Physical Education Teacher Education Student Teaching Placement Procedures

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
Greeley, Colorado
The Graduate School

PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER EDUCATION
STUDENT TEACHING PLACEMENT
PROCEDURES

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT


The student teaching experience is widely regarded as the most formative aspect of a teacher preparation program. This practicum is the final opportunity to occupationally socialize a teacher candidate with the attitudes and values of the teacher preparation program. Knowing this, careful selection of student teaching placements is imperative. However, little research has been conducted regarding placement procedures in general teacher education, and even less in physical education teacher education (PETE). The purpose of this paper was to explore placement procedures of PETE teacher candidates in CAEP accredited programs at state classified universities/colleges within the United States. The research was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of a survey of demographics and basic placement procedures with responses from 40 universities/colleges. Phase 2 utilized data from the survey results to purposefully select six universities/colleges to conduct more in-depth study of the placement experiences of the PETE faculty student teacher coordinators. Phase 1 found that the majority of PETE programs are governed by the college of education and that when governed by the college of education rather than another college, PETE faculty have more of a say in placements. That being said, twenty-seven and a half percent of programs reported not having a say in student teaching placement selection. When examining site selection considerations,
congruency between the PETE program and the placement was the primary quality and that availability was considered before quality of the placement. Phase 2 found that the majority of the six physical education student teacher placement coordinators interviewed felt that physical education is a unique discipline that is not always understood by others. All of those interviewed felt that relationships with those involved in the placement process are important and need to be developed in order to have placement input and ensure quality. Different programs have different procedures, and the ideal placement process depends on the program, but all agreed PETE faculty need to have input regarding the placement of their teacher candidates at student teaching sites. Placements do have an impact in the development of a teacher candidate. Poor placements can be detrimental, but opportunities for learning do still exist. This paper provides information about demographics and placement procedures of PETE programs in the United States. The experience of the PETE student teacher coordinators provides insight into how different programs experience different procedures, how they work to have a say in placements, and how they feel about how the quality of the placement impacts the teacher candidate. These data allows for base knowledge about PETE student teacher placement procedures and a jumping off point for getting, increasing, or maintaining a say in placements.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student teaching is a common capstone experience in most teacher education programs in the United States. The student teaching experience is also widely viewed as the most formative experience within the program, rooting the beliefs and practices of teacher candidates. Behets and Vergauwen (2006/2012) noted “Student teaching is the critical element in teacher education programs, as it is the place where teacher competencies are developed” (pp. 408-409). McIntyre, Byrd and Foxx (1996) and Jones (1992) concurred with Behets and Vergauwen’s sentiments, as do Beck and Kosnik (2002) who also noted that all levels of the student teaching triad (teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university faculty) view the student teaching practicum as a key element of any program. Because the student teaching experience appears to play such a crucial role in the development of teacher candidates, it stands to reason that placement site selection is a critical factor in fostering a quality learning experience. Finding appropriate placement sites which are optimal for each individual student is complex and multifaceted. Therefore, many factors play a role in placing a student in an appropriate teaching placement- including quality of the program, the curriculum being taught, characteristics of the cooperating teacher, the ecology of the site, and the congruency of theory and practice between the university program and the placement site. Placement coordinators in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs face many of
the same challenges as coordinators of other teacher education programs. However, there are additional factors which must be considered specific to the needs to a physical education teacher candidate.

Teacher candidates learn a great deal in the authentic environment of student teaching and often conform to the programs already in place by the cooperating teacher (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). Occupational socialization is important throughout a teacher education program, and with student teaching being the most formative aspect of a program, it is essential teacher candidates are put in situations that can maximize the potential for positive socialization (internalizing practices and values of quality physical education). Many factors impact the PETE student teaching experience such as the curriculum being taught, the orientation and qualities of the cooperating teacher, the context in which the practicum is enacted, and the congruency between the undergraduate program and the placement site. A poor placement site can socialize a teacher candidate to enact practices that are not in line with quality physical education practices and have other detrimental effects. Physical education teacher education programs can also face additional placement challenges such as the governance structure of the university and the need for multiple placements. In order to place teacher candidates at sites that are most conducive to learning and positive occupational socialization, the factors explored in the following sections need to be taken into consideration.

**Occupational Socialization**

Lawson’s (1986) theory of occupational socialization, defined as “All kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of physical education and
later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teacher educators and teachers” (p.107), plays a key role in physical education teacher education and the importance of the student teaching practicum. Students enter PETE programs with preconceived notions about physical education and those who teach the subject. Those beliefs may be confirmed or challenged throughout the undergraduate coursework. A student teaching placement site can confirm or challenge what is taught in the undergraduate program. With student teaching being the most formative aspect of an undergraduate program, the impact of socialization can be the greatest. In fact, Siedentop and Locke (1997) stated “There is overwhelming evidence that effective teachers cannot be reliably prepared in settings that are poor or indifferent for clinical practice and professional socialization” (p. 27). It is imperative quality student teaching sites are chosen for teacher candidates so that the occupational socialization that occurs is consistent with the practices and values of quality physical education and the teacher education program.

**Site Placement Components**

In addition to the tenants of socialization, there are several factors which should be considered when choosing a model placement site for a teacher candidate; factors which can contribute in meaningful ways but can also have potentially detrimental effects if not appropriately matched. These elements contribute to a positive learning experience and to the occupational socialization which promotes quality teaching and physical education programs. Therefore, when considering a placement, the curriculum and quality of a program, the congruency between the site and the university, the cooperating (mentor) teacher, and the context (or ecology) of the site should be evaluated.
Quality Physical Education and University and Program Congruency

One of the first features to evaluate in a placement site is the curriculum. Is what is being taught in line with how the TE/PETE program and the associated faculty expects the teacher candidates to teach? Students in a PETE program spend many hours in courses learning theory, content, and pedagogical techniques in order to conduct a quality physical education program. Many PETE programs believe that the goal of physical education is to allow K-12 students to become “a physically literate person” (Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014, p. 9). The definition of physical literacy utilized by SHAPE (Society of Health and Physical Educators) America is “the ability to move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person” (Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014, p. 4). SHAPE America (2014) also recommended that students spend at least half of their time in physical education engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA). Being able to balance skill development (taught using best practice techniques) with MVPA recommendations is very different than having a “busy, happy, good” physical education program.

