to organize it; however, he has

a concern with the cutback in time allotted to physical education, especially at the elementary level, and views this quite negatively. Presently Bob has spent all eight years teaching elementary to high school physical education and feels that this program represents the "backbone" in promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. Bob's aim is to have students stay active and to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

**Fred-** Teaching on the Avalon Peninsula for the past 19 years has been an enjoyable experience for Fred. During his career, he has spent all of his time teaching physical education from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Fred describes himself as a staff member who is involved in many facets of the school operation. Whether it is fixing a computer, running the school newspaper, or setting up an intramural program, it is quite evident that he does contribute immensely. Fred feels that the most valuable resource he has in planning his physical education program is his physical education colleagues, and he feels that, although skill acquisition is important, physical educators need to consider an "active living" approach when designing their program. Fred also is concerned that mainstreaming special needs children into the regular gymnasium setting is unfair and unrealistic as most educators do not have the ability or knowledge to offer them the type of program they require.

### **Conclusion**

All participants shared memories, viewpoints, and concerns regarding the teaching of physical education at the elementary level. Through a very thorough description of their teaching experiences, it was possible to pinpoint the major topics of

discussion and present them as "themes" for analysis. This is the approach taken in the data analysis which follows.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

The men and women who participated in this research contributed an immense amount of information regarding their teaching experiences. This study cannot include a complete analysis of all data, nor can it become involved with every facet of the participant's interview; the volume of information would make such an analysis both impossible and impractical. To understand and evaluate the complexity of data collection, I have included a copy of one of the sixteen interviews (see Appendix B). A thorough critique of this interview should help the reader form a summary of the teaching experience, as well as note the additional relevant information that became apparent as the researcher and participant entered into different tangents of discussion. From this, an appreciation should evolve regarding the time consuming task of "sifting through" and "scrutinizing" the data.

#### **Scrutinizing the Data**

According to Merriam (1988) "analysis becomes more intensive once all the data are in, even though analysis has been an ongoing activity." (p. 123). Scrutinizing all interviews several times allowed for the opportunity to organize the information so that all data could be easily retrievable. As each interview was read and reread, I was able to more clearly interpret the data.

Since both specialist and nonspecialist participants in this research underwent a similar type of interview, each question was coded and the 16 responses to each question were then recorded. There were times, however, when such a process was not possible

because of the uniqueness of each interview. In these cases the responses were filed for later analysis. Throughout the analysis it was the intention of the study to scrutinize the data by focusing on only one group of participants at a time. The analysis deals with the nonspecialist physical education teachers first and then the specialist group.

### **Nonspecialist Physical Education Teachers**

#### **Experiences As Students**

##### **School Programs**

Several teachers who were exposed to large schools located in densely populated areas seemed to enjoy the various programs offered by their school. Both Joyce and Kelly were active members of a variety of organizations and spoke quite positively regarding their school programs. Joyce recalled that it was her sports program which stirred up most of her memories. She stated:

*At the elementary level we were lucky in that we had a lot of equipment. We had things like ropes, parallel bars, and trampolines which was unusual. As a result of that I got interested in gymnastics and activities like that. In terms of overall programs I remember Allied Youth, trips down the Burin Peninsula, and youth races. (Coles, 1994, a , p. 2).*

This feeling was also shared by Barbara and Anthony who enjoyed the sports program. Barbara's enjoyment was attributed to her involvement in different sporting teams. She commented "these occasions really stand out because it promoted more teamwork and this was certainly quite different from the teamwork we would have to



display in the classroom." (Coles, 1994, g , p. 2). This view was shared by Kelly who felt good about school programs such as intramurals and the Young Christian Leadership Organization, but recalled bitterly the disappointment of not being able to take part in an art program. Because of her high marks she was not allowed to participate and was instead forced into other areas of the curriculum.

On the other hand, John, Larry, Frank, and Patricia were all from small communities and received instruction in a multi-grade setting. Their schools seemed to dictate a rigid system with few extra-curricular activities and personal freedom. Larry pointed out:

*There was nothing that we had formally in the school just that we played a few games at recess and dinner time. I can remember the older students doing high jump... We would also practise running and things like that, but as far as regular physical education was concerned, well, we really didn't have much. However, I can remember once in Grade 3 standing by our seats and doing a few exercises. I think that was the only teacher that had us do this in class. There were other groups like Red Cross that we participated in but not organized activities or programs regarding physical activity. (Coles, 1994, f , p. 2).*

In some cases the participants left their hometowns and received high school education in larger communities because their own communities did not have a high school program. Although the transition may seem positive as both facilities and programs were now available, the change posed problems. Patricia remembered the experience of taking part in organized physical activities for the first time in Grade 11. She maintained "I was not very comfortable with it. I was very insecure and didn't really

know what to do." (Coles, 1994, e, p. 2). Frank also recalled negative experiences with his transition from his home town to another community. He stated:

*We didn't participate much because it seemed that they dominated things...we didn't really feel a part of the school during the first couple of years. We were reluctant to participate because I think most of us felt like outsiders. It was not until my last year that we really got involved in various committees.* (Coles, 1994, e, p. 1).

With regards to school programs, both specialist and nonspecialist teachers appeared to specifically focus most of their attention on the sports program.

#### School Physical Education Program

The exposure to a physical education program varied with each participant. Kelly, Anthony, and Joyce were the only nonspecialist teachers who recalled such a program during their elementary school days. Patricia, Frank, John, and Barbara were not introduced to physical education classes until high school, while Larry could not remember any organized sessions at all. Despite these differences, many participants expressed a positive view of their programs but, ironically, tended to focus many of their comments on the negative experiences.

It was obvious that many memories centered around the activities themselves. Most participants mentioned that their school physical education program involved a number of different sports such as basketball, badminton, volleyball, soccer, and gymnastics. They went on to say that it was these organized traditional games that dominated the class. In terms of instruction, many participants recalled some, but concluded that in most cases it was minimal during physical education classes. For instance:

Joyce: *I do remember being instructed but nothing special or out of the ordinary regarding gym classes... I do remember being instructed in new activities like archery and cross country skiing in which I learned about the different types of skis as well as about waxing.* (Coles, 1994, a , p. 2).

Frank: *I remember when we first entered the gym we had to do some warm-up exercises, a few laps around the gym, and you do a few push-ups, sit-ups and that then you got right into a game. At times there were some instruction but overall not very much.* (Coles, 1994, c , p. 2).

Barbara: *I can't really remember having the teacher take us through a routine during physical education class. I can remember doing laps and that was basically it. I don't remember stretching or anything like that, but I do remember doing laps. In fact I would say that although both instruction and game situations did exist during class, it was certainly the games that stand out more in my memories than the actual skills which were taught.* (Coles, 1994, g , p. 2).

Besides the instructional issue, several responses were noted which expressed disappointment in the physical education program. These included a lack of encouragement by teachers to try and promote sport and activity, the competitiveness and domination of the skilled athletes, and in one case, the excessive amount of time spent sitting down and listening as opposed to "doing" during class. Another disappointment concerned the unfair emphasis placed on specific activities by the physical education teacher. Regarding this point Kelly clearly recalled:

*A lot of what I remember about high school is the fact that our gym teacher really enjoyed gymnastics. I was certainly not agile or flexible. I simply abhorred gym at the time when we were doing gymnastics. I guess this activity was a personal preference for our teacher. (Coles, 1994, b , p. 2).*

The absence of an elementary program likewise appeared to have taken its toll on several participants. They felt that a lack of skill training in organized games gave them a feeling of being left out and inferior. John proclaimed "I remember not being as good at most of the games or sports... The students were miles ahead of me. As a result it was a real put-down for me." (Coles, 1994, d , p. 2). Patricia also recalled the embarrassment stemming from her lack of confidence with physical education. She stated:

*It probably was a couple of months before I felt comfortable about going to gym class and feeling that you were as good as the other students in your class. You did participate, but I do remember one volleyball game in particular. We had to go away to a school in a near-by community. I had been picked for the team, but still I was afraid to participate because of the fact that you felt like you weren't good enough to be on that particular team. Therefore, you felt that you might interfere with the children winning the game and didn't feel comfortable about going along. (Coles, 1994, e , p.3)... I also remember doing some sports and feeling very insecure. I didn't enjoy it. I was supposed to be part of a team, I can't remember what it was now, but I do remember that on graduation night the team members were all given a ribbon. I remember thinking I don't deserve this ribbon. (Coles, 1994, e , p. 2).*

Although the physical education program had its disappointments, many positive moments were noted. Besides the extra-curricular and intramural programs, the program

was regarded as a break from the rigors of the classroom and it gave the participants a chance to have fun with their friends. Anthony, without any resentment, remarked:

*Our extra-curricular program consisted mainly of working with some of our more talented athletes on things like basketball and volleyball. In elementary class, I remember playing dodge ball and trying as hard as I could to knock the glasses off one my opponents. I can also recall the fitness program where you could earn a bronze, silver, and gold. I can recall great difficulty making my way around the whole track. We did play some sports that were already familiar to us such as hockey and basketball. In fact, I can recall some pretty intense games of floor hockey; that was one of my favorite activities. We also learned about other sports such as golf as well. (Coles, 1994, h , p. 1-2).*

Larry, who didn't recall any organized physical education class, had memories of children running and taking part in fun competitions during recess and lunch-time. Despite the lack of equipment such as basketballs and soccer balls, students were active. Larry recalled "we basically brought the stuff ourselves like a bit of string and a pole for high jumping... we didn't have much in the way of extra-curricular. Come 3:30 p.m. you went home and that was it." (Coles, 1994, f p. 2-3). The organized games promoting cooperation and fitness were likewise considered positive. This is exemplified by Patricia as she specifically recalled her preference. She pointed out "if you went along to a gym class where you had relays or where you had just organized games rather than sports it was enjoyable. I do remember that part as being enjoyable, and I liked those classes." (Coles, 1994, e , p. 3).

## Teacher Training Programs

Different programs have different effects on people. The effectiveness of such a program can only be judged and evaluated by noting the experiences of those who have participated. In this study, it appeared that most nonspecialist teachers experienced teaching strategies which could be transferred to the physical education class. Although Frank, John, and Larry completed at least one course aimed specifically at teaching physical education during their teacher training, the others completed their program with no exposure to physical education whatsoever. Barbara and Anthony both pointed out that they had no opportunity to take a course aimed specifically at physical education. Barbara, however, stated "I do remember during language arts classes when you were taught how to integrate and so you brought in actual playing of games." (Coles, 1994, g , p. 2). This was confirmed by Kelly and Joyce:

*Kelly: Yes there were some courses but none dealing specifically with physical education. However, I think any methods courses that helps in teaching will certainly give you the basis of science, math, and physical education, in terms of the approach of how to do lesson plans, preparation activities, follow-up, evaluation. But in terms of specifically for physical education, unfortunately no. (Coles, 1994, b , p. 3).*

*Joyce: I can't think of any course which I completed which emphasized physical education. I'm primary trained and this training included different areas of the program, not physical education. At university the only courses where we did go outside was during some science courses, but other than that there was no physical activity. (Coles, 1994, a , p. 3).*

Even the teachers who completed a course felt it did not assist them in their teaching of physical education. John concluded that the course he completed was more geared toward getting them physically fit than it was to teaching: "So I really didn't gain a whole lot regarding the teaching of physical education. There was no real hands-on experience working with children in a physical education setting like a gym." (Coles, 1994, f, p. 3). Larry also insisted "It was too long ago and we didn't get the proper training. Anything I teach I picked up on my own... Whatever I came across I tried to teach, but I have not had any formal training." (Coles, 1994, b, p. 4). Larry commented that his greatest memory regarding his teacher training programs was being introduced to a teacher who gave him a love for the game of basketball. Frank and Patricia had the most exposure to the methods of teaching physical education:

*Frank: We had to do up a lesson plan and then teach a lesson. To be honest, I found I was frightened to a certain extent. Like I said I didn't have much experience or background in physical education. The other students in the class (my peers) were very cooperative and liked to help each other as much as possible. (Coles, 1994, c, p. 3).*

*Patricia: We were presented with the theory and were told how to go about teaching physical education. I can't remember being actually taken out into the gym and being shown how to set up certain things. There was no practical experience. It was kind of scary, but I didn't mind after I got into it myself. I became more comfortable with it, but when the physical education teacher arrived I was glad to give it up. (Coles, 1994, e, p. 4).*

Despite some negativity towards their teacher training programs, there were helpful and useful aspects which they felt gave them a better understanding of the physical

education program. These included the learning of games and organizing of activities which could be carried over from their own teaching environment. Teachers saw physical education as a great outlet for challenging students and encouraging them to give their best effort. Some participants even credited their training programs with helping them understand the characteristics and behavior patterns of children. This they felt was important in providing a good learning atmosphere. For instance, Kelly maintained "from my training standpoint, knowing that these kids have a short attention span and knowing the need of getting up and being physical and doing varied activities, then that helped in delivering my own teaching program." (Coles, 1994, b , p. 4).

### **Experiences as Teachers**

Like in any career, teachers continually reflect on their past experiences as they pursue the task of educating students. It was, therefore, quite interesting to talk to the nonspecialists about their teaching experiences. This included discussing their first year teaching, their teaching assignments, their perspective on physical education, their activity selection, their teaching strategies, their contributions as a teacher, and the relationships they formed.

### **First Year Teaching**

Many of the nonspecialists could not recall specific teaching experiences during their first year of teaching. The responses were very thorough regarding the physical surroundings such as their school and community, but attempting to capture those unique teaching experiences which either haunt or bring a smile to a teacher was difficult. In



some cases, teachers were able to recall memories which they have termed "unforgettable."