Quality at the K-12 level begins by incorporating a curriculum with measureable standards and outcomes. In 2014, the national organizations for physical education, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and SHAPE America, revised and published national standards and outcomes for K-12 physical education. But just teaching to the standards does not make an excellent program. There are what Rink (2003) outlined as critical variables of effective teaching, and further expands on these in her popular text Teaching Physical Education for Learning, (2010). Each lesson taught
should have clear goals and outcomes, in line with bigger unit goals and curricular aims. Content should be developed within lessons, throughout units, and across grade levels utilizing informing, extension, refinement, and application tasks. Proper content development provides teachers with a foundation to present students with tasks that are appropriate to their level, differentiated when necessary, and encourages a focus on quality of the psychomotor movement and use in an authentic environment. Content development is a critical stepping stone in designing quality and appropriate learning experiences. In addition, it is recommended by Rink that learning experiences follow four basic criteria: 1. Provide an opportunity for psychomotor development, 2. Tasks are appropriate for the experiential level of the learner, 3. Allows for maximum practice time in an authentic environment, and 4. Provides students with an opportunity to address psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains.

When the university program and what is enacted at the placement site support one another in what best practice should look like, the teacher candidate will know what and how to teach and will have a clear understanding of what is expected. If teacher candidates end up in a placement that is not congruent with what they have learned in their preparation program, what they have been taught may become secondary to their reality. Researchers have found that despite knowing programmatic values, teacher candidates will emulate their cooperating teachers even if this tends to be negative (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979) and even if they do so reluctantly (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). Thus begins the “wash-out effect” described by Lawson (1989) as when “school practices progressively erode the effects of teacher education” (p. 148). Lawson, in this case, was
referring to the second phase of induction when the new teacher begins a job, however, the idea of wash-out can begin upon entering a school setting during student teaching. Not only can wash-out begin to occur when there is a struggle between the PETE program philosophies and site conditions, but teacher candidates may not experience career confirmation and begin to question the choice to become a physical educator.

**The Cooperating Teacher**

The cooperating teacher (CT), also known as the mentor teacher, is the on-site teacher with whom the teacher candidate works with on a daily basis by taking over that teacher’s basic responsibilities such as classroom management, planning and conducting lessons, and assessment. The cooperating teacher plays a very substantial role in the student teaching experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Behets & Vergauwen, 2006/2012; McIntyre et al., 1996; Sudzina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997; Templin, 1979), as Behets & Vergauwen (2006/2012) pointed out “All participants agree that the CTs have the most significant influence on PTs (preservice teachers), especially on their attitudes” (p. 417). Because of the considerable potential for influence, careful selection of cooperating teachers is a must for a positive, constructive student teaching experience.

In physical education, the orientation of the cooperating teacher, teaching or coaching (or non-teaching), must be considered when choosing placements. Smith (1993) found that during early field experiences the interaction of the orientation of the preservice teachers and that of the cooperating teachers impacted the preservice teachers. If the cooperating teacher was of a non-teaching orientation (e.g. disorganized, roll-out-the-ball, little to no instruction, etc.) and the preservice teacher was of a teaching orientation (e.g. gives feedback, learning accountability, content instruction, etc.) the
student was “extremely negative about their experience and indicated that they were seriously considering alternative careers to physical education” (Smith, 1993, p.166).

In conjunction with the orientation, there are a variety of good qualities a cooperating teacher should possess in order to be an effective mentor. These qualities have been compiled from a variety of perspectives: the teacher candidate, the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, and a credentialing program (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Sudzina et al., 1997). While being a good teacher is imperative, it is not the only factor necessary to be a good cooperating teacher and mentor. Overarching themes of good cooperating teacher qualities are that they are effective educators, supportive, and create a safe environment. These themes are further broken down to more specific qualities. Effective educators not only know content and how to deliver it, they are willing to share that knowledge. Being supportive encompasses many qualities, from emotional support to allowing for autonomy and flexibility in what content the teacher candidates deliver as well as the method, and by investing time into the mentorship. A safe environment is non-judgmental, filled with trust and open communication and allows for feedback and reflective practice.

A more recent factor that may impact whether or not a cooperating teacher would accept a teacher candidate for a student teaching experience is evaluation legislation. Some states, such as Colorado (Rules for Administration, 2011) and Michigan (Public Act, 2015), required assessment of student growth be included in the evaluation of the teacher. With a performance evaluation being dependent on student growth, some prospective cooperating teachers may be hesitant to accept teacher candidates who will
instruct their students and potentially impact the cooperating teacher’s professional evaluation.

**Context of the Placement Site**

The environment in which preservice teachers (PTs) are expected to perform and apply what has been learned throughout the undergraduate program can have an impact on the student teaching experience. According to Behets and Vergauwen (2006/2012), “The ecology of the school setting—pupils, physical environment, curriculum, and community—is a major influence of PTs development, and all too frequently this influence is not positive” (p. 407). Many factors create the environment of the school setting. As noted by Templin (1979), along with the cooperating teacher, K-12 students being taught significantly impact the teacher candidate. Students give feedback to teachers through performance and behavior. If students are more challenging, irrespective of the quality of teaching, at a placement site, the experience will also be more challenging, many times with the teacher candidate having to focus more on classroom management than on pedagogical skills. Also, if the cooperating teacher is more coaching oriented, changing how a class is structured could present an issue with the already established student routines and rituals. Other factors that impact the context of the placement site include class size, equipment and facilities available for instruction, and the school community.

The number of students in a class at a given time will have an impact. If class sizes are large, pedagogical practices learned in undergraduate studies will be more difficult to enact, particularly if the time allotted for physical education is minimal. When there are many students, feedback to individuals becomes more limited. The potential for
practice trials also may be limited depending on the equipment and facilities that are available. If there are a limited number of basketballs or basketball courts/hoops, for example, the ability to practice skills in an authentic environment is diminished.