Throughout the discussions it became evident that first year teaching was "hard," "hectic," and "challenging." A feature shared by the nonspecialist teachers, especially those having the greatest teaching experience, was that they were admired by both children and community members and were well respected. Barbara proclaimed:

*It was the most positive teaching experience that I had because it was a small community and you were made a part of that community. You just were not only a teacher. Because I was new and was from another area, everything I did seemed to be very much appreciated. In a small community a teacher was always treated with respect. Today things are not like that. (Coles, 1994, g , p. 3).*

In regard to teaching physical education, it was clear that most teachers recalled some first year experiences. For instance, Frank recalled "we did have a ping pong table and we would put our seats back in the classroom to play games. We didn't have a gym. In the summer we would go outside and play soccer and other activities." (Coles, 1994, g , p. 3). Patricia remembered how she spent some of her time implementing her physical education program. She stated "We'd take the children outside in the winter time, and we'd play hockey on the ice and have some relay games on the playground. There was nothing organized like there is today where the children are taught particular skills." (Coles, 1994, g , p. 4).

Larry agreed, too, that it was the community which brought out the strongest recollections. He talked about the two-room school and his role as principal. He went on to state "the basic things we were used to in my home town like running water, toilets,

and electricity didn't exist. These things didn't exist at that time in 1963... Instead there were lamps and even the food was different." (Coles, 1994, *f*, p. 4). It was Kelly who courageously described her first year teaching as enlightening, embarrassing, and frustrating all in one thought. She recalled:

*I always remember the first day walking down the hallway as a substitute and being asked how long I'd been teaching. It was pretty amazing to the person to find out that this was my very first day. It was very exciting. Another thing I do remember is having to read from the Old Testament and mispronouncing names left, right, and center... I remember also later how some classes did not go too well. For instance, I remember starting basketball and having this wonderful lesson plan for shooting basketballs, but the nets were approximately about a foot and a half from the ceiling and of course there was no room for the shooting skills; therefore, everything had to be modified or changed right there during the lesson. So having the balls hit the ceiling and sending the lights clanging was definitely an experience I won't forget. How could students practise an arc? I think there were times of absolute chaos as well to be honest. (Coles, 1994, *b*, p. 4).*

### Teaching Assignments

A classroom teacher has many teaching and non-teaching responsibilities throughout the normal school day. Besides the regular classroom curriculum subjects, these teachers were given the additional responsibility of instructing physical education. In this study,

the nonspecialists reacted quite differently to this assignment and spoke quite openly about their reactions.

The most common response of teachers who enjoyed teaching classroom subjects along with physical education centered around the concept that physical education was a "break" from the regular routine for both teacher and student. Other responses focused on such phrases as students enjoyed it, it was easy to motivate them, it was a chance to get out of the classroom, a chance to get to know students from a different perspective, it broke up the day, there was less planning involved, no text books, no tests, and no real evaluation.

The negative reaction by nonspecialist teachers to this additional teaching responsibility was more descriptive and detailed. These responses included difficulty in coming up with activities, extensive planning, a lack of confidence and expertise, a lack of organizational ability, a lack of control, a lack of good teaching resources and facilities, and a genuine "fear" of just having to teach physical education. It was the safety factor involved in teaching a physical activity that seemed to concern most. The following comments reflect the contrasting viewpoints shared by two nonspecialist teachers:

*Larry: In a way, teaching physical education was less of a burden because with gym there's no text books to read through. There were no lesson plans, and also there were no tests to prepare for. In a sense it was a little easier. Teaching physical education was a break away from the class and there was no testing and evaluation as such, not formal. It is easy to report and I think it gives you an opportunity to get a little better along with the students when you teach them physical education. Actually, last year I asked the principal if he*

*was stuck for slots to put people that I would teach physical education for my own class and he put me there. (Coles, 1994, e, p. 1).*

*Patricia: I found it very difficult to teach physical education. I didn't grow up with a gym and there was very little that I knew. I learned because I had to. I read the teachers guide. I was nervous about teaching physical education. I was especially nervous about the safety aspect of it, especially in the multipurpose room. We had a low ceiling, and we didn't have a very big space. After awhile I became more comfortable with it and began to enjoy it more. I'm still happy that we now have a specialist physical education teacher. Overall I can't say I totally enjoyed it. I was much more relaxed in the classroom rather than up in the gym... Also going up to the gym was completely different, and you kind of felt that you didn't have as much control over the children as you do in your own classroom. It was difficult when you got back to classroom to get back on track again and to a different routine. I think I probably spent more time preparing for physical education because I didn't know a whole lot about it. On the days before I had gym I'd be running around to the other teacher finding out how I was supposed to do this or how I'm supposed to do that. I think it took away from my preparation for my other courses because of that. (Coles, 1994, e, p. 1).*

### **Perspective of Physical Education**

The attractiveness of teaching physical education also received mixed reviews. Most teachers insisted they liked teaching physical education and cited "enjoyment" and

"the challenge" as two motivators. Others were not at all motivated and were nervous at times. Even though there was a mixed reaction concerning the teacher's own role in the instruction of a physical education program, there appeared to be a strong and clear message regarding the role of physical education in the school system; that physical education was important and will continue to remain significant as society's values change. Despite this perspective, some teachers felt that physical education was not really promoted in their school. For instance, Anthony charged:

*In our school, gym is regarded as a break and a reward for good behavior in the classroom. It can be withheld at times if children do not behave appropriately in other classroom areas. ...The resources that I have, the skills that I have, and my knowledge of physical education allows me to be content with what I do even though I am quite aware that what I'm doing is not really teaching. It is sort of giving them a break from the academic aspect of the school. That is the attitude that generally prevails within the school. (Coles, 1994, h, p.3-4).*

Many teachers mentioned that fitness and a healthy lifestyle were crucial for all students and saw physical education as a basis for reaching these objectives. They contended that it can motivate and instill confidence in most students, especially those who are weak academically. In fact, most participants in this study ranked physical education equally important with the other subjects in the curriculum. Overall, it was strongly felt that more physical education classes were needed than are presently being offered. Joyce and Kelly both stated:

*Joyce: I would rank physical education high. I don't think there is enough emphasis put on physical education. It tends to be looked on by some teachers*

*as a break from the classroom, and some unfortunately tend to use it as a punishment for bad behavior by making them miss physical education classes. I would rank it high. Obviously your math and reading skills are very important, but physical education is also important. (Coles, 1994, a , p. 6-7).*

*Kelly: I think it's critical, and I think we have to get across the perception that it is a very important subject. We are raising a lot of children who are spending a lot of time in front of the television; children who are not spending a lot of time being creative and being physical. I think physical education is important not only two or three times per six day cycle, but I think its important to be a daily part of their lives. (Coles, 1994, b , p. 11).*

Several alleged that physical education was important but not as significant as some core subject areas. Frank stated:

*In comparison to other courses I don't think it is as important as math or language arts, but I do feel that it is necessary. Children look forward to it and it motivates students in other courses. (Coles, 1994, c , p.8).*

Many participants felt that children were becoming "couch potatoes" and were spending more time in front of the television. John's comments show the changing standards of students over the past 20 years or so concerning physical activity. He charged "Children don't walk anymore. When I grew up I had to walk a mile and a half to school every day. That was my physical activity. Now they don't walk anywhere." (Coles, 1994, d , p. 6). Even Anthony, who pointed out earlier his school's low priority on physical education, offered a similar viewpoint. He questioned:

*...what will happen to the child who leaves high school and no longer continues to exercise. Putting on weight and being unhealthy can occur quite quickly. I think there has to be more knowledge of things such as differences in aerobic and anaerobic activity, and how much of each is needed. What has struck me the most is the school system's lack of preparedness and insight into life after school for our students.. It should be a province wide issue. (Coles, 1994, h , p.5).*

### Activity Selection

The types of activities selected by nonspecialist teachers for their own physical education program mainly involved traditional sports. These included soccer, basketball, volleyball, badminton, floor hockey, and tee ball. All teachers claimed that each class followed a routine which consisted of a warm-up, some skill instruction, and then concluded with a game or activity. It was noted that most skills were geared towards the development of traditional sports, and that there were large discrepancies in the amount of skill instruction given to students. Some teachers commented that in some instances, planning and skill instruction were minimal.

These activities were taught under different conditions. Some teachers did not have a big facility or an abundance of equipment, and as a result, they had to make modifications to their classes. For example, Barbara recalled "I distinctly remember doing volleyball because we did it on our knees due to the low ceiling... a curriculum guide showed us the different skills that were involved. Not that we did them properly, but we did try our best." (Coles, 1994, g , p. 3). In some cases as well, the facility lent

itself to playing sports like soccer and floor hockey which were easy to plan and were very popular activities. Frank commented that the kids always looked forward to these activities. He pointed out "If they leaned towards floor hockey or handball, then you did it." (Coles, 1994, c, p. 4).

The reasons for selecting such activities were the result of several factors. First, the type of activity selected depended on the facility and equipment available. In many cases, it was the physical education coordinator who helped with the program. Some teachers also thanked outside organizations who offered assistance by providing teaching tips on various sporting activities. Other factors included the teachers' familiarity with the activities, the popularity of the activities for the students, the influence of other physical education teachers and their programs, and finally, the physical education curriculum guide itself. Larry and Anthony both commented:

*Larry: I knew about these sports and the rules. I didn't select them because I saw them in a course content or because the principal recommended it or because the school board said so. It was more or less up to me what I chose to do within reason as long as it wasn't dangerous; for example gymnastics, trampoline, etc. The school supported and didn't really curtail any activities that I did. (Coles, 1994, f, p. 4-5).*

*Anthony: Since I didn't have any training in physical education in my current classes I do a lot of things that I was exposed to in high school and throughout. For example, volleyball, basketball, floor hockey, etc. In fact my past school experiences affected me quite a bit. ...In reality I guess it's not a program that I have. It all depends on the mood of the children on a given day. If they felt*



*like playing certain sports and it hasn't been played recently then I would probably play it. (Coles, 1994, p.2).*

This feeling was shared by several other teachers who mentioned that they did not instruct activities like gymnastics. These teachers felt concerned about the safety factor and didn't feel very comfortable because of their lack of training.

### Teaching Strategies

During the instruction of a physical education class, it appeared that the nonspecialist teachers were fairly consistent regarding their methods of teaching. Most mentioned that it was either a "show and tell" approach whereby you demonstrated the skill and then asked the student to practice it, or it was "exploratory" where you gave the student a piece of equipment and let them explore it. Several participants mentioned the use of centres or stations in their physical education classes. Only one teacher felt that he had no real teaching strategy and that this was due to a lack of clear physical education objectives.

In addition to their specific teaching strategies, teachers gave several important teaching points which they believed contributed to an effective physical education class. One involved keeping instruction to a minimum as students were eager to get started. Joyce went a step further and stated:

*Little time was used explaining, but every now and then you would have to stop the class and point some things out. Sometimes they were given the opportunity to try things out, and the instruction was given later. For instance in basketball before instruction was given students were encouraged to get a*

*basketball and do their own thing and then later in the lesson to stop them and do a set shot or something. (Coles, 1994, a , p. 4).*

These teaching strategies were embraced and used mainly as a result of everyday classroom teaching experiences . It was felt by many nonspecialists that their teacher training programs were influential in terms of providing the methodology required, but it did not play a major importance in the adoption of these strategies for physical education specifically. One nonspecialist felt that because of his lack of training, he would go to the physical education teacher and ask for some good ideas and techniques to improve or brighten up his class.

#### Teacher Contributions and Relationships

The teachers in this study felt that they contributed in some way toward providing a degree of exposure to physical activity outside of the regular classroom. Several declared that they organized after school programs for students or an intramural lunch-time activity. Other events such as sports day, Education Week, and Fit Week were also mentioned. Other teachers recalled these additional programs but didn't seem too positive about them. For instance, in response to the contribution and effort made by his school regarding extra-curricular, John charged:

*As far as physical education is concerned, I don't think we do enough. I know our school has some organized days but I don't think physical education is stressed. I know we do have days like sneaker day which promotes Fit Week but outside of that, that's it. (Coles, 1994, d , p. 4).*

This feeling was shared by another nonspecialist who felt that the only extra program that was set up was during Education Week, when some sort of tournament was organized. Frank responded in an frustrated tone as he stated "We would have dinner time sports, and sometimes we would have students stay back and play some ping pong or badminton. This doesn't exist now because teachers are under so much pressure that they just don't have the time." (Coles, 1994, c , p. 5). It was Kelly who emphasized the importance of such activities and felt it needed a group effort if such programs and activities were to succeed. She credited specific parties in her school as a motivating force:

*I think presently now having a physical education teacher adds to the entire feeling and overall motivation of the school and being involved in physical education. I think having a good committee makes a difference because it is really important to any physical education program outside the actual in-class instruction. I've been really excited about a few of the things that have been happening in terms of Olympic days, field trips that include really good instruction such as physical education and orienteering objectives, and many other things that have taken place in our school recently. (Coles, 1994, b , p. 7).*

With regard to staff, students, and the community, the nonspecialist teachers in this study spoke favorably of all three. Each felt that their colleagues were very supportive, cooperative, and professional. Regarding her own school, Kelly contended, "any time you go past here you will find cars here after what are thought to be normal working hours for any work or office." (Coles, 1994, b , p. 7). As far as the students are concerned it was felt that although problems were noted, generally there was a good

relationship between most teachers and students. The relationship with parents was significantly positive as well. Frank raised the following point:

*In my first school there were discipline problems, and I found the stronger students dominated the class. Thus the weaker students who were not well coordinated more or less shy off into the corner and didn't really want to participate. At this school, however, with the smaller numbers, and help from a specialist everybody was made to believe that they could do it and it seemed everyone had a good time. They particularly enjoyed tournaments. We also have one handicapped student here who is restricted to a wheel chair and she would actively take part in class and was made to feel a part of the class. So I think the other students have gained a richer perspective of handicapped students from physical education, and they have come to realize that everyone is treated equal despite their handicap. (Coles, 1994, c, p. 6).*

However, Kelly and Anthony felt that community support had changed.