Facilities, equipment, curriculum, and physical environment are also context factors. The space and equipment available can significantly impact the student teaching experience. Are there adequate areas to conduct physical education classes, or is class frequently in the hallway, a regular classroom, or are the class sizes too big for the gymnasium? While these are issues any teacher may face occasionally at any school, keeping these experiences to a minimum so that teacher candidates can focus on instructing quality physical education is a must. Ample and serviceable equipment is necessary as well. In order for teacher candidates to observe and enact best practice, there needs to be enough equipment with which to work. The curriculum that is taught within the school context will reflect whether quality physical education is being instructed. Which courses and units are being included and how often students are seen and for how long are all factors that impact how physical education in the “real world” is perceived by the teacher candidate. The location of the facilities can also have an influence on context. Because the physical education department is located in or near the gymnasiums, there is a physical distance from other teachers in the building. The lack of proximity to coworkers can lead to feelings of isolation and can be even more stressful on elementary teachers, as many times they are the only physical educators in the building. The separateness can make social interaction and support from other teachers more difficult, and can lead to feeling unconnected to the school community.
Another context factor that can affect the student teaching experience is community. The primary community the teacher candidate will be immersed in is the community of teachers within the school. Unfortunately, physical education, along with other specialist subjects, tend to be marginalized. In many schools, physical education is a “low-status subject” and “viewed as less valuable than subjects like reading and math” (Gaudreault & Woods, 2013, p. 52). Physical education teachers may receive subtle, and not-so-subtle, hints degrading the value, importance, and work put into a quality program (Curtner-Smith, 1997). Marginalization can lead to stress, poor performance, and exiting the career altogether. Imagine a teacher candidate put into a placement with a highly marginalized department. The attention may no longer be on the practicum, but rather on how to cope in the school environment. The emphasis of student teaching should be about applying and improving knowledge and skills through practice and reflection. If a teacher candidate is constantly feeling marginalized at a placement, the focus may shift to surviving the practicum and questioning the career choice. If teacher candidates are placed at sites with high marginalization, how can they be expected to take full advantage of their experience and want to pursue PE as a profession when similar situations, as Gaudreault and Woods (2013) found, can cause successful veteran teachers to become so frustrated that they exit the career field? Marginalization can occur anywhere and we cannot shield teacher candidates from it, nor would we want to. While teacher candidates need to be aware that marginalization happens (Richards, Templin, & Gaudreault, 2013) and should to be equipped with tools to cope and to raise the status of physical education, PETE programs need to be aware of the dynamics of the placement to which future teachers are being subjected.
Poor Placement Effects

Little value can be found in a poor practicum, suggests McIntyre et al. (1996). While poor placements may lead to less than ideal learning experiences, in many cases teacher candidates are able to persevere and complete the practicum. There are times, though, where the placement may be highly unpleasant and the outcomes negative.

LaBoskey & Richert (2002) found that when with cooperating teachers where the relationship was less compatible, the teacher candidates’ focus was more on the relationship and negative events than on their own learning or future careers. When there are conflicts of personality or pedagogy between cooperating teachers and teacher candidates, negative classroom interactions may occur and can result in poor performance evaluations (Sudzina et al., 1997). These poor performance evaluations are more of a reflection of personality conflicts than teaching practice. Teacher candidates are aware of this possibility and may change behaviors (many times the behaviors teacher education programs don’t want to see) in order to avoid conflict (Templin, 1979). It is also shown, as aforementioned, that poor placements, whether the factor is the cooperating teacher, the context, or incongruence between site and undergraduate program, can lead to negative occupational socialization of future teachers, teacher candidates questioning the desire to become physical educators, or even self-removal from the profession.

Physical Education Teacher Education Placement Challenges

Physical education is unique in that PETE programs reside in different locations within a university governance structure. Ayers and Housner (2008) found

The majority of respondents’ PETE programs were located in a college of education (66.1%), with the second most common location identified as “other” (25%), which included locations such as colleges of professional programs and
social science, arts and science, health and human performance, or health and human services. A few PETE programs identified as existing in colleges/schools of physical education (6.3%) or colleges/schools of health (2.7%). (p.56)

Regardless of the location, there is a question of how much oversight or involvement PETE faculty have when placing teacher candidates at student teacher sites. Are sites being chosen as a matter of convenience as the literature states, and who is making these decisions? Quality sites are imperative- do placement procedures support this importance, and if not, why?

Ayers and Housner (2008) found that 54.3% of PETE teacher candidates are prepared for licensure grade levels K-12, 31% for licensure in P-12, and the remainder are prepared for licensure in one of the above categories and/or with a health endorsement. They also found that the majority of PETE programs, 81.6%, place students in some combination (elementary school, middle school, high school) of two student teaching sites. Finding two student teaching sites for each teacher candidate may be difficult, but finding two quality sites can become even more challenging.

The structural and, at times, physical separation of PETE programs from the college of education (if the college of education places all student teachers) and the need for two field placements (therefore a larger pool of qualifying sites) can result in poor placements if sites are chosen as a matter of convenience and the placing agent is unfamiliar with what quality physical education programs look like. Poor placements can lead to negative socialization (resulting in poor programs), exposure to marginalization (which can lead to disenchantment in the profession), and the questioning of ability or desire to be in the physical education profession.
While presenting a challenge, two different placement sites and cooperating teachers can also be valuable for several reasons (different pedagogical practices, different management techniques, different contexts, etc.). Two practicum sites can be particularly valuable if one placement is weak. There is at least the opportunity to experience a placement that reinforces PETE values rather than being stuck in a weak placement for the entire practicum. While it is idealistic to assume that all the sites teacher candidates are placed at are strong, the reality, backed by research, shows this is not the case (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Smith, 1993; Sudzina et al., 1997; Templin, 1979). The order of the placements, if one is strong and one is poor, was found by LaBoskey and Richert (2002) to have an impact on not only the quality and focus of the student teaching experience, but also on the teacher candidate questioning education as a career choice. If the weaker placement occurs first, the teacher candidate may consider leaving teaching. If the stronger placement occurs first, the resolve of the teacher candidate is strengthened and resiliency to poor practice is promoted.