*Kelly: When I started teaching there was a different level of respect, and maybe as a new teacher I found that different as well. I have found a difference in parents attitudes as well as the kids in the last 10 years. There may not be quite the same respect. It's much more of a challenge than it was before. I think that in order to take care of a lot of those discipline problems, classroom teachers are being asked to take care of them ourselves. That isn't always an easy thing to do. I think we have to compete with video games and other factors that were not the same 10 years ago as they are now. (Coles, 1994, b, p. 7).*

*Anthony: Parents in the community are generally cooperative, although it seems that education is not the highest of priorities ...You just go on and do your job and there's no complaints. It's laissez-faire! The community overall is easy to get along with but again education is not valued. For instance, our school is a candidate for a new building and when we held a meeting for parents in an attempt to put pressure on school boards - only one or two parents came along. This, to me, best exemplifies this situation. (Coles, 1994, h , p. 3).*

### **Other Program Concerns**

As a part of this research it was important to allow all teachers the opportunity to comment on other aspects of their program. The topics of student evaluation, resources, and teacher assistance received some focus. The obstacles and concerns of program implementation in physical education was another topic of discussion.

### **Student Evaluation**

With regards to student evaluation there were clearly inconsistent guidelines for teachers to follow. Differences were not only evident in terms of the type of reporting, which depended on the school board's evaluation policy, but there were noticeable discrepancies in what content to evaluate in physical education. Some teachers felt that evaluation should be subjective with an emphasis on athletic ability, while others felt that attitude and participation were equally important. Teachers in some schools gave letter grades, while in other schools they just gave a participation comment. These differences

would certainly explain why the whole process of completing evaluation on students ranged from "easy" and "not a concern" to "difficult" and "very uncomfortable."

In some cases, it would appear that several schools have made changes to their evaluation policy regarding physical education. Several teachers mentioned that they have even abolished the letter grade at the elementary level because they found it difficult to evaluate the skills. Barbara alluded to the unique situation in her school where there was no physical education specialist. She cited "The other schools in the area did continue with the letter grade, but we did not since we didn't have a regular physical education program. So there was kind of an exception made for us." (Coles, 1994, g , p. 4). Several teachers felt that a checklist for parents and children would seem the most appropriate evaluation device.

## Resources

Resources were seen as important for these teachers in the implementation of their physical education program. Although most pointed out that there were not a whole lot of quality resources, the program guide put out by the Department of Education served a useful purpose. Other resources unique to individual schools were sometimes criticized as they just contained games and did not present any real skill progression strategies. While several teachers utilized outside organizations and sought their aid in helping with the skill instruction of specific sports, others utilized staff members who had previously taught physical education. Most teachers tended to accumulate their own resources and shared them with others. Frank felt the greatest resource was the physical education coordinator. He maintained:

*...when I came here, being a smaller school the coordinator in this area was very agreeable and helpful and he spent a lot of time with us. He provided workshops and helped teachers, and he wrote up lesson plans and came up with curriculum material that you would need. A few years ago some teachers had to teach physical education for the first time and were very reluctant to do so. But he made them feel comfortable and drew up lesson plans with the objectives and goals for them. (Coles, 1994, c, p. 7).*

Not having enough resources affected these teachers in many ways. It seemed to put more responsibility on the teacher and very often limited them in what they could do. It was very time consuming to plan an activity and not have the resources to consult. Not all teachers shared this view. John was pleased with the resources available to him. He pointed out "Obviously we could always have more, but generally we have the basics needed to teach a program especially at the level which I am currently teaching." (Coles, 1994, d, p. 6). Larry, on the other hand, saw a weakness in his program resulting from a lack of resources. He commented:

*I don't use any text book. That's probably a weakness I see in my own program in that I really don't follow any set structure. No doubt they are there and are laid down by the Department of Education, but I haven't had any formal training from the school board or the Department of Education nor have I had any manuals or instructional guides to follow. I have more or less been left to develop my own program which is not really a good idea. (Coles, 1994, f, p. 6).*

Some teachers felt that the physical education coordinator and principal were two key people to contact when resources were needed. These individuals were seen as good support structures, but they too were limited in what they could do.

### Obstacles and Concerns of Program Implementation

Every teacher spoke on the obstacles regarding their own physical education program. Although there were some differences unique to each setting, there were many common responses. One obstacle concerned the equipment. This included the need for more quality equipment, the need to ensure that all equipment could be found during class-time as different teachers were using it, and the need to understand the intended purpose of each piece of equipment. Another obstacle was the obvious lack of expertise in the area of physical education. These teachers felt more in-service was required and more planning time was needed to help implement a good program. A lack of resources was seen by some teachers as an obstacle as well. One final problem concerned the facility itself. Several teachers alluded to the space and how it did not lend itself for specific activities. The class lesson, as a result, became frustrating for both teacher and student. Joyce and Anthony clearly expressed this concern:

*Joyce: Students at Grade 6 were very frustrated because we did not have a gymnasium. The biggest problem by the time they got to Grade 6 was a lack of space. Their bodies were too big for the room we were in. The second was the lack of equipment we had to work with. The support structure to assist was not really that great. We did have a physical education coordinator and there were some physical education in-services put on, but we were very limited.*



*We did have some people from Newfoundland Sport try to teach us some volleyball, but our facility restricted us. (Coles, 1994, a , p.5).*

*Anthony: The net for basketball, right now it's a portable net and it's in quite bad shape. The backboard is severely damaged, it's on a slant, it's stuck in a position where its higher than the other net, and it's very old. It can't be repaired to a satisfactory level. It hard to justify raising the money necessary to replace a lot of the equipment like this net because the funds are so restricted for your basic academic materials which in a school usually do take a higher priority. There simply are no funds for materials like gymnastic equipment, or anything that is out of the mainstream. So really it is quite restricted. (Coles, 1994, h , p.4).*

Teachers expressed their own concerns as well. It appeared the major fear centered around the concept of "safety." For teachers this included the danger of students becoming injured in a restricted space or activity, the concern of teaching something in which one has no expertise (such as gymnastics and aerobics), and the concern that they (teachers) would be unable to respond properly to an injury because of a lack of first aid training. Another concern by one teacher focused on the skill level of students once they left the school. This teacher worried that the children might not be as prepared as other children. John and Kelly reflect these concerns:

*John: I'm always concerned about safety. I think that's the biggest concern that I have. Not that I don't think I can do the job, but it bothers me that someone could get hurt and I would not know what to do about it. I've done a St. John's Ambulance First Aid Course, but that was three or four years ago and I haven't upgraded since. We have asked for it. Not only should physical*

*education teachers be trained in first aid, but all teachers who are constantly in contact with children should be trained as well. (Coles, 1994, d , p.5).*

*Kelly: I was teaching some aerobics to the children, but I'm not a qualified instructor and I didn't feel 100% comfortable with teaching it. We talked about heart rates and things like that, but I really didn't feel that the kids were able to determine their own heart rates so it was something we sort of had to play by ear. Another major concern with us was the teaching of gymnastics. Most of the teachers here were very hesitant to get involved in a gymnastics program without any knowledge about the safety and safety precautions that had to be taken. We were constantly told that it was a subject that lent itself to the area that we had, which was certainly true, but we had no expertise in that subject whatsoever. (Coles, 1994, b , p.8).*

### **Personal Attributes and Observations**

All teachers like to evaluate their programs in an attempt to make constructive changes if such changes are deemed necessary. Often included in this assessment is a personal reflection of one's own teaching attributes. Teaching physical education, as a nonspecialist teacher, could certainly encourage on-going evaluation and encourage teachers to form personal observations. Such observations could include their effectiveness as a physical education teacher, an assessment of their own teaching qualities, and a reflection of their physical education teaching experiences.

## Teacher Qualities and Effectiveness

Qualities such as good organizational skills, patience, and understanding were common positive responses given by the nonspecialists in describing their characters as a physical education teacher. Although other terms, such as enthusiasm, adventuresome, interesting, enjoyment, and a belief in fitness, were additional adjectives and phrases accompanying these positive qualities, overall there was still a definite "doubting" by most of these nonspecialists regarding their ability to be effective physical education teachers. Evaluating themselves as physical education teachers resulted in most teachers reacting quite negatively. Teacher comments ranged from a hesitant nod of approval, to an acceptance of a lack of teaching competency, to even some animosity at being given this responsibility. Those who appeared comfortable with this role still seemed to lack authority and confidence as they used such phrases as "Okay I guess," and "I think I did an adequate job" in describing their performance. Other teachers were a little more detailed in their responses.

*Joyce: I think I had some redeeming qualities as a physical education teacher, but I think some areas were neglected because I didn't have formal training in physical education. I think the children were sold out because they didn't have a physical education teacher. (Coles, 1994, a, p. 5).*

*Frank: Back then? Not too good. With not having the training and based on what I've seen now by watching our own physical education specialist. With his different teaching techniques in sports, I just never had it!... One thing I do feel about teachers doing instruction is that "do they really know the skills that are required?" Even though they can seek help from others and they can learn what drills to give children in various activities, still the teachers*

*including myself do not seem to really understand the necessary skills and the reason for teaching them. Therefore, as these children progress to high school, their skill development may not be on par with others which could result in frustration and the "giving up" of an activity because of an inferior feeling. It should be noted too that when a specialist taught at our school, the children participated in numerous outside sporting activities. But now since his departure, we participate in very little. Teacher involvement in other curriculum related matters is also a reason for this decline. They simply don't have the time. (Coles, 1994, c , p. 5).*

*Kelly: I think to be that concentrated and that focused with the kids in that kind of situation is very difficult. I certainly didn't feel that I had the background and the knowledge to fulfill the objectives of the program in the way that I would like. The physical barriers of the facility that we were in were a problem. The program at the time did not do a whole lot for me - I didn't enjoy it. (Coles, 1994, b , p. 6).*

### Teacher Reflections

Although most rated their effectiveness as a physical education teacher as low, almost all nonspecialist teachers in this study still felt that the whole experience was an enjoyable one. They sensed they did an adequate job considering their background and expertise. Many were quick to point out that they still had concerns about the whole situation.

When asked what they would change, if they could, regarding their teaching of physical education, many indicated that they would seek more help, especially in utilizing resource people. One teacher even acknowledged that he concentrated too much on games during class and felt there was a need to follow the objectives and guidelines of the program more precisely. Another teacher contended that he would do the opposite and try to incorporate more fun into the program rather than an emphasis on skill teaching. Overall there was a mixed response when asked if they would like to resume or continue their physical education teaching duties. Three teachers were not too eager and gave a clear and definite "no" while three others stated that they would not mind at all. The remaining two nonspecialist teachers gave an indecisive response.

### **Specialist Physical Education Teachers**

#### **Experiences As Students**

##### **School Programs**

It really was not a surprise to learn that it was the sports program which became the focus of all the school programs for most of the physical education specialists. They had many pleasant memories of the extra-curricular sporting activities in the schools they attended. Ironically there was no mention of any participation in other school organizations or groups. Instead, it was their involvement in an elite sports competition, an intramural activity, or even an after school sports program which dominated their experiences. Wayne recalled:

*Unfortunately our school program wasn't very good. We basically had just the regular sports like volleyball, soccer, basketball, and badminton. We didn't*

*have any new things. All we did was play games. It was a games oriented session with very little emphasis on skill, and unfortunately all the guys dominated everything. There was some choir but most was centered on the sports. (Coles, 1994, i , p. 1).*

Further probing revealed that although other school programs such as choir and music existed in some schools, many of these teachers could not recollect specific memories of such programs until they reached high school. In fact, several mentioned that such programs were nonexistent in their schools except for those which they planned themselves. Adam stated "My first experience I had with a gymnasium or any kind of library program - never did have a music program- was from Grade 9 to Grade 11 approximately one class a week." (Coles, 1994, j , p. 2). Steve also recalled a lack of organization regarding such programs:

*Back when I was a student I didn't know what curriculum and intramural, or extra-curricular meant. There were activities but certainly not the same as, nor the same weight as, the activities which we have today. Generally it was done only if a particular teacher had an interest in a specific activity. Today, however, many organizations have been set and are attempting to promote specific activities (Athletic Federation, CIRA, etc.). In other words, there is somebody in charge of such a promotion. This certainly did not exist to the same degree in my school days. (Coles, 1994, n , p. 2).*

When asked to describe their overall school experiences, all of the teachers used phrases and words like "fond memories" , "positive" , and "excellent" in their descriptions. As they elaborated most seemed to associate this question with their physical education classes and sporting programs only. Although it was not the intention

to solely focus on one specific program, many of the responses followed a pattern similar to that expressed by Bob:

*Physical education, itself, I found to be quite positive because it was a break from the regular routine of just sitting around and working, and you got a chance to be active. I loved physical education and thrived on being active through sports. I had respect for the physical education teacher I did have, and it was just a nice place to be. You didn't have to worry about studying or doing a written test. It was doing your best and enjoying it. I can't think of anything negative. I think the physical education program I had in Grade 9 was interesting, quite structured, and we had a really good teacher. (Coles, 1994, o, p. 2).*

The only negative features expressed regarding the school programs once again centered on sport. This concerned an apparent lack of facilities and trained teachers. One specialist felt that his school offered some good sporting programs but because of busing and other obstacles, he was unable and hesitant to participate. Brett remarked:

*I don't think about the sports as my key memories because I was from a different community, and we sort of had to go up through the ranks before we could get in on a lot of things. I guess it was due to a lot of insecurity. They had good programs. I wasn't involved in them because of the busing after school. (Coles, 1994, m, p. 2).*

### School Physical Education Program

The exposure to a physical education program differed among each of the specialist teachers. Betty, Wayne, and Gloria were exposed to a physical education program commencing at the elementary level and progressing straight through until their high school graduation. Adam, Fred, and Bob took part in a physical education program starting in junior high, while Brett remembered participating in a physical education program only during his final year of high school. Steve recalled no specific physical education sessions at all, and chuckled, "lunch time there was usually a game of pitch or even an organized fight in the back of the school. There was no general organized activity." (Coles, 1994, n, p. 2).

Most of the experiences focused on sporting teams in traditional sports such as basketball, volleyball, soccer, badminton and gymnastics. The most common descriptor used by these teachers regarding their school physical education program was that it was positive. Brett stated "We had a physical education teacher from the States. I must say he came in, and we all had to wear uniforms, jock strap, sneakers, and white socks. To me I always remembered that - that was nice." (Coles, 1994, m, p. 2). This positive feeling was also shared by Gloria who enjoyed the competitive nature of her program. She proclaimed "In gym class I guess I was probably the best girl athlete in class, and in a lot of cases I could beat about 50-60% of the boys in any given sport. So I enjoyed it." (Coles, 1994, l, p. 2).