**The Known System of Teacher Candidate Field Experience Placement**

Research in general education shows that many CTs and sites are chosen out of convenience (McIntyre et al., 1996), simply, the availability of a cooperating teacher and proximity to the university (Kay & Ishler 1980; Smith 1993). With PETE programs usually connected to the school of education, who has the oversight of physical education teacher candidate placements? In agriculture teacher education programs, Norris, Larke, and Briers (1990) found that “the strongest belief held by teacher educators was that faculty members should make the final decision concerning placement of student teachers” (p. 63). Those who are most familiar with program instruction and values
should coordinate, or at least participate in the coordination of, student teaching sites that will support what is taught within the program. When a teacher candidate site coordinator is unfamiliar with effective and quality physical education, poor and unsuccessful placements can be made (Smith, 1993). Siedentop and Locke (1997) prescribed that there is enough program control over field experience site placements to ensure only quality, congruent philosophies are present for the experience. While there are recommendations for PETE faculty over-site of placements and research to show how critical a placement can be in the development of a teacher candidate, there is a gap in the research exploring how PETE teacher candidates are being placed at field experience sites.

High-quality student teaching experiences help students become professionals who are able to enact quality physical education programs. “Compatible placements are more conductive to growth so we need to do all we can to find and develop such opportunities” (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002, p. 30). Finding teachers who embrace the critical variables of effective teaching described by Rink (2003) is necessary to create optimal positive learning experiences for physical education teacher candidates. Jones (1992) found that perceived ineffective lessons caused doubt about occupation selection but that positive feedback from students and cooperating teachers confirmed for teacher candidates their choice to become teachers. Finding sites that promote feedback and learning go a long way in the development of a teacher candidate. Norris et al. (1990) and Sudzina et al. (1997) further advocate for matching teacher candidates and cooperating teachers.
**Significance of the Study**

Research is needed to first determine how PETE teacher candidates are being placed at field experience sites and secondly how PETE student teaching coordinators experience the placement procedures. Are PETE program teacher candidates being placed at student teaching sites that are in line with what research says are the most favorable conditions? Are there barriers to creating the optimal learning experiences for PETE teacher candidates? Because student teaching is so influential for a teacher candidate, it is imperative that field experience placements are vetted with minimum standard requirements and not just made out of a matter of convenience. Are there “model” placement procedures? How do PETE programs cope with less than ideal placement practices and sites/experiences? Knowing placement factors which impact student teacher success can help programs see how placements are being made, possible coping strategies for less than ideal situations, and alternatives/ideas to create better placement procedures to more closely reach or achieve best practice. Knowledge gained from this research can help to bring awareness to the critical issue of teacher candidate placement and the importance of where and with whom teacher candidates are being placed in order to foster positive occupational socialization.

Quality physical education is important for many reasons. Exercise and physical fitness have positive associations with cognition and scholastic aptitude. By providing activities which are appropriate for students, academic performance levels, in many cases, will increase. Quality physical education is also imperative in order to achieve the primary goal of SHAPE America- a physically literate person. To achieve this goal, an educator who is knowledgeable, willing and able to conduct a quality program is
essential. An educator with a teaching orientation who can communicate effectively and a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate content development are essential. Students who achieve physical literacy will have the knowledge and tools to be healthy for a lifetime.

In order to enable teacher candidates to transition from students to in-service teachers prepared to deliver quality programs, many factors must be considered concerning the most significant experience of their formal training- student teaching. Because student teaching is formative, it is imperative that quality practicum sites are selected. Quality sites lead to positive occupational socialization, which will lead to positive induction and practice once the teacher candidate is a certified teacher. Poor placements can lead to negative socialization, career questioning, or even career discontinuation. In these situations, substandard physical education programs may be conducted or quality educators may be lost to the profession. Very little research exists on how teacher candidate placements are made, and even less pertains specifically to physical education. The current study helped to determine how PETE teacher candidates were being placed, looked for trends in the current system and ideals and barriers experienced by PETE student teaching coordinators. This is a stepping stone to other questions about placement and finding ways to the ideal system.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the process of student teaching site placements of PETE teacher candidates as experienced by PETE faculty student teaching coordinators. Specific questions addressed were:

Q1: How are PETE teacher candidates placed in their student teaching sites?

Q1a: Who decides the official placement of teacher candidates and what role do PETE faculty play in the placement selection process?
Q1b: What criteria are used to select placements?

Q1c: What, if any, are barriers to placing teacher candidates in ideal locations?

**Definition of Terms**

The following are operational definitions, including synonyms, of terms used throughout this research. The intent is for greater understanding of content based on how the researcher views these terms.

**Field Placement:** where a student teaching experience is enacted. This is inclusive of the cooperating teacher and the context of the school environment. SYN: placement site

**Placement Context:** The setting in which the student teaching experience is enacted.

This is inclusive of the pupils, the physical environment (facilities and equipment), curriculum, and the school community. SYN: placement ecology, site context, site ecology

**Teacher Candidate:** a student in a teacher preparation program. A student teacher is a teacher candidate in a student teaching placement. “Teacher candidate” is used throughout this paper to refer to a student teacher (unless otherwise indicated) in order to avoid confusion with K-12 students. SYN: pre-service teacher.

**Cooperating Teacher:** the teacher at the field placement who is responsible for the teacher candidate. Responsibilities include guiding and mentoring, observing and assessing performance, and communicating with the teacher candidate and university representative. SYN: mentor teacher
**PETE Student Teaching Coordinator:** The PETE faculty member who is responsible for coordinating student teaching experiences. At some schools this may be giving names of teacher candidates to an administrator, for others it may be choosing sites themselves, or anywhere in between.

**Student Teacher Placing Administrator:** The person who makes the determination which teacher candidate will go to which placement site. This may be PETE faculty, it may be an administrator in the College of Education, or some other option.

**Student Teaching:** The opportunity at the end of an undergraduate degree program where prospective teachers go into schools and, under supervision of a cooperating teacher and university supervisor, take on all responsibilities of an in-service teacher. The experience allows for teacher candidates to bridge the gap from student to teacher in a supervised environment with performance being evaluated at the end. Some experiences are one semester, other are two, and are typically split between elementary and secondary levels. SYN: field experience, practicum, capstone experience

**State University:** a university maintained and administered by one of the states of the United States as part of the state public educational system (Merriam-Webster).