Although these teachers focused on the good aspects of their physical education programs, there were still negative experiences associated to physical education. Some of these included the necessity of having to drop a high school physical education course in order to obtain a science credit, the lack of exposure given by the instructor to a favorite activity like gymnastics, and the lack of equipment, thus leading to long and



boring line-ups during class activities. It was Bob who focused in on this latter point. He charged "In terms of equipment, we had very little. In gymnastics we had a box, a couple of mats, and a springboard. In volleyball we had the old rubber balls that would almost make everyone cry when we passed them. (Coles, 1994, g , p. 2).

Steve alluded to the obvious unfair treatment of females during his discussion of the cross country running program. He stated "I guess only males participated, but come to mention it the people who seemed to organize these races were predominately males as well. I guess that's why there was no female program at that time." (Coles, 1994, n , p. 2). It was Gloria who felt that not everyone benefited from the program. She declared "My self-esteem was great. For the girls who weren't so good, they just sort of hung by the side." (Coles, 1994, l , p. 2). Wayne's comments reflected this perception too. He stated "Mostly the guys dominated, and the girls used to be scared to death." (Coles, 1994, i , p. 1).

A common remark made by most specialists centered around the instructional aspect of their physical education program. Fred stated that his instructor focused heavily on skill and fitness. His first experience with a physical education class as a student was a bit unique: "I suppose the thing that stands out was the first class. The teacher made us all sit down and take off our shoes and socks and checked us for athletes foot. That was certainly a bit of a shocker." (Coles, 1994, p , p.2).

Although skill acquisition appeared to be the major focus of most physical educators, the lack of instruction during class also became a popular topic of discussion. This viewpoint was supported by both Adam and Betty.

*Adam: Basically you played the game. I was never taught the proper skills. Basically it was what you picked up on your own. I played on a basketball team in Grade 11 but I never learned to do a lay-up shot properly off the left*

*foot until I entered the university and did physical education. (Coles, 1994, j , p. 1).*

*Betty: Yes, and I remember standing and doing calisthenics such as stretching, jumping jacks, and that sort of thing. In high school I can mostly remember the sports like volleyball. I don't really remember much instruction. It seems like I can remember more of playing the games. (Coles, 1994, k , p. 2).*

Brett and Steve, both with a tone of resentment, also recalled this lack of instruction. In the following passages they speak of their physical education instructors and how instruction, or lack of it, adversely affected them and their confidence levels.

*Brett: I don't know if he did (utilized) for me what he could have, but I was a person who gave a fairly good effort. You only had to see me once or twice to know that I could probably do it, but I had to be taught. This particular teacher, as like a lot of physical education teachers at that time, just overlooked me because I didn't have the skill. He didn't look at me, the person. Skill is something that needs to be developed. Also they played soccer. I played soccer, but I wasn't a soccer player. I sat on the bench. I think that was probably a negative experience too, sitting on the bench. It was nerve wrecking because you had to sit there, sit there, sit there. That was a terrible experience. (Coles, 1994, m , p. 2).*

*Steve: We had something called P.T. days called physical training where another teacher took us out and took us out through a series of exercises and had us play a little bit of ball. There was very little instructional programming*

*... That physical training was looked upon as a break from the classroom. It was not conducted for the sake of having some educational value, but it was looked upon as only a break from the classroom academia. Many times it was used as a means of punishment. If you happened not to do your homework, or if you happened to be a discipline problem on a given day, then teachers would deny you the right to go out there and have that physical training. That always stayed with me and I'm very vigilant of that and when I'm teaching in my own school it really bothers me to see another teacher attempting to keep a child from participating in physical education, and I refuse to let it happen. (Coles, 1994, n , p. 3).*

#### Teacher Training Programs

Almost all of the specialist teachers spoke quite positively of the teacher training programs they experienced at university. Many felt they had acquired the skills and knowledge necessary in delivering a good physical education program to their own students. Adam contended "In university I learned the skills right, and in learning the skills right I can now teach children correctly and analyze or break up their skills." (Coles, 1994, j , p. 5). Many other teachers gave a similar response. It was obvious from the data that physical education, at that time, was in a sports-oriented mode. Many teachers felt that society practically dictated that skill acquisition dominate the training programs and, therefore, the university seemed to be just fulfilling this demand. In some cases, it was indicated that the program concentrated too much on traditional sports. Wayne stated:

*I was taught to teach in the old traditional way, and that has stuck with me. Traditional sports has always been stressed in the curriculum and always will be. I also go with the flow now in learning new things and I'm trying to incorporate other things as well. I think I'm a traditionalist that's trying to change. (Coles, 1994, i, p. 6).*

In terms of teaching strategies, it was agreed that the training programs played an important role. Several teachers felt that it was both the "command" and "exploratory" approach which dominated the program. They expressed concern with recent changes in the philosophy of the physical education teacher training programs. Most of these teachers commented that although they were attempting to make changes, the adoption of a new teaching style and program would be difficult. Betty and Steve both appeared to be making changes in their school program but admitted difficulty with this transition because of the influence of their teacher training programs.

*Betty: I'm getting back to teaching things in units. This is basketball, and this is track and field. I feel though I shouldn't be doing this since it should all be integrated. At least that's what I think new programs like movement education is saying. However, it's not easy getting away from this unit teaching, and I find it very difficult since I did not have any training in these new approaches. (Coles, 1994, k, p. 5).*

*Steve: I used the same sports in my program as I had been exposed to at M.U.N. Right now, even at this present day, even after having a year to actually look at what I am doing, I'm still somewhat operating at this traditional mode of teaching for the seasons and for the sports. However, I'm trying to move away from it, and that would require a fair amount of thought.*

(Coles, 1994, n , p. 6)... *I find you actually imitate the people who teach you. You can talk for days about the various instructional strategies to use in the classroom, but its what you see done in the gymnasium. We, as students in physical education, were basically taught the command style and as a result we actually duplicate when we teach in our own system. Only when we question or reflect on our own ways of teaching and trying to make things more interesting do we actually try to seek out other ways. That's what I'm going through right now.* (Coles, 1994, n , p. 7).

There were other positive aspects revealed by the specialist teachers regarding their training programs. Besides the acquisition of skill and knowledge, the programs offered many courses which were both interesting and practical. It was felt that the experiences of the programs provided opportunities to learn the fundamentals of recreation and competition through intramural and elite programs. Probably the greatest asset mentioned by the teachers concerned the camaraderie which developed among the students themselves and between the students and professors. It was "close-knit." Both Adam and Bob supported this viewpoint.

*Adam: One bad experience I had in volleyball class was I hurt my knee. My exams were postponed, and I found it difficult getting back and forth from my boarding house. I lived two or three miles away, and even using buses was a problem. One pleasant memory which made me feel welcome one day was having the director of the faculty see me outside the physical education building and offer me a ride to my apartment. He then drove me right to my door. That was one memory which I will never forget, and it is one reason*

*why I still to this day respect and admire this man for what he did on that day.*  
(Coles, 1994, j , p. 3).

*Bob: You were with the same group all the way through so that was a good time to really get to know them. When you compare it to my education degree - you went to class, you did your work, you left, and when you finished your work you hardly knew many people at all. It was more of a course route or method type thing, and you left not knowing a lot of people; whereas in the physical education faculty, you got to work with the people and it was a lot more enjoyable. There was a lot more hands-on experience with what you were going to be teaching when you got out instead of just looking at it from theory.* (Coles, 1994, o , p. 3).

Like any program, there were negative comments as well. Besides being too sports minded, the biggest criticism made by some teachers was the program's inability in prepare teachers properly on how to teach. Gloria, when asked about what she learned in the program, declared "Obviously skills! But usually anyone who goes into physical education usually has the skills to begin with anyway. They have interest in sports, but they don't always know how to teach someone else the sport." (Coles, 1994, l , p. 3). Betty pointed out a negative concern about the training programs. She charged "there was only one way of doing something and that was the only way... This is how you dribble the ball and this is how you teach children to dribble...there was no accounting for individual differences " (Coles, 1994, k , p. 3). Another remark made by some teachers was that the training programs really didn't prepare them as primary and elementary teachers. It seemed that the development of curriculum applicable to these lower grades was one area lacking in the training programs.

A final criticism of the physical education teacher training programs made by several specialists centered around the issue of mainstreaming physically disabled students into the regular classroom setting. This concern was best explained by Fred.

*One requirement of my course was to spend some time in the pool with a physically disabled child, and I must say that was a real eye opener for me. I even felt uncomfortable at first, but I got used to it after awhile. In fact, I'm glad now that I did it. (Coles, 1994 , p , p.2) ...I think the developmentally delayed children are out there in the school and there is nobody who can give you information specifically program oriented - they will give you a whole lot of adaptive programs for wheelchairs and some ideas for this and that. There should be some training! It seems its only what we pick up on our own. These students are in the schools and I think they are there to stay, and it appears the consensus is that well you are a professional so you adapt. I don't think that's good enough!. I think there should be some kind of training at the university level. (Coles, 1994 , p , p.7).*

### **Experiences as Teachers**

Although training programs may differ, these specialist teachers encountered teaching experiences similar to and/or unique from other teachers of physical education. These experiences include their first year of instruction, their teaching assignments, their teaching perceptives, their activity selection, their teaching strategies, their contributions as teachers, and the relationships they formed.

### First Year Teaching

Most physical education teachers could recall their first year of teaching very vividly. Although several mentioned that it did not involve teaching physical education, it appeared that overall the whole experience was very promising. When asked to describe their feelings, adjectives such as "interesting" , "enjoyable" , and "useful" were common expressions. Some felt that it was in this, their first year, that a lot of discipline issues were experienced and handled. Some were very thankful and felt that it contributed to their future effectiveness as physical education teachers, while others were just glad the year was finally over. Even these latter teachers still felt the experience was enjoyable.

As physical education specialists, there was no mention of having to make modifications to class instruction by going outside or to a near-by facility. It would appear that facilities were already in place which would explain the hiring of a specialist. The greatest achievement these teachers prided themselves on was their after-school programs and the support and appreciation given to them by students. Several teachers elaborated on their first year experiences by stating that it was very rewarding and extremely motivating. One of these teachers was Wayne:

*I went there in March because a teacher got sick, and the school board was looking for a physical education teacher. They had never had one there. The moment I went into the school it was like I was some kind of a king because they never had an instructor before, and all of a sudden you had this guy going in there who knew something about gymnastics, games, basketball, and things like that. I stayed after school which was something that had never been done in that school as far as I understand. They really took to me. All of*



*a sudden at the end of the year, I had a gymnastics show. The people loved it. (Coles, 1994, i, p. 5).*

Not all teachers found the experience positive. Some felt that being a first year teacher and suffering from a lack of experience could lead to embarrassing and frustrating situations. Both Steve and Betty shared their experiences.

*Steve: I walked in as a fairly confident individual. I remember my principal telling my wife that I would be okay when I got my rough edges cut off or smoothed out... Those rough edges were in terms of how I would approach problems. If I had a concern I would be pretty forthright and not as diplomatic as I should have been. I remember that one of things that made physical education teachers look good was having a competitive sports team. I didn't know why that existed at that time but I do believe the training at M.U.N., the culture that we were brought into, that physical education was looked upon as mainly sports and not as physical education. Even though I wasn't getting paid for it, I felt that coaching was one of my big jobs and that I must do it. I remember coaching a team once and going to this school and having my players get out of hand and as a result made them and me look bad. It was my first high school team and I was attempting to teach certain skills and plays on the court. They were going up against a school that had a stronger reputation in terms of success with the sport. The coach was much more knowledgeable than I at that time. They had a student team that was much bigger and stronger and that particular game our students lost control and frustration set in. Some were kicked out. However, I do believe the other side aggravated the situation and provoked the situation to the point where I*

*was brought into an exchange with the opposing coach. When I came away from it I had a bad taste in my mouth, and I realized this was not what I wanted in terms of coaching and I knew it had to change. It was certainly a critical incident and caused me to reflect. From that point on I ensured that I was in total control of the students and I continued to coach, but I always instill in my players that they were representing their school, their town, their community and that their behavior would reflect that. (Coles, 1994, n , p.4-5).*

*Betty: I was very enthusiastic and would go up to the gym in the night time. I would use the equipment such as a pole vaults, boxes, and trampoline. I felt I was like a fish out of the water. There was really no program. Just go out and teach the skills. I really felt I didn't know how to plan a program properly. Perhaps I missed it along the way. Perhaps I thought I knew how to plan a program, but after I got out and started teaching I found there was a lot of questions that needed answers; mostly because I felt like I was the only one there. The other classroom teachers could converse with others and find out how they planned but I couldn't. (Coles, 1994, k , p. 4).*

### Teaching Assignments

Many of the specialist teachers were given classroom teaching responsibilities in addition to their physical education teaching duties. In almost all cases, the transition from the gymnasium to classroom during the course of a teaching day was met with approval. Some teachers even had a feeling of relaxation when entering the classroom. Adam pointed out "I find in the classroom they are in their seats most of the time -

whereas in the gymnasium you are always constantly watching them... I find it less stressful because the possibly of injury almost is nonexistent." (Coles, 1994, j , p. 1). Several teachers even felt it was a "break" and it allowed the teacher an opportunity to view a child from a different perspective. Brett commented:

*I guess it was a variety. It's a spice of life. It was a break to go into the classroom. When you are in the gym a long time, after awhile your mind becomes bogged down and you start to look at children a bit different. They are not children anymore, they become more athletic. If they don't measure up you can sometimes become more annoyed. Many of these students who do not do well in the gym athletically usually are pretty good in the classroom, so you get to see another side of them. Now you realize that they are working hard in the gym but maybe are just not capable. The same is true for someone who works hard in the gym but doesn't do well in the classroom setting. It made me feel like I was worth something.* (Coles, 1994, m , p. 1).

One experienced physical education teacher with no classroom experience felt that she was now getting bored and needed a change. Betty insisted "I do want to continue teaching physical education, but I wouldn't mind getting a little taste of the classroom, just for a little change. I've started to develop this feeling over the last four or five years." (Coles, 1994, k , p. 1). Several teachers contended that they were comfortable teaching only their specialist area and preferred no classroom duties. The basis of their argument centered around two major points. First of all, physical education was an area they enjoyed and were trained in. Second, it was unfair to them, as well as to students, to teach them in a subject area where the best quality instruction was not possible. Steve

remarked "It would be like having to teach physical education if you were not interested or qualified to do." (Coles, 1994, n , p. 1).

### Perspective of Physical Education

Teachers cited several factors responsible for enticing them into the field of physical education teaching. The main attraction was their obvious enjoyment of sport and the positive experiences of participation in competitive and noncompetitive activities. Two other reasons were the enjoyment of working with children and the impact of the physical education program in their own school setting. One teacher commented that planning for physical education was less in comparison to other subjects. However, one of the major factors leading to the attractiveness of teaching physical education appeared to be the fact that children thrive on and enjoy the program. Gloria reflected on her present teaching situation.

*It is positive because the kids love it. The students are coming to gym class and they are laughing and smiling. They can't wait to get down there. They see you in the corridor and they say "Miss, we got gym today?" and when I say yes, you see a big smile on their faces. That's fun. (Coles, 1994, 1 , p. 3).*

Many specialists felt that physical education is a very important subject in the complete development of a child. They alluded to such factors as the learning of basic motor skills, the promotion of leadership skills, the promotion of a positive attitude towards participation in activities, and the development of an active lifestyle as possible incentives promoted through physical education. They felt that children needed to be physically active and needed to develop good self-esteem. As a result they saw both themselves and physical education as two possible facilitators which, if utilized properly,

could help achieve this objective. The most common response supporting its importance was the role it played in the academic performance of students. Adam commented:

*In the gym participating they are happy and having lots of fun, and that can make their school life and social life happy. Emotionally they can be happy, and I think a happy child can learn better in the classroom and put more effort into their work. A child with straight academics like I had when I was growing up needs other enrichment like extra-curricular to make the school life happier, and I'm willing to put more time into my homework and look forward to going back to school the next day rather than just going back to sit in my seat.* (Coles, 1994, j , p. 11).

Although seven physical education specialist teachers stated that physical education was equally important as other courses in the curriculum, only one felt that while it was meaningful, it was not as important as math, science, or language arts.

### Activity Selection

The specialists have taught physical education from a predominately sports-oriented mode. They have instructed the traditional sports such as soccer, basketball, volleyball, floor hockey, badminton, track and field, tee ball, and gymnastics, and in some cases dance and orienteering. Some teachers like Bob have taught using themes or units. He declared "I would sometimes have different "units" on hand-eye coordination. Traditional sports such as soccer and basketball were still emphasized but not the real game. Instead it was the hand-eye coordination activities dealing with the fundamentals of the sport." (Coles, 1994, g , p. 5).

The general routine usually consisted of a warm-up, some skill introduction and practice, and a closing activity. The teachers spoke often of lead-up games as a teaching tool in preparing students for participation in several of these sporting activities. Fred felt that in his elementary physical education program, skill acquisition was stressed and deemed necessary for the junior high program. He stated "I find at the elementary level they usually work hard and listen. This is a good time to develop their skill level which will help prepare them later for organized games and activities." (Coles, 1994, p , p.3).

Several teachers, on the other hand, declared a desire to get away from the traditional sports program, but felt the move would be a difficult one. Steve summed it up best. He contended "...traditional games are not forgotten. Instead a balance or combination is really what is needed. Even though trends may change we have to be open and still not forget our roots." (Coles, 1994, p , p. 6). Despite this contemporary philosophy, almost all physical education teachers in this study stressed the importance of skill acquisition and skill progression. Adam spoke in favor of the traditional program and saw it as a source of motivation for children:

*I've stayed with the traditional sports and I have not seen any difference in the children's level of enthusiasm towards participating in these activities. I've been at it for twenty years. My lunch-time and after school program continues to have 95% participation so I don't see any kids getting turned off. I don't do a lot of games in the gym but instead I concentrate on the skills. (Coles, 1994, p , p. 5).*

Since it appeared that all teachers had access to adequate facilities like a gym, there were no major complaints regarding this aspect of the teaching environment. The unavailability of equipment did not seem to pose a problem. Although some teachers

expressed a desire to have additional equipment to use in their programs, there were no real problems with what they already had. Most of the specialists placed equal emphasis on all activities; some stressed gymnastics as the basis of their program.

*Wayne: I find that in gymnastics you're using the whole body. You're learning to control your body which is very important... For instance, down hill skiing. I've learned to know what to do with my body, and as a result I can do pretty well anything. I don't think there's any sport that I can't do. (Coles, 1994, i , p. 6).*

*Brett: We do gymnastics. I don't know if we call it educational gymnastics but we do gymnastics, and there is a fair amount of movement involved. It is a different kind of approach than just coming in and doing flips. The gymnastics we do, you can see why it is important to have it in school because it contains all the important fundamental movements which is the backbone of the physical education program. (Coles, 1994, m , p. 5).*

Gloria, on the other hand, found it difficult to put gymnastics on par with other activities in her program even though she recognized its importance. She insisted "I didn't find I was very well instructed in gymnastics in university and, therefore, am not comfortable with it. I enjoyed it in elementary school but after that I didn't have much exposure to this activity." (Coles, 1994, l , p. 4).

The reasons for selecting specific activities varied among the teachers. Common responses included: the activities were laid down by the Department of Education; they were activities enjoyed by students; they were activities that most teachers had some background in and thus found skill demonstration easy; and they were a part of the tradition of physical education. Steve's rationale for his activity selection was based on

the notion that not all students were sports minded or competitive minded. He pointed out "Students do enjoy traditional games like basketball and volleyball, but they are not for everybody. We need to alter our program and offer a more personalized approach to give students the opportunity to find something they can continue into." (Coles, 1994, n , p. 6).

### Teaching Strategies

Most of these specialist teachers used both an "exploratory" and a "command" approach in their teaching strategies. Some mentioned that the best teaching environment was to let the students go out and experience it. Others felt that although this was the most effective, they still found themselves mainly using a teacher-directed approach. Betty spoke on this difficult transition stating that she needed at times to be more child-centered.

*I'm too teacher directed! Perhaps I should just say to the child listen, here is your arm, here is the ball, show me how you can keep the ball up in the air using your arms. Perhaps the child can keep the ball up ten different ways than the way I showed him. But the real problem with this is how do I evaluate this child. How I can evaluate him/her on something I haven't shown them. At the end I feel I have to show them something in order to do a fair and consistent evaluation. (Coles, 1994, k , p. 6).*

It would seem that these teachers preferred a combination of both strategies. Brett felt that many activities and skills need to be positively reinforced and explained, but sometimes all it took was to provide children with practice. Good questioning techniques such as "What could you do to make it better?" was another effective teaching tool. Brett



maintained "The children will learn to bloody well skip on their own and don't need to be shown. They don't need to be shown how to hop on one foot or how to play with hoops. They will learn this themselves." (Coles. 1994, m , p. 6). Bob seemed to sum it up best.

*It would depend on the activity. If it's a gymnastics activity, you can use exploratory. The students sort of explore the apparatus, and I guide them through some exploratory activities. Sometimes with activities you want to be direct and say specifically what needs to be done. I think I use a combination of strategies appropriate to that class, skill level, age level, or activity that they're carrying out. (Coles, 1994, p , p. 5).*

Overall most physical education teachers in this study felt that their university training assisted them in adopting these teaching strategies. Although the training programs presented opportunities to question the different teaching strategies, most specialists insisted that it was up to each teacher to choose the most appropriate strategy(s) for their specific programs.

### Teacher Contributions and Relationships

Without hesitation, it appeared that all physical education specialists commented enthusiastically when asked about their contribution to the life of their schools. Besides promoting school spirit, these teachers felt that their programs contributed immensely to a positive school atmosphere. This question of teacher contribution was one area where these teachers were not afraid to blow their own horns. Statements displaying confidence and pride were common.

Adam: *I spend so much time in the gym. The life of the school and the relationship with the students as far as I am concerned, without bragging, heavily involves my program. The only extra-curricular program in the school now is my after-school sports program involving this year about 95% of the students in Grade 6. My lunch time sports I would say is about 100%... In terms of physical education as being the life of the school, all I know is when I announce an activity, I always block the gym. I know that if I had a lunch time program and an afternoon program for 5 days a week for any grade level from 4-6, I know I would block the gym. I have that confidence.* (Coles, 1994, 1, p. 8).

Brett: *There's probably no one in the school that contributes more than the physical education teacher. Of course that's if he is a good one and comes in with a positive attitude, is willing to work, and puts kids first. I have found most physical education people are like that.* (Coles, 1994, 1, p. 8).

All teachers pointed out that their physical education programs included many activities outside of the regular classroom instruction. Intramurals, after-school sessions, varsity sports teams, clubs, and special events such as Fit Week, Education Week, winter carnival and sports day were some of the extra programs implemented by most of these teachers. Weekend activities were also mentioned. Although these activities were viewed positively, the only setback mentioned by one specialist in offering such activities was the isolation it sometimes brought from the other staff members.

Some teachers proclaimed that their colleagues were quite supportive and cooperative and in some cases helped with the programs. Other specialists ran extra-curricular activities on their own but still commented on the positive support they

received. Fred pointed out "I run the full intramural program myself but the support I've been given for that is that I don't have to do lunch-time duties. They (teachers and administration) figure my intramurals count for lunch-time supervision." (Coles, 1994, p. 5). However, some specialists were reluctant to seek any type of assistance. Two reasons for this hesitation were that these classroom teachers were too bogged down with other responsibilities and as a result found little time for physical education, and that it was their own program and, therefore, their own responsibility. One specialist sought assistance but was not happy with the result. Gloria declared " ...there are too many teachers who do not realize the importance of these activities as well as physical education. They fail to see the importance of it to these students." (Coles, 1994, i, p. 5).

Steve commented on the importance and invaluable contribution of a good staff.

*When I went there I had to fight that belief - that physical education was only for the elite in the school. To me physical education was for everybody, and there was more to it than soccer and basketball. There was more than floor hockey. It was for any student who wanted to get involved. I had to convince the students that it was them and I had to actually buck the system and say we were not only going to cater to the elite, we were going to give every child the opportunity to play. I wanted to bring in intramurals and show it was important to the school. There was some resistance to that. At one point I was even considering to quit. However, it was the staff which held it together for me until I was able to establish myself. (Coles, 1994, ii, p. 9).*

With regard to student and community support, the specialist teachers in this study felt both were appreciative of the program, but Steve put the parents position into perspective when he said "I do believe that if it came down to the crunch they (parents)

would let physical education go simply because that "force" is out there telling parents that academic subjects are the most important." (Coles, 1994, n , p. 9).

### **Other Program Concerns**

The following analysis deals with the experiences of specialist teachers pertaining to other program concerns. These include student evaluation, resources, teacher assistance, and obstacles and concerns of program implementation in physical education.

#### **Student Evaluation**

Student evaluation was an area of great uncertainty and concern. As the specialists revealed their evaluation policies, many admitted that the whole process was difficult and inconsistent. Several specialists at the elementary level were forced to give students a letter grade and provide a comment. Others simply gave a very short comment informing parents that their child was either "progressing well" or "not progressing well" in physical education. It would appear from the discussions that most teachers did not like these types of evaluation. Gloria, in referring to her present evaluation system, commented "I dislike this system and instead would prefer a checklist of both skills and attitudes. I feel this would be more meaningful. I disagree totally with assigning letter grades to elementary students." (Coles, 1994, 1 , p.5). It was Betty who displayed the most frustration.

*But evaluation is difficult! Let's take gymnastics and the forward roll, some do it beautifully, some do it so-so, others roll real nice but have a poor landing. The child that is obese cannot roll at all - do I allow for individual differences there? In basketball what if a child is small and cannot shoot from*

*a certain area because of a lack of arm strength, do I take that into consideration? There are too many factors. Evaluation becomes too subjective in a way even though we say its too objective. We just can't give a child an "A" in basketball because he can shoot 8 out of 10 baskets. We must look at technique and other factors. One time I looked at a child's attitude and tried to evaluate their interest, but I found this to be difficult because you could get a real quiet child that could be interested but it wouldn't show. Evaluation... I don't know should I look at only physical skills, or social skills, or both? But this becomes too difficult. (Coles, 1994, 5, p. 6-7).*

The actual evaluation schemes used by the specialist teachers were quite different for each school. Some specialists stressed physical skills as the most dominant criterion while others placed equal emphasis on skill, attitude, and participation. Some physical education teachers were even experimenting with a student self-test where students were responsible for setting and striving to reach their own goals. Most specialist teachers felt that some form of a checklist outlining all the above attributes would be more meaningful for both student and parents. Wayne's philosophy seems to be popular among the specialist teachers in this study:

*I'm not like a lot of physical education teachers. I don't evaluate on an A, B, C basis because that will only turn students off in elementary grades. I evaluate like this. If you come to gym class prepared to work and your attitude is good and you have your gym clothes all the time and you basically do the best that you possibly can, then that's all I ask. I try to make it fun. If I do my job well, I think I can get nearly everybody. There are always exceptions. I don't feel that because you don't excel in a sport that you don't*

*deserve a good comment. I feel that attitude is very important in my scheme of grading. Participation is also important. (Coles, 1994, i , p. 4).*

The time factor involved in completing student evaluation was also a negative feature expressed by several specialists. Having students standing around and waiting, according to Fred, should not be a part of today's physical education program. He stated.