**Traditional PETE Program:** Four-year (or more, depending on when/how the practicum is incorporated) undergraduate program consisting of courses in physical education content and pedagogy, concluding with a student teaching experience.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of research regarding the student teaching experience is found in general education and tends to focus on cooperating teacher qualities and aspects of the “triad” (the teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor). While many of the general education research findings may be applicable, physical education has factors that need to be considered which are particular to the field. In the grand scheme, quality physical education needs to be conducted in our nation’s schools. Physical education has national standards which need to be taught, students need to gain the knowledge and competencies to be physically fit for a lifetime, and, in a time where the emphasis is on reading, writing, and mathematics, physical education needs to be relevant and valuable. Substandard programs fuel the misconception that physical education is playtime for students, and provides fodder for those who would like to cut physical education time and programs in favor of time for more “academic” subjects. In order to increase the number of quality programs in schools, quality physical education teacher education programs need to graduate quality physical education teachers. Teacher candidates traditionally engage in a four-year (or more) undergraduate teacher preparation program culminating in a student teaching experience. The major concepts that drove this research which will be explored further are (1) that even though student teaching is recognized as the most formative experience in an undergraduate teacher
preparation program, how teacher candidates are placed in the known system does not support the care that should be taken when selecting student teaching sites, (2) based on previous research, there are many factors that go into a good student teaching site so it is known where and with whom we should be placing teacher candidates, and (3) that poor placements have little value, or at worst, cause students to question career choice or quit the profession altogether.

**Occupational Socialization**

The research is primarily grounded in Lawson’s (1986) theory of occupational socialization. As observed by Locke (as cited in Coleman & Mitchell, 2000), “The best program in the world can produce trainees with the desired behaviors and values- but any public school that does not share the same values can reshape the trainee in a few days” (p. 99). Student teaching is a time of transition from being a student to becoming a teacher. It is also a time where all three components of occupational socialization—acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization—are experienced (Lawson, 1983). Occupational socialization is defined by Lawson (1986) as “All kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of physical education and later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teacher educators and teachers” (p. 107). Experiences and perceptions from birth through the K-12 years in physical education and sport influence the decision to pursue physical education as a career (acculturation). Professional socialization describes when would-be and in-service teachers gain and/or maintain knowledge, skills, and values necessary in the field. Professional socialization begins during the undergraduate degree program and continues throughout an individual’s teaching career through professional development and
experience. Organizational socialization occurs when “prospective and experienced teachers acquire and maintain a custodial ideology and the knowledge and skills that are valued and rewarded by the organization” (Lawson, 1983, p. 4). When thoughts and perceptions are gained, changed, or confirmed, socialization occurs.

Perceptions of the physical education profession gained during acculturation may or may not be vastly different than the ideals presented in a physical education teacher preparation program. Professional socialization confronts or confirms perceptions throughout the process, coursework, and experiences of an undergraduate teacher preparation program. Often the intent of teacher preparation programs are to ingrain (socialize) within students the ideals necessary to conduct a quality physical education program. Professional socialization continues during the student teaching experience, when teacher candidates experience what it is like to be a physical educator on a daily basis. Positive experiences during professional socialization can result in teacher candidates who graduate and are primed to teach quality physical education (Richards & Templin, 2011), and can have a persisting influence on beginning teachers (Curtner-Smith, 2001). Student teaching is also a time of organizational socialization where the context of the teaching site and the parameters and values of the cooperating teacher and students being taught influence perceptions of the career. With student teaching being the most formative experience in a teacher education program, and identifies as a major contributing factor to the socialization processes, it is imperative that placement sites are chosen to reflect the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to promote occupational socialization in a manner that promotes quality physical education and teacher candidate success.
Student Teaching and the Known Placement System

Student teaching is the bridge where a student transitions from being a student to being a teacher and is where the theory learned and practiced throughout the preparation program is enacted. Student teaching is where teacher candidates are immersed in the real world of teaching and develop the necessary competencies to execute a quality physical education program after graduation. Many phrases have been used to describe the importance of student teaching, which include, “critical element” (Behets & Vergauwen, 2006/2012; Coleman & Mitchell, 2000), “key aspect” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996), “crucial role” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002), and “most influential” (Ronfeldt, 2012) to the point where this notion is widely accepted in the teaching field. The importance of student teaching is a view shared by members representing all aspects of a teacher education programs—“All participants, preservice teachers (PTs) or student-teachers, university teachers (UTs), and mentors or cooperating teachers (CTs) are in full agreement that the teaching practicum is the most important and effective learning experience in a physical education teacher education (PETE) program” (Behets & Vergauwen, 2006/2012, p. 409). Armaline and Hoover (1989) go on to say “In fact, many teachers, like graduating seniors, will note that the only things worthwhile in their professional education programs were the field experiences” (p. 47). With the student teaching experience being so formative, it is imperative that the occupational socialization that occurs during student teaching is achieved through quality physical education programs with quality cooperating teachers at sites with supportive ecologies.

Knowing how critical and valuable student teaching is, it stands to reason that there is an understanding of how significant the placement of teacher candidates into
quality student teaching sites is within a teacher preparation program. McIntyre et al. echoes this sentiment saying that the placement for all field experiences, both early and student teaching, is a “crucial stage in teacher preparation” (p. 173), and Jones (1992) calls for a conscientious selection of sites for student teaching. Unfortunately, however, this does not seem to be the case. Placements are made out of opportunity rather than finding quality programs, cooperating teachers, and sites (McIntyre et al., 1996; Sudzina et al., 1997). Kay and Ishler (1980) conducted a survey asking institutions to identify criterion used to select exploratory field experience sites. Of the 200 institutions that responded, the most frequently cited criterion was availability of site personnel, proximity to the university/ease of transportation was cited second most frequent, and the quality of the program being cited by less than a third of the respondents (30.5%). While the criterion was listed specifically for those field experiences prior to student teaching, all field experiences are important and if the quality of the program is only a factor for less than a third of the responding institutions at the early stages, can more be expected for placement for the student teaching experience? There is little research that explores the phenomenon of teacher candidate placement and how it is being enacted, and virtually none in the realm of physical education teacher education where there exist other possible challenges such as many times not being located, organizationally or physically, with the college of education and with having to find multiple placements.