*I'm glad that we don't waste as much time now as we did lining up kids and having them wait as evaluation took place. Sometimes this would take up to two weeks of physical education classes. For instance, the fitness program; although some parents wanted me to do it , sometimes it took up to four or five weeks of my program to finish it. Looking back on it I remember seeing the kids sitting down and waiting. I couldn't let them go off behind my back because of the safety factor involved. So I've eliminated a lot of this stuff now. Hopefully it's for the good. (Coles, 1994, p , p.6).*

## Resources

Even though the physical education teachers basically followed the guidelines laid out by the Department of Education, most felt that because of their training, knowledge, and experience, the most valuable teaching resource was themselves. They stressed the importance of remaining current on new teaching trends through books, organizations (CIRA), and in-service. This latter resource concerned teachers; some felt it was a obstacle stifling their professional development. In terms of acquiring resources, most teachers were quite comfortable and appeared to have their own personal contacts. The

idea of a physical education coordinator also appeared to be a positive step in resource acquisition. It was the coordinator and the other physical education teachers who were recognized as important support structures by the specialists. Bob, one of the few physical education teachers who had access to a coordinator, declared:

*We are one of the lucky boards regarding the employment of a full time physical education coordinator. Anything we need regarding a manual or something new coming out we can get it through our coordinator or curriculum centre. Our coordinator will send us some things plus if I come across some things I will send them to our coordinator who will make sure all other physical education teachers receive a copy. (Coles, 1994, o , p. 7).*

Many specialists also mentioned that while their resources were built up over the years, they were always seeking additional sources. They felt resources were important because they could expose children to a variety of games and could help with the modification of certain activities. The absence of resources did not seem to bother most specialists. Brett pointed out:

*I can certainly work with the amount of resources I presently have now. Resources are important when the subject comes up. When the subject of money comes up then resources become important, but I think you can do it all without anything if you want. You can do your physical education without any equipment but of course it would be better to have it. (Coles, 1994, m , p. 8).*

### Obstacles and Concerns of Program Implementation

According to the specialists, if a physical education program is to be effective, certain obstacles need to be overcome. These include the need to get more classroom teachers involved in the program, and the need to promote the program's importance. It would appear that classroom teachers' perceptions need to be changed. Wayne told the following story.

*One teacher thought they should keep a child out of gym because he wasn't doing his work, and I said "you can keep him out of extra-curricular but you can't keep him out of my gym classes like I can't keep him out of your math class because he was bad in physical education." That didn't go along well with the administrator, but I just point blank told him that if he's has a problem just call the school board. It didn't go well with me for a while because I was cast down upon, but that's the way it goes, but in school it (physical education) is not a very high priority. (Coles, 1994, 1, p. 6).*

There were other concerns singled out by the specialist teachers. Several teachers expressed a concern over the recent cutbacks in physical education and even questioned the future of the program. Bob charged "In our school the physical education program for elementary grades have been cut to only two periods on a six-day cycle whereas other grades receive three. It is these students that need physical activity the most." (Coles, 1994, 2, p. 7). This concern stems from an apparent reduction of student instruction in physical education per week as well as an apparent increase in the number of specialist teachers instructing classroom subjects. Adam proclaimed "Now I'm finding that the academics is cutting into my time and, therefore, you just don't have the time to give into



it (extra-curricular) any more." (Coles, 1994, 1, p. 9). Even the issue of time tabling posed some problems for several specialists. Fred pointed out:

*So what is happening now is nothing can be made up until all of these students (special needs students) are taken care of. You can't set up your program until you base it around them first. A lot of times you end up with a schedule that is not necessarily good for your physical education program. Here's an example; In badminton season I may have a junior high class at 9:00 a.m. and a primary class at 9:30, so down come the badminton nets and posts. Then an elementary class followed by a primary means, the same thing happens again. Intramurals could also mean more equipment set-up. Overall it might mean setting up and taking down this equipment six or seven times a day. This is a setback and has been a problem in the last few years. When I can't control my scheduling then I can't make things convenient for my classes.* (Coles, 1994, 2, p.5).

There were other concerns as well. They included the need for more in-service, better and more consistent student evaluation guidelines, more emphasis on activities and programs which would encourage equal male and female participation, more outside programs for students, and even the appearance of the physical education teacher as a role model. Several teachers felt more in-service should be given on the placement of special needs children into the regular physical education program. A growing and potentially dangerous concern expressed by several specialists was summed up best by Brett. He stated:

*Sometimes it worries me about this sexual abuse stuff whenever it pops up... There are times when there are a couple of students left and this sort of thing*

*can become an issue. Even the nature of the activity sometimes can become a concern. For instance, in gymnastics I have eliminated activities where spotting takes place for that reason. The physical (sexual) abuse thing is probably the utmost fear for most teachers. If there would be anything that would drive me away from teaching it would be that.* (Coles, 1994, m , p. 9).

### **Personal Attributes and Observations**

As with all educators, physical education specialists also need to reflect on their own teaching experiences. Specialists commented on such topics as their effectiveness as physical education teachers, their personal teaching qualities, and provided feedback regarding their physical education teaching experiences.

### **Teacher Qualities and Effectiveness**

Positive teaching qualities dominated the discussion as specialists spoke of their own effectiveness as a teacher. The most common qualifiers used were "well-organized," "enthusiastic," "friendly," "nice," "fair," "cooperative," and "knowledgeable." Betty stated "I find I'm organized. When I go to class I have my steps down. I have no worries with skills or skill progression." (Coles, 1994, k , p. 9). Some specialists mentioned that a friendly learning environment was important, but it was equally crucial to be firm and in control. Adam voiced this quite clearly:

*You have to be enthusiastic about all sports. I do think that I have very good control, and I demand a lot of respect because they know if they're willing to work at it I'm willing to give my time. I don't want to be really strict I just*

*demand respect. I also don't think I'm selfish for giving my time for sports.*

(Coles, 1994, j , p. 11).

In terms of how they evaluated themselves as physical educators, most teachers spoke with a positive tone. They used such phrases such as "pretty good," "better than average," and "competent." Steve talked of a personal quality he prides himself on. He maintained "I do believe that I'm a fairly good role model for the students, and my personality helps me turn students on to physical activity and physical education." (Coles, 1994, n , p. 8). It appeared that good planning and the personal satisfaction of putting a lot of time into their programs were important factors attributing to positive self-evaluations. It should be noted that some teachers mentioned a lack of confidence. Further probing revealed that this feeling arose when comparing their own activities with the programs of those offered by other colleagues. This feeling did not appear to result from a lack of faith in their own teaching ability.

#### Teacher Reflections

The specialist teachers were very happy in their present role as a physical education teacher. The most common reason for this enjoyment seemed to be the great response from students towards the physical education program. Adam's statement shows the impact physical activity had on many students in his school.

*Even last week I had a student who was sick who insisted that he come to school because he had lunch-time and after school sports. That tells me that they enjoy what they are doing and the enthusiasm is there. So that makes it worthwhile and gives me personal satisfaction.* (Coles, 1994, j , p. 10).

Gloria enjoys teaching physical education but feels that other people view it differently.

*I don't like, however, how some people feel physical education is a easy job. It is not an easy job! There is an attitude in school by other teachers that it is an easy job. Physical education teachers got it made because they have no correcting to do, they have no ..... etc. ,etc. But I feel that most good physical education teachers put in so much extra time and effort through extra-curricular that the board and Department of Education doesn't put enough emphasis on it. (Coles, 1994, 1 , p. 7).*

When asked what they would change if they could, there were many different responses. One expressed a desire to study the recent trends in physical education with an emphasis on the movement approach. Another teacher wanted more instruction in specific activities like gymnastics, while a third would like to be a physical education or classroom teacher only and not have both responsibilities. Two other specialists felt the need to give more emphasis to the lesser skilled rather than focusing on the talented athletes. Others suggested giving students more control over decision making.

### Conclusion

Collecting data from both specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers has resulted in very comprehensive interviews. In addition to the actual teaching experiences, attitudes and insights have provided a basis from which conclusions and recommendations can be drawn. These "lived" experiences are unique to the participants involved, but the data may contain relevant information which may benefit all teachers.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section summarizes the study and provides several conclusions derived from it. The second section contains recommendations for further research.

#### **Summary**

The purpose of the study was to compare the elementary teaching experiences of specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers. Understanding their concerns, frustrations, and perspectives, both as students and as teachers, revealed insights into their programs and into curriculum related areas. Gaining access to their perceptions and analyzing their experiences of teaching physical education and what that role entailed was successfully achieved. It was the intent that the information collected would serve as a consulting document assisting administrators, teachers, and schools in the organization and planning of elementary physical education programs.

Interviewing eight specialist and eight nonspecialist physical educators provided a rich spread of data. All recorded data was then coded and compared. This initial comparison focused on the nonspecialist group, and then shifted to the specialist teachers. Through these teaching experiences the following summaries were derived.

With regard to their own experiences as a student, it was clear that of all the school programs offered, the sporting activities received the most attention. In relation to physical education specifically, the specialist and nonspecialist teachers both recalled that it was games and traditional sports that dominated their classes. Even though fond

memories existed pertaining to various aspects of the programs, both groups expressed some disappointment. The apparent lack of instruction was one issue recognized by both groups of teachers.

The teacher training programs for both groups were obviously different as each program set different goals and objectives. Being in a sports-oriented society, the specialist teachers spoke positively regarding their programs' ability to teach them the necessary skills, but some expressed a concern about the programs' inability in helping teachers learn how to deliver these skills effectively to students. Several specialist teachers went a step further and commented on the lack of assistance given to teachers on integrating special needs students with other children in a gymnasium setting. There was, however, a consistent mention by the specialist teachers of the close-knit relationship formed among the students themselves and between the students and professors during the training programs. The nonspecialist teachers focused their thoughts specifically on physical education and did not elaborate at all on their training as classroom teachers. Those that experienced some physical education training felt it was positive but not practical.

With regard to their experiences as a teacher, it appeared that their first year was a memorable one. As their careers progressed the combination of having to teach both physical education and classroom subjects was termed favorable by most specialist teachers, but received mixed reactions from the nonspecialist group. Although this additional responsibility was regarded as somewhat of a break by both specialist and nonspecialist teachers, their rationales were somewhat different. Most nonspecialist teachers regarded physical education as an escape from the routine of the regular classroom, and many enjoyed the move despite a concern for student safety. Most

specialist teachers, on the other hand, saw the move to the regular classroom as a positive change, mainly because it was relaxing and less stressful.

Both groups felt that physical education was an important course in the curriculum contributing to a child's overall development. Both groups seemed to focus on traditional sports and the skills related to each as the basis for their program. It was the specialist group that recognized that a change in physical education philosophy might be necessary, although the traditional program was still motivating and popular to many of these specialist teachers. The nonspecialist teachers, on the other hand, were more concerned with the existing program in terms of facilities, equipment, and the acquisition of outside assistance.

Both specialist and nonspecialist teachers practised similar teaching strategies in the instruction of physical education. Both mentioned that a combination of "command" and "exploratory" instructional strategies were used depending on the activity or lesson. Many specialist teachers, however, felt they were too teacher-directed. There were also similarities in the statements made by both groups concerning the positive support of teachers, students, and parents. The most noticeable difference between these groups of teachers related to their planning of extra-curricular and school activities. Although both groups attempted to plan similar events, the enthusiasm and confidence displayed by the specialist teachers was greater than those of the nonspecialist group. Being "busy" was one reason contributing to the classroom teacher's apparent lack of extra-curricular planning.

With regard to other program concerns, it was quite obvious that both groups were not satisfied with the evaluation procedures or guidelines in their schools for physical education. The type of evaluation, as well as what to evaluate, was termed difficult and viewed negatively by both groups. Resources was another area where it was felt more

emphasis was needed, despite an ability to “cope” with those resources already in the school system. The nonspecialist teachers cited the physical education teacher and/or coordinator (if one existed), outside sporting groups, and other staff members as important contacts. The specialist teachers cited their own experiences, and their experiences with other physical education colleagues, as their most valuable teaching resources.

Obstacles in physical education programming was another issue where large discrepancies existed between specialist and nonspecialist teachers. The nonspecialists focused on equipment, facilities, student safety, and a lack of expertise as their major obstacles. The skill level attained by their students was another concern. The specialists, on the other hand, saw teacher perceptions, a lack of teacher involvement, and cutbacks in physical education as the main obstacles affecting their programs. Gender equity, in-service, and possible charges of sexual misconduct were also regarded as areas of concern.

With regard to teacher attitudes and observations, the nonspecialist group cited good organization, patience, and understanding as their positive teaching qualities, but responded inconsistently in relation to their effectiveness as physical education teachers. A lack of expertise seemed to be the overriding factor leading to this attitude. The specialists also cited the qualities listed above, but evaluated themselves more positively. This feeling was logical since the specialists had acquired more training in the area of physical education. Both groups were happy and seemed to enjoy physical education, even though several nonspecialist teachers wanted to give up this teaching responsibility.



## Conclusions

The analysis of all data provided by the teachers in this study has led to the following conclusions;

1. Past physical education programs of both specialist and nonspecialist teachers were dominated by games and traditional sports.
2. Many teachers focused on both the positive and negative attributes of their past physical education program as a student. The most noticeable attribute mentioned by both specialist and nonspecialist teachers concerned the lack of instruction during physical education classes.
3. The success of the teacher training programs for both groups was viewed differently. The specialist group thought skill instruction was good and commented positively regarding the closeness of the group. Some felt, however, that their teacher training program did not help them deliver skill instruction to students effectively, and others felt that more emphasis should have been placed on developing programs for special need students. The nonspecialists who experienced some physical education training felt it was positive but not practical.
4. The combination of having to teach both physical education and classroom subjects was favorable for specialist teachers but received a mixed reaction from the nonspecialist group. The rationale used by the most specialists was that regular classroom teaching was enjoyable and less stressful, while the nonspecialist group viewed classes in the gym as a break from the routine of the regular classroom, despite specifying a concern for student safety. It appeared

that the specialist teachers were more comfortable in the classroom than the nonspecialists were in the gymnasium.

5. Both groups viewed physical education as an important component in a child's overall development.
6. Most specialists and nonspecialists concentrated on teaching traditional sports and the skills involved with these activities as the basis of their present elementary physical education programs.
7. Both specialists and nonspecialists suggested different teaching obstacles in their physical education programming. The specialists saw teacher perceptions and their lack of involvement, cutbacks in the programs, a lack of administration support, gender equity, a lack of in-service, and an increase in sex-related charges against teachers by students as their major concerns. The nonspecialist teachers focused on such issues as a lack of expertise, a lack of facilities and equipment, the skill level attained by the students, and student safety.
8. Both specialists and nonspecialists practised similar teaching strategies in the gymnasium. Although the command and exploratory strategies were those most commonly noted by both groups, many specialist teachers felt they may be sometimes too teacher-directed.
9. Both specialists and nonspecialists spoke positively regarding their relationship with staff, students, and parents.
10. Specialists appeared more enthusiastic and confident than the nonspecialists in the planning and organizing of extra-curricular programs, as well as other student activities.

11. Student evaluation was one curriculum area where both specialists and nonspecialists felt a change was needed. Both groups cited choosing the type of evaluation and what to evaluate as the most frustrating aspects of student evaluation.
12. Teaching resources for physical education were viewed inadequate by both specialist and nonspecialist teachers. Most nonspecialists cited the physical education teacher and/or coordinator (if one existed), outside sporting groups, and other staff members as important teaching resources. Most specialists cited their teaching experiences and their physical education colleagues as their most valuable resources.
13. Both specialists and nonspecialists identified similar teaching qualities that they possessed as physical educators. While the specialist teachers evaluated themselves as effective, most nonspecialist teachers felt that although they possessed good teaching attributes, they were not effective physical education teachers.

### **Recommendations**

These recommendations are based on analysis of the data collected and on the findings and conclusions which have been presented. They are directed toward all teachers who are involved in delivering physical education programs at the elementary school level:

1. All students in elementary teacher training programs should be given some background in all aspects of the curriculum, including physical education. The training programs should make it compulsory that all elementary teachers

complete courses in physical education. These courses should include both theory and hands-on experience in a physical setting. Included in the training programs would be skill progression, student safety, equipment use, resources, program modifications, lesson planning, and student evaluation. An emphasis on special needs students and completion of required first aid training should also be a component of the training programs.

2. Courses introducing contemporary teaching ideas and trends in physical education should be made available, by the School of Physical Education and Athletics, during summer months to assist those physical educators who want to upgrade. With a very high percentage of physical education teachers from a "traditional orientation mode" it is important to provide all physical education teachers with an opportunity to study new programs. These teachers can then determine if such programs are worthwhile. Those teachers that opt to complete these courses could then provide direction to others.
3. In-service should be available to all specialist and nonspecialist physical educator teachers and these sessions should be on-going. In-service will ensure that all physical educators will be exposed to new teaching strategies, new physical education trends, and be informed about such issues as gender equity and student safety in physical education.
4. The physical education coordinator or school board should make available to their schools the necessary resources and contact personnel to aid in planning an effective physical education program.
5. A physical education committee consisting of teachers from each grade level should be formed whether the physical educator is a specialist or nonspecialist.

This committee would serve as a contact and a support group for nonspecialist teachers and would also aid them in the planning of special events or extra-curricular activities. The creation of such a committee may also promote a positive image of physical education, as well as encourage teacher involvement.

6. A physical education coordinator for each school board should be hired to focus solely on physical education. This individual would serve as a contact person and would aid all specialist and nonspecialist physical education teachers. The coordinator would also play a key role in developing an awareness of the potential of physical education among school board officials and other administrators, and help improve the status of physical education in the present school setting.
7. Further studies should be conducted in the area of elementary physical education. Some possible topics might include: the attitude of students towards instruction by specialist and/or nonspecialist physical education teachers; an investigation of the perceptions of teachers and school administrators towards physical education.
8. All schools should have a physical education specialist on staff. If instruction by a specialist is not possible, the on-staff specialist could assist other teachers in implementing a quality physical education program. Nonspecialist physical education teachers expressed obstacles which could affect the implementation of a quality program; whereas, the obstacles stated by most specialist teachers are important but a quality program is still possible. The enthusiasm, confidence, and effectiveness projected by specialist physical educators towards physical education are also good teaching attributes.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview Guide for Specialist and Nonspecialist Teachers**

**TOPIC : Specialist Teachers Teaching Physical Education and Their Experiences  
with the Physical Education Program.**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**A. Introduction.**

1. How long have you been teaching physical education?
2. How long have you been teaching physical education at the elementary level?
3. Have you taught other subject areas besides physical education? If so, were these taught together in the same year? How did you enjoy teaching these courses?

**B. Prior Secondary School Experiences In Physical Education.**

4. Lets go back to your school days: Where did you go to school?
5. Tell me about your school programs? What are some memories you have regarding the overall program?
6. What do you think about when I ask you about your past school experiences?
7. What are some experiences you remember regarding your own childhood (pre-high or high school) physical education program?
8. Describe the physical education program in your high school. Can you describe an in-class experience you remember of high school physical education? Any memories regarding the extra-curricular programs in physical education?

9. Describe a typical physical education class in your school when you were a student.

### **C. Teacher Training**

10. In preparation for a career in physical education, where did you go to university?
11. What makes teaching physical education attractive to you?
12. What were some specific experiences you remember regarding the teacher training programs? What did you learn or experience in the program that you use in you teaching today? Be specific.

### **D. Experiences Of Teaching Physical Education**

13. Tell me about your first year teaching? What was it like?

#### **Present**

14. Describe your physical education program? Do you see part of your high school or university programs embedded in your program? Be specific. (What , how, & why).
15. What activities are you teaching in physical education? Why?
16. What teaching strategies do you use in the instruction of these activities? Give specific examples. Does your high school or university program help you adopt such strategies? Does it help prepare you on such teaching aspects as student evaluation?
17. How do you see yourself as a physical education teacher?

18. How do you contribute to the life of the school? What do you do as a physical education teacher at your school? Describe a typical day, or week?

**E. Relationships (examples/stories)**

19. Tell me about your staff? What are they like to work with?
20. Tell me about your relationship with students? Relationship with parents?  
Relationship with community?

**F. Resources**

21. Are there any obstacles in the implementation of your physical education program? Any support structures in place to assist?
22. What resources do you have available to you? How are resources acquired?
23. Tell me about how your resources/lack of resources affects your teaching? Give specific examples.

**G. Personal Goals In Teaching Physical Education**

24. How do you feel about your teaching of physical education? Are you happy with what you do?
25. What qualities do you have in teaching physical education? What would you keep or change about your teaching?
26. How does teaching physical education affect your lifestyle or even your family's lifestyle?
27. Is there anything else you would like to add to your comments?

**TOPIC : Nonspecialist Teachers Teaching Physical Education and Their  
Experiences with the Physical Education Program**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**A. Introduction.**

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching physical education? How long teaching physical education at the elementary level?
3. Have you taught physical education together with other subject areas in the same year? How did you enjoy teaching these courses?

**B. Prior Secondary School Experiences In Physical Education.**

4. Lets go back to your school days: Where did you go to school?
5. Tell me about your school programs? What are some memories you have regarding the overall program?
6. What do you think about when I ask you about your past school experiences?
7. What are some experiences you remember regarding your own childhood (pre-high or high school) physical education program?
8. Describe the physical education program in your high school. Can you describe an in-class experience you remember of high school physical education? Any memories regarding the extra-curricular programs in physical education?



9. Describe a typical physical education class in your school when you were a student.

### **C. Teacher Training**

10. In preparation for a teaching career, where did you go to university?
11. As a part of your teacher training, what courses or programs emphasized the teaching of physical education? Was teaching physical education attractive to you? Why or why not?
12. What were some specific experiences you remember regarding the teacher training programs? What did you learn or experience in the program that you use in you teaching today? Be specific.

### **D. Experiences Of Teaching Physical Education**

13. Tell me about your first year teaching? What was it like? Did it involve teaching physical education?

### **Present**

14. Describe your physical education program? Do you see part of your high school or university programs embedded in your program? Be specific. (What, how, & why).
15. What activities are you teaching in physical education? Why?
16. What teaching strategies do you use in the instruction of these activities? Give specific examples. Does your high school or university program help you adopt such strategies? Does it help prepare you on such teaching aspects as student evaluation?

17. How do you see yourself as a physical education teacher?
18. How do you contribute to the life of the school? What do you do as a physical education teacher at your school? Describe a typical day, or week?

**E. Relationships(examples/stories)**

19. Tell me about your staff? What are they like to work with?
20. Tell me about your relationship with students? Relationship with parents?  
Relationship with community?

**F. Resources**

21. Are there any obstacles in the implementation of your physical education program? Any support structures in place to assist?
22. What resources do you have available to you? How are resources acquired?
23. Tell me about how your resources/lack of resources affects your teaching? Give specific examples.

**G. Personal Goals In Teaching Physical Education**

24. How do you feel about your teaching of physical education? Are you happy with what you do?
25. What qualities do you have in teaching physical education? What would you keep or change about your teaching?
26. How does teaching physical education affect your lifestyle or even your family's lifestyle?
27. Is there anything else you would like to add to your comments?

**APPENDIX B****SAMPLE INTERVIEW**

### Sample Interview (Kelly)

#### A. Introduction.

Ellis: How long have you been teaching? Why did you choose teaching as a career?

Kelly: I've been teaching just a little over 10 years. I am presently a Grade 5 teacher and graduated from university with a B. A. Degree in Education and a B.A. Degree in Psychology. I decided to become a teacher due to my experiences with my nieces and nephews. I was very interested in the way they were developing and changing and how creative they were. I was always interested in the arts and am very much involved in it. I found that through the children I was working with that I was able to explore this a little further.

Ellis: How long have you been teaching physical education? How long teaching physical education at the elementary level?

Kelly: I spent approximately three years teaching physical education at both the primary and elementary level. At the elementary level two years and at the primary level one year.

Ellis: Have you taught physical education together with other subject areas in the same year?

Kelly: Yes I have taught the regular classroom subjects along with physical education

Ellis: How did you enjoy teaching this combination?

Kelly: It was good at that level because the children were given the opportunity to be physical and active which was an important part of their regular day. The elementary students enjoyed physical education. It was also a good break for them and it varied our routine. Sometimes it was also a good break for me but this was not always the case. There were times when the lessons went very well and I felt good about it, but there were many lessons where I felt I didn't have the expertise to carry out the lesson in a way that was both interesting and beneficial for the kids. In terms of the classroom it can also be a bit hectic at times. I tend to have a class that is a bit noisy. There are a lot of things going on in the class, but I think it's productive noise. We have a standard format of starting the day like prayers, canteen, and registers, and from there working on themes. I try to keep the subject area interesting but at the same time ensure that the objectives are being met.

## **B. Prior Secondary School Experiences In Physical Education.**

Ellis: Lets go back to your school days: Where did you go to school?

Kelly: I kind of come from a varied situation. I started off in a convent, and being the only non-Catholic in the school was kind of interesting. I stayed there until about Grade 3 and then I moved to the mainland where I was part of the public school system which again was a change. Then I moved back to Newfoundland during which time I entered an integrated school situation. From the integrated school system I went back to a Catholic school system for high school.

Ellis: Tell me about your school programs? What are some memories you have regarding the overall program?

Kelly: I think for me one of the disappointing things about high school was the fact that I was considered too "bright" to be involved in the art program. I think that upset me more than anything because I felt I was a creative person, and I didn't have that outlet. You see, you had to be at a certain academic level in order to partake of that program and unfortunately my marks were too high. I was involved in intramurals, and I was also involved in a group called "YCLO" which was Young Christian Leadership Organization which did food drives and things like that for the needy. We would go and sit in old folks homes.

Ellis: What do you think about when I ask you about your past school experiences?

Kelly: Overall my past school experiences were positive. Again I was disappointed at not taking part in the art program.

Ellis: What are some experiences you remember regarding your own childhood (pre-high or high school) physical education program?

Kelly: There were certainly some memories that stand out more than others. A lot of what I remember about high school is the fact that our gym teacher really enjoyed gymnastics. I was certainly not agile or flexible. I simply abhorred gym at the time when we were doing gymnastics. I guess this activity was a personal preference for our teacher. In terms of athletics, I always enjoyed volleyball, basketball, and things like that. A lot of the opportunities that I had in school were not things that prepared me for life after school - sports and activities that I would be able to be involved with. I think that this was an important aspect that was missing from the programs that I was involved with. I enjoyed watching sports. While I may not be athletically inclined, I was an enthusiastic spectator. I do enjoy playing as well. Maybe this interest stems from the idea of wanting so badly

to be an athlete. When I pursue things, I always tried my best. I was involved in cheer leading because I enjoyed watching hockey, soccer, and basketball. I was also involved in fund raising, but I was mostly an avid observer of sports.

Ellis: Describe the physical education program in your high school.

Kelly: I belonged in, which at that time was probably the largest school in Newfoundland, to a school of approximately 1200 students. So, in fact there was quite a bit of equipment and there was a large gym as well. I think what I enjoyed the most was working through the intramural program, and that was something that I really enjoyed. I was interested in participating in high school sports and the varsity program, but it wasn't something that was available.

Ellis: Can you describe an in-class experience you remember of high school physical education?

Kelly: I don't remember too much about the classroom setting.

Ellis: Any memories regarding the extra-curricular programs in physical education?

Kelly: When I was in Grade 8 there was a team that was set from Grade 6. By the time I arrived that team had been in operation for awhile and I really didn't feel I had the opportunity to get involved in the sports program. However, I don't feel bitter or negative towards this. I think too, coming from a large school, that it was easy to be overlooked. I feel like its only recently that I'm becoming more involved in sport and that I really do enjoy it. I have always been a spectator as well. I joined cheerleaders so I could get into hockey games for free. That was one of the main reasons, and I've been following hockey and other sports ever since I was a youngster. I even at one point wanted to be a reporter as well.

Ellis: Describe a typical physical education class in your school when you were a student.

Kelly: I remember a lot of time spent sitting down and listening as opposed to a lot of time doing things. I remember getting showers and stuff after which obviously cut into instructional time. I can't remember doing a whole lot in high school... I guess thinking more about it there were definitely warm-ups, and I remember completing a designated activity. Again if it was gymnastics everyone stood around the trampoline and watched whoever it was and made sure they didn't fall off. The classes were generally fairly short. I think they were only 30 minutes at that time so we had to hurry to get changed and get back to our other classes.