**Features of a Quality Student Teaching Site**

There is knowledge available, though, about factors that contribute to a quality student teaching site. There are pedagogical practices that undergraduate programs instruct and are supported by research, such as practice time and communication, which
should be modeled for, and put into practice by, the teacher candidate. What is enacted in the classroom at the student teaching site should support what is taught in the undergraduate program. Student teaching is the bridge between theory and practice and congruency between what has been instructed and what is put into practice is a factor of a quality site. Cooperating teacher orientation and qualities also play a significant role in the success of a student teaching experience. The relationship between a teacher candidate and cooperating teacher can enhance or distract from the goals of student teaching. The ecology, or context, of the placement site can also affect the quality of the student teaching experience. If a teacher candidate has to worry more about equipment and facilities or isolation and marginalization than pedagogical practices, the effects of the practicum may not be optimal.

**Pedagogical Practices**

As aforementioned, working within a system that is based off standards and outcomes strengthens the quality of a physical education program. Having clear goals for each lesson and proper content development to provide a foundation for appropriate learning experiences further enhance the potential for quality. Other pedagogical practices also contribute to the overall quality of a program and should be in place at a site where teacher candidates are placed.

Research findings have continued to link time engaged in appropriate practice to skill acquisition (Derri, Emanouilidou, Vassiliadou, Tzetzis, & Kiomourtzoglou, 2008; Ennis, 2003; Metzler, 1989). Several factors contribute to what makes practice appropriate for student learning: enough time and trials to practice and refine the movement, tasks that are developmentally appropriate, and cognitive engagement in the
task. Cognitive engagement is important for learning and retention of skills and the ability to apply those skills in changing contexts (Ennis, 2003; SHAPE, 2014). Psychomotor improvement can also be facilitated when practice is varied as opposed to massed. Varied practice arranges for switching between tasks in order to require more recall and cognitive engagement and spreading practice over time which will again provide an opportunity for recall and allow for students to readdress a task as they mature (SHAPE, 2014).

Teachers also need to be good communicators (Ennis, 2003). The expectations of what the teacher wants the student to learn and to do need to be clear in order to achieve lesson outcomes. How a task is presented sets the tone for how students will practice. If there is a good explanation/demonstration with clear cue words (Masser, 1993; McNamee & Steffen, 2007) and tasks that are clearly organized, students will be more likely to engage in good practice. Practice does not make perfect—perfect practice makes perfect. In other words, the students need to be practicing a skill correctly in order to move toward mastery. To help students move toward skill acquisition, feedback is also a necessary component. Timely, specific feedback on how a student performs will help with the quality of movement, particularly addressing how to correctly perform the skill, not just the errors (Tzetis & Votsis, 2006). Accurate cue words given during the task progression can aid the teacher in giving specific feedback during lessons. Feedback gives students information on their performance and supports creating a mastery climate. A mastery climate is an environment where self-assessment and skill improvement is the focus, reducing competition and peer comparisons. This type of climate encourages students of all skill levels to participate and work toward improvement for self.
Assessment of learning is also imperative in quality programs. Teachers need to ensure learning is taking place and that their teaching and program is effective. Assessment is ongoing and should inform teaching. Pre-assessment is used to decide what tasks are appropriate for the skill level of the learners and checks for understanding and other formative assessments are used to confirm learning is taking place throughout a lesson and unit. Assessments have many benefits in physical education to include being able to track student learning, evidence for grades, allows for better feedback, helps to provide a focus to lessons, and helps a program to track effectiveness and with credibility. With some teachers seeing up to 600 students per week (SHAPE, 2014), some teachers may feel that time is a barrier to assessment. Relatively recently, education has really been pushed to become data-driven. Many teachers may have learned standard assessment techniques but are unfamiliar with newer, alternative assessments. Professional development can be critical to update assessment practices as well as provide new ideas to teachers. Assessment of programs and curriculum in general is also important to promote student learning. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed a Physical Education Curriculum Assessment Tool (PECAT) that is designed to help “users enhance, develop, or select appropriate and effective physical education curricula for the delivery of quality physical education, which will improve the ability of schools to positively influence motor skills and physical activity behaviors among school-age youth” (CDC, n.d., p.1). This tool is aligned with the previous edition of the NASPE National PE standards, and has yet to be revisited since the revision of the standards was published in early 2014. However, the PECAT can still be used to analyze a physical education program to find strengths and areas in need of improvement.
With technological advancements and prevalence, teachers are being increasingly asked to include technology to enhance learning. In fact, in SHAPE America’s national standards and outcomes publication, there is a chapter dedicated to technology use. Technology use in the classroom can aid in management, instruction, help our students connect, and assessment. Keeping track of attendance and grades can be an arduous task for teachers who see hundreds of students in a week, but computer systems can help this and can also make tracking student learning over time easier. Pedometers, accelerometers, heart rate monitors, videos, and media applications are all ways to instruct and assess student performance that can also make learning more fun for this tech-savvy generation. Teachers are cautioned however, to ensure the use of technology enhances the learning experience and isn’t used just to be used, possibly causing distractions (SHAPE, 2014).

Quality physical education programs can help our nation’s youth not only in the gymnasium, but also in the classroom. This notion is significant because many programs are finding time in physical education class reduced or even cut in favor of more academic time in subject areas such as reading, writing, and math (Sallis et al., 2012). Research shows a positive association between cognition and physical activity and correlations between current fitness levels and scholastic performance (CDC, 2010; Hillman, Erickson, & Kramer 2003; Shephard, 1997; Sibley & Etnier, 2003). The CDC (2010) further reported in a review that maintaining or increasing time spent in physical education may help and does not appear to hinder academic learning and performance. Physical education programs also occur in unique environments which prescribe instruction of the whole child (psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains) that is not
present in other subject areas. Youth are further educated in PE by learning tools (knowledge and skills) to be able to engage in health-enhancing choices and activities for a lifetime. Quality physical education programs not only benefit youth in their current situations in the gymnasium, the classroom, and socially, but also have the potential to impact those students their entire lives.

**Congruence**

Content and pedagogical practices being taught at the university should be supported by the program in which a teacher candidate is placed. Having congruence reinforces what is being taught at the university and enables teacher candidates to apply the theory and skills they have learned in their campus-based courses. Congruence is essential to the success (reinforcing positive socialization of the teacher candidate) of the field experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Smith, 1993). Coleman and Mitchell (2000) detail benefits of a shared technical culture between the university and the placement site, to include the potential of a better understanding of expectations, a shared vision of what is important and how to achieve that vision, and the potential for reinforcement of professional values and behaviors espoused by the PETE program. “Consistent messages from the theory classrooms on campus to the applied activities in the schools are far more powerful than contradictory messages from these two aspects of the certification program” (p. 51). Some placement site options may differ in philosophy from that of the university but with a philosophy that is strong, well-documented and grounded in theory. A placement such as this would not be negative, per se, but can still be less than ideal due to the possible lack of a shared technical culture, which may lead to inconsistent messages and confusion. Because less than ideal
placements can and do happen, LaBoskey and Richert (2002) recommend four ways to prepare for such placements: 1. having the more congruent placement come first in the student teaching experience, 2. “having well-designed, well-integrated coursework that supports the learning of program principles” (p.32), 3. having well-trained and supported university supervisors, and 4. collaboration with the cooperating teacher. By working together, universities and schools can provide student teaching sites where the university knows quality teaching and mentorship are being supported.

**Cooperating Teacher**

The cooperating teacher is a key element in the quality of a student teaching site. In fact, many may argue, the most influential factor. Knowing this, when selecting cooperating teachers, is it important to remember that “not all good teachers make good mentors, while not all good mentors make good mentors of all beginning teachers” (Hobson et al., 2009, p. 212). Many universities have basic professional qualifications to be a cooperating teacher such as degree level, how long the teacher has been teaching and specifically in the current grade/subject/location. But much more should go into considering an in-service teacher to be a mentor to teacher candidates. Many studies have been conducted focusing on what cooperating teacher qualities enhance the student teaching experience, gathered from multiple perspectives - the teacher candidate, the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, and from university faculty. The first consideration for physical education cooperating teachers should be the teaching orientation. Teachers with a teaching orientation are focused on teaching students knowledge and skills to be physically active for a lifetime. A “sound approach to teaching and learning” was identified by teacher candidates as component to a good
student teaching placement (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 93). Teachers with a non-teaching orientation are more concerned with keeping students busy, happy, and good. A non-teaching orientation does not produce a quality program nor is it congruent with the philosophies of a quality PETE program. Placing students in these situations can be detrimental to teacher candidates, as will be discussed later in this section. In order to support quality physical education socialization and congruence with university teachings, cooperating teachers with a teaching orientation is a key concern. One way to accomplish this would be to observe potential cooperating teachers before teacher candidates could be placed with them. This opinion was reflected by both university faculty (Norris et al., 1990) and prospective teachers (Smith 1993). A teaching orientation, however, is not the only important factor when deciding suitability as a mentor, it is merely an initial consideration.

Many personal characteristics of in-service teachers have been listed as contributing to a successful student teaching experience. Teacher candidates want a situation where they are respected and treated as a teacher. This means they have good, collegial relationship with their cooperating teacher that is collaborative and allows for autonomy (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hobson et al., 2009; Koerner et al., 2002; Sudzina et al., 1997). This type of relationship between a cooperating teacher and a teacher candidate allows the teacher candidate to develop professionally and provides a positive work environment. Collaboration allows the cooperating teacher to share knowledge, aid in planning, explore teaching strategies, and provide avenues for resources. Flexibility, open-mindedness, and autonomy is important to teacher candidates. This allows them to try out what they have learned in campus-based classes and develop their own teacher
personality and style. In order for teacher candidates to feel comfortable being autonomous and possibly making mistakes, they need to feel they are working in a safe and supportive environment. They need to feel emotionally supported and cared about (Beck and Kosnik, 2002; Hobson et al., 2009; Koerner et al., 2002; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002). Feeling safe allows teacher candidates to explore content and strategies as well as be reflective in a non-judgmental environment. This provides the opportunity for more growth as a teacher. Feedback from cooperating teachers was also seen as important by all members of the student teaching triad (Koerner et al., 2002), particularly if the feedback, from the perspective of the teacher candidate, was given in a collegial manner and there was an opportunity to discuss the feedback for deeper meaning and understanding (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). Some in-service teachers may naturally possess these qualities and exhibit them on a daily basis, others may need to develop and/or become aware of these qualities and the impact they can have on the student teaching experience.

Research has found that training should be provided to teachers who are selected to become cooperating teachers so that there is a shared technical language and culture between the program and the student teaching site, thereby affording congruence of philosophies (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000). In some studies it was thought training for cooperating teachers should be mandatory (Norris et al., 1990), while others found that training would be helpful (Hobson, et al., 2009). Besides congruency, training also helps to ensure cooperating teachers are more aware of, and better educated in, how to systematically supervise to provide the most knowledgeable and constructive experience possible (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000). This is imperative as many cooperating teachers
have no training in how to supervise and rely on their own experience as a teacher candidate, how they are currently supervised as a practicing teacher, or from other cooperating teachers (Rikard and Veal, 1996). When cooperating teachers are trained in and share similar goals and philosophies as a teacher education program, less negative occupational socialization will occur. If cooperating teachers are aware of what university programs and teacher candidates are looking for from mentorship, they are able to make a more conscientious effort to provide that environment.