### **C. Teacher Training**

**Ellis:** In preparation for a teaching career, where did you go to university?

**Kelly:** Memorial

**Ellis:** As a part of your teacher training, did you complete any courses or programs which emphasized the teaching of physical education?

**Kelly:** Well, there were some courses but none dealing specifically with physical education. However, I think any methods course that helps in teaching will certainly give you the basis of science, math, physical education, etc. in terms of the approach, of how to do lesson plans, preparation activities, follow-up, evaluation. But in terms of specifically for physical education. - unfortunately no.

**Ellis:** Was teaching physical education attractive to you?

**Kelly:** Yes, because I enjoy physical activity. It was an opportunity for me to fulfill some sort of a life long dream of someone thinking I was good at basketball or volleyball, so that was kind of neat. Physical education has also been an attractive thing to me and I enjoy it. I often sort of pitied some of the teachers who didn't participate in physical activity and didn't have the interest for some things that I had, and in their having to teach the program I think it was very difficult situation to throw them into.

**Ellis:** What did you learn or experience in the program that you use in you teaching today?

**Kelly:** Yes I did find some things helpful. I took time to have exercise breaks in the middle of class. The kids would do arm circles, running on the spots, etc. to get them moving. I also felt that exercise outdoors such as walking around the school or doing other things. This would be an important part of it as well. From my training standpoint, knowing that these kids have a short attention span, knowing the need of getting up and being physical and doing varied activities, then that helped in delivering my own teaching program..

### **D. Experiences Of Teaching Physical Education**

**Ellis:** Tell me about your first year teaching? Did it involve teaching physical education?

**Kelly:** It was in a small community. I was a Grade 4 teacher. At that time I did not teach physical education. It was a regular classroom teaching position. I certainly have some memories of that year.

**Ellis:** Can you share some with me?

**Kelly:** I always remember the first day walking down the hallway as a substitute and being asked how long I'd been teaching. It was pretty amazing to the person to find out that this was my very first day. It was very exciting. Another thing I do remember is having to read from the Old Testament and mispronouncing names left, right, and center... I remember also later how some classes did not go too well. For instance, I remember starting basketball and having this wonderful lesson plan for shooting basketballs, but the nets were approximately about a foot and a half from the ceiling and of course there was no room for the shooting skills. Therefore, everything had to be modified or changed right there during the lesson. So having the balls hit the ceiling and sending the lights clanging was definitely an experience I won't forget. How could students practise an arc? I think there were times of absolute chaos as well to be honest. There were times when there was too much on the go, and I didn't have the control that I would normally have in a classroom situation where you were in a large setting one that is more difficult to control unless you have those controls set in place before hand. Things like squads and organizational skills that I just didn't have at the time for that kind of thing.

### ***Present***

**Ellis:** Describe your physical education program?

**Kelly:** Given the restriction of the facilities that we had, it was a multipurpose room not a gym. We had limitations in terms of ceiling height and actual room space. Whenever possible we would go outside. For example, for soccer skills we would certainly move the physical education class outside into the field. We did volleyball and basketball skills, but everything had to be modified. Instead of actually doing volleyball in a room with a 10 foot ceiling, we practised the skills necessary to play the game and they pursued it further at junior high school. We



would teach them various hand-eye coordination skills and things like that using volleyballs to get the kids used to the volleyballs. Due to concern expressed by the teachers, we had some people from M.U.N. come in and actually do some skills with us. We looked at volleyball, basketball, aerobics, and that sort of thing.

Ellis: What was your daily physical education teaching routine?

Kelly: Whatever class we were starting would always start with some kind of warm-up activity. Then we would follow with some skills and then possibly a game situation or a fun situation for the kids to learn those skills. We would go through a review of the skills that were taught and possibly some sort of cool down if there was time.

Ellis: Do you see a part of your own high school or university program embedded in your physical education program?

Kelly: Maybe, because my bad feelings towards gymnastics colored my teaching of gymnastics and the amount of gymnastics that I taught. It certainly influenced me. It is something I didn't enjoy. It was something I was not comfortable with. I was concerned about safety precautions and other things. I did not feel that I had the expertise to teach that. I would teach skills all the way around it, but I did not feel comfortable teaching an actual gymnastics program. When it came to university it would be more along the lines of different courses that I did, methodology, and that kind of thing. I do regret the fact that we were not given the opportunity or it was not a required to do some physical activity courses. I think its important through the health program as well as the physical education program. I think its important that students pursue physical activity every day. If they are going to pursue it every day, then we should be given some background and knowledge in it.

Ellis: What activities are you teaching in physical education?

Kelly: We tried to teach a lot of the skills that were involved in different sports. For example, when we taught volleyball skills obviously there is not a whole lot you can do in a room that has a ceilings of 3 meters. However, we would emphasize some of the motions and some of the hand-eye coordination skills that are required for that particular sport. There were a lot of modifications, and a lot of floor hockey.

Ellis: Why were these activities selected? Why a lot of floor hockey?

Kelly: It was one of those situations where the facility would lend itself to floor hockey. You were confined by your physical restrictions. Soccer was another one because we could actually go outside to play soccer in the fall when it was nice out. There were some activities that weren't given equal emphasis such as volleyball and basketball. These are two that stick out in my mind. Considering volleyball was the sport that's played quite a bit on the shore it's a pity we couldn't do more. Badminton was another example.

Ellis: What teaching strategies do you use in the instruction of these activities?

Kelly: It was many and varied. There are times when I would set up centres around our multi-purpose room and the children had the opportunity to go to the different centres and do the activities. There were times when I would tell the kids what had to be done and they would go out and try it. I would travel around to see how they were doing. It was sort of combination of things that I would do at the time.

Ellis: Did your high school or university program help you to adopt these strategies?

Kelly: Yes, not high school but certainly university with the methodology courses, practical training, and that sort of thing. Also learning different teaching strategies can also be applied to physical education.

Ellis: Does it help prepare you on such teaching aspects as student evaluation?

Kelly: I think it's a necessary part of the program. You need to evaluate what you are doing yourself and also how the kids are progressing. I think it's important to see progress in the things that you do. I didn't evaluate with an A, B, C or as a percent such as 70, 80, or 90%. I used excellent, very good, good, etc. But even that was a very difficult thing to do. I think it's more relevant to the children to have an anecdotal report of their evaluation or some sort of checklist for the parents and children to let them see where they are and how they have progressed. A lot of our evaluation tended to be on attitude and participation and how the children were involved.

Ellis: How do you see yourself as a physical education teacher?

Kelly: Not great. Even though there were certain aspects of it that I enjoyed and that I thought were fabulous, I think it's a very difficult thing to do. I think to be that concentrated and that focused with the kids in that kind of situation is very difficult. I certainly didn't feel that I had the background and the knowledge to fulfill the objectives of the program in the way that I would like. The physical

barriers of the facility that we were in were a problem. The program at the time did not do a whole lot for me - I didn't enjoy it.

Ellis: How do you contribute to the life of the school? What do you do as a physical education teacher at your school?

Kelly: During Education Week we would have various tournaments and things like that. Whenever it was Sneaker Day or Fit-week or things like that, I made sure that my class participated. We got out and walked around and that kind of thing. Everyone sort of did their own thing. That didn't add to the whole feeling of the school. I think presently now having a physical education teacher adds to the entire feeling and overall motivation of the school and being involved in physical education. I think having a good committee makes a difference because it is really important to any physical education program outside the actual in-class instruction. I've been really excited about a few of the things that have been happening in terms of Olympic days, field trips that include really good instruction such as physical education and orienteering objectives, and many other things that have taken place in our school recently. I think the new health program and emphasis on daily physical activity, strengthening your heart, and how physical activity will improve your mental status as well as your mental state. All moves towards this type of programming is important.

### **E. Relationships**

Ellis: Tell me about your staff? What are they like to work with?

Kelly: It is a very positive staff. It's a very professional staff. They are teachers that really care and put a lot into what they do. Any time you go past here you will find cars here after what are thought to be normal working hours for any work or office. The kinds of programs here are second to none.

Ellis: What about your relationship with the students, how do you find that overall?

Kelly: Pretty good. It has certainly changed over my 10 years of teaching. When I started teaching there was a different level of respect, and maybe as a new teacher I found that different as well. I have found a difference in parents attitudes as well as the kids in the last 10 years. There may not be quite the same respect. It's much more of a challenge than it was before. I think that in order to take care of a lot of those discipline problems, classroom teachers are being asked to take care of them ourselves. That isn't always an easy thing to do. I think we have to compete

with video games and other factors that were not the same 10 years ago as they are now.

Ellis: What about your relationship with parents and community?

Kelly: In general, we do have an excellent support group in terms of parents being supportive of the school, and I think they think very positively about their children attending this school.

## **F. Resources**

Ellis: Are there any obstacles in the implementation of your physical education program?

Kelly: Definitely, the resources - especially in terms of people resources. I didn't feel that we were given the best situation. We didn't have the background, and in order to get help it was pushed from the grass roots level. Unless you really pushed or were really aggressive about it, they would just assume that everything was going okay. I think given that we didn't have a physical education specialist, I think it was important that they check in on us a little bit more to make sure that the programs were running smoothly. Again the physical restriction of being in a small room was another obstacle. There was also not a great store of equipment either. There were lots of things down there that we didn't know the name of or what it was intended for. I'm still not 100% sure!

Ellis: Any concerns?

Kelly: A couple of things that we did - I was doing a lot of aerobics at the time so I was teaching some aerobics to the children, but I'm not a qualified instructor and I didn't feel 100% comfortable with teaching it. We talked about heart rates and things like that, but I really didn't feel that the kids were able to determine their own heart rates so it was something we sort of had to play by ear. Another major concern with us was the teaching of gymnastics. Most of the teachers here were very hesitant to get involved in a gymnastics program without any knowledge about the safety and safety precautions that had to be taken. We were constantly told that it was a subject that lent itself to the area that we had, which was certainly true, but we had no expertise in that subject whatsoever.

Ellis: Any support structures in place to assist?

Kelly: We did have a coordinator, but he was responsible not only for physical education but also for a fair number of other subjects in the entire district. That was the only support person we had.

Ellis: What resources do you have available to you?

Kelly: I think as in any program that you present to kids its one of your resources that tend to dominate. We got some information from the Battle Creek Program, but again given our physical limitations we had to look at other activities and other sports and how to modify it. I think one of the exciting things about teaching elementary physical education at a time when there was no gymnasium was the involvement of the physical education program at Memorial when they send out people who were experts in certain areas. For example, a volleyball instructor who was involved in volleyball helped us in adapting some of our programs and how to teach them the skills.

Ellis: How are resources acquired?

Kelly: Yes there was a real strong movement here at the school that we didn't feel great about what we were doing. We didn't feel that we were qualified to be teaching a lot of the things that we were, but of course we were willing to teach and given the resources I think we did an adequate job. There was a real strong movement from the school to see what could be done for us given our unique situation. We got our physical education coordinator from the board office involved and he in turn contacted the Physical Education Department who in turn provided us with resource people for the sports of basketball and volleyball and helped us modify our program.

Ellis: Why was your school so long in getting the necessary resources or equipment?

Kelly: I think a lot of it was due to the demand from the district. Our district is one of the most expanding districts in the region, and certainly the school here has been adding classrooms every year. When I started here there were quite a few less classrooms than there are today. So I guess this expansion was the reason for our physical education program today.

Ellis: Tell me about how your resources/lack of resources affects your teaching?

Kelly: Critical. You cannot run a good program unless you have both people and books. Good resources are worth their weight in gold. But then again there was a problem in terms of our training. Very few of us had a physical education background, and we were stuck with a binder that said Battle Creek on the outside

and very little on the inside. It was very difficult for non physical education teachers to use that particular program. Also I think I mentioned this before, but even though we did have a number of personnel in resources, we did find a lack of resources in terms of print material which would have been helpful.

#### **G. Personal Goals In Teaching Physical education**

Ellis: How do you feel about your teaching of physical education? Are you happy with what you do?

Kelly: Overall, yes; however, I think when it came to floor hockey and soccer the students were quite good. But when it came to basketball the students when they reached junior high were in a really difficult situation. As far as I am concerned, I felt our children were not as well prepared. Having come from a situation where they are obviously at a disadvantage, I really wanted to prepare these children as best I could for what they would be going to and for the kinds of situations they would be presenting themselves at the junior high level. However, I knew that given the facilities, as much training and effort that I put into it and the kids put into it, it was frustrating to know that they still would not be at the same level as the ones with the modern facilities, trained instructors, and equipment.

Ellis: What qualities do you have in teaching physical education?

Kelly: I think enthusiasm and interest. I think that was critical. Teachers who didn't have the enthusiasm and interest, didn't do much with the program. There may have been times that physical education didn't get done all the time because the interest and enthusiasm were lacking.

Ellis: Looking back, would you keep anything or change anything about teaching physical education?

Kelly: Teaching is not static, its a dynamic profession. Its always changing and we must be constantly evaluating programs. I would use much more outside people in terms of my own preparedness. I would be more aggressive about obtaining resources. We had equipment that I didn't know what it was for or what to do with it.

Ellis: How does teaching physical education affect your lifestyle or even your family's lifestyle?

Kelly: I'm not sure it had any effect, positive or negative, because I've always been involved in either aerobics or racquetball or a number of other sports so I can't say one way or another whether or not it has affected my lifestyle.

Ellis: Is there anything else you would like to add that really didn't come out in the interview? Or maybe you would like to elaborate on an earlier point?

Kelly: Yes! I think it's critical, and I think we have to get across the perception that it is a very important subject. We are raising a lot of children who are spending a lot of time in front of the television; children who are not spending a lot of time being creative and being physical. I think physical education is important not only two or three times per six day cycle, but I think it's important to be a daily part of their lives. Generally speaking, I really think that physical education can be very rewarding for the person who is teaching it, but it can also be very trying and very difficult if you're not feeling 100% comfortable. Physical education has got to be one of the toughest subjects to be teaching.