**Placement Site Ecology**

The ecology of the site, or context, to include demographics and numbers of students, schedule, view of specialist classes, facilities and equipment, staff relations and school administration also has an impact on the student teaching experience. Ronfeldt (2012) suggests that “certain kinds of schools may have positive effects on student teacher learning” (p. 20) and found that teacher candidates whose placements were in schools with higher stay-ratios (those that are easier to staff) went on to have students with higher achievement gains regardless of where they ended up working. Ronfeldt (2015) also found that some kinds of schools, such as those that are better functioning, more supportive, and have good teacher collaboration, are better contexts for student teaching, promoting sounder instructional effectiveness. Koerner et al. (2002) also recognized that the context may impact the learning experience stating that “the context of a placement itself have potentially powerful shaping effects on the ways in which student teaching placements are enacted” (p.54). Teacher candidates should look forward to, rather than dread, going to school every morning. They should be able to focus on content and teaching strategies and effectiveness rather than on trying to keep track of 35
kindergartners or only having one piece of equipment for every seven students when the
to-one or two-to-one. They should be able to focus on content
development rather than wondering what they will do again today because the gym was
taken over for something else for the third time that week with no prior notice. In a poor
context teacher candidates may not be able to focus on putting theory into practice and
have a negative experience. Also on the negative side, Jones (1992) found that
“unprofessional staffroom talk” contributed to teacher candidates questioning their career
choice. The environment of the school created by the staff can lead to a negative
perception of the teaching profession. The culture of a school can have a critical impact
on the learning experience. Gaudreault and Woods (2013) state, based on the Teacher
Career Cycle Model, that the “environmental atmospheres that include negative pressures
and conflicts can have an adverse effect on teachers’ career paths” (p. 53). This can be
especially true for subject areas like physical education, where isolation and
marginalization is prevalent. A sense of belonging to a community can help a teacher
candidate develop relationships and focus on the practicum, rather than the possible
drama occurring in the staffroom.

Poor Placements

Not only is it imperative teacher candidates are provided the best opportunities for
a successful student teaching experience, it is critical they are not placed in inadequate
practicum sites. At a site not suited to support a quality student teaching experience,
teacher candidates many become negatively socialized, or as Templin (1979) expressed,
“The student teacher is re-educated in the occupational socialization process as he or she
prepares to teach physical education” (p. 492). At some sites, the cooperating teacher
provides the way things need to be done. They may project that there is only one way to operate and work within their classroom— their way (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Sudzina, et al., 1997). This can lead to stress and confusion for the teacher candidates, and with the cooperating teacher being the model of how the “real world” of teaching is enacted, teacher candidates may follow the lead of the cooperating teacher, even if the practice is negative and regardless of their entering philosophies (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979). In many programs, cooperating teachers provide the final evaluation of the teacher candidate which can impact the approval or denial of certification. Some teacher candidates may be put in a position that in order to gain a passing evaluation, they have to conform to the practices of the cooperating teacher despite what they have learned throughout their undergraduate program (Templin, 1979). Situations where conflicts may arise between the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher can also lead to “negative classroom interactions and weak summative evaluations” (Sudzina et al., 1997, p. 29). Armaline & Hoover (1989) summed this up by saying “Field experiences are sites where the potential for miseducation is as great as it is for education that transforms…” (p. 47). Because student teaching is so influential, one semester can undo seven or more semesters of occupational socialization of what quality physical education is and how to enact it in a practical setting. This is extremely problematic when these teacher candidates graduate and begin teaching physical education. If there has been a re-education to ineffective practice, students are not getting a quality education, a poor perception of the profession is perpetuated, and universities lose out on potential (eventual) student teaching sites with quality programs with congruent philosophies.
Another problem with poor placements is that teacher candidates may question their abilities or worth of the profession, and may even choose to no longer be a physical educator. Smith (1993) found in a study examining early field experiences for sophomore physical education majors that when exposed to substandard experiences, the prospective teachers (PT) considered leaving the program. One PT who described what she observed as recess later considered majoring in some other field. Another who said the cooperating teacher didn’t really teach ended up dreading going to the experience every week and was no longer as excited to pursue physical education as a career. LaBoskey and Richert (2002) found that when a teacher candidate was put in a practicum experience that was not congruent with the university philosophy she began “questioning herself and the enterprise of teaching” (p. 14) and “she began to consider leaving the profession” (p. 15). This particular teacher candidate had a strong placement following the first weaker one that seemed to reestablish her faith in herself and the teaching profession. The impact felt in these situations is that the teacher candidates with the strong teaching orientations, those who want to implement the quality physical education programs universities are educating them to enact, are the ones who have the difficulty with poor placements. The teacher candidates we want to graduate into the work force are caused to question the profession when placed in substandard situations. Curtner-Smith (2001) observed that even a first-year physical educator (who accepted a job in a less than ideal situation) found that “his strong teaching orientation meant that he was not prepared to lower his standards and expectations, hence, by the end of the year he was seriously considering alternative careers…” (p. 100). These teachers with high standards and expectations of themselves and the programs they implement are the teachers we need in the schools.
Unfortunately, poor placements can cause the physical education profession to lose out on what it needs the most.

**Conclusion**

The student teaching experience is the most influential facet of an undergraduate teacher preparation program. Because of this, it is imperative quality practicum sites are being provided for teacher candidates. Student teaching is a complex and dynamic process with many factors that contribute to a successful experience. Physical education teacher education may encounter additional challenges as they may not being placing the teacher candidates (other agencies, such as the college of education may be the administrators of placements) and two quality placements need to be found for each teacher candidate. If someone other than PETE faculty is placing teacher candidates, she may not know what factors are needed for a quality physical education placement. And, as aforementioned, quality may not be a consideration as availability and proximity tend to be the major criterion for placing teacher candidates at student teaching sites.

Researchers have recommended that faculty placement or oversight of placements would help to provide better site selection (Norris et al., 1990; Siedentop & Locke, 1997; Smith 1993). Kalick (1971) recommends tailoring the student teaching experience to the individual students and Hobson et al. (2009) discusses deliberately pairing teacher candidates and cooperating teachers. There are recommendations for placement, but the limited research on placement procedures indicates that this is not occurring. Physical education teacher education has its own challenges with regards to student teaching placement, with little to no research examining how this phenomenon is being experienced. Knowing how crucial and formative the student teaching experience is, it is
imperative teacher candidates are being placed in the best possible situations to ensure growth. While there is research that illuminates factors that contribute to a successful placement, more research is needed into how PETE teacher candidates are being placed and how PETE faculty student teaching coordinators are experiencing the phenomenon. More research will shed light on whether best practice is being taking into consideration or if availability and proximity are truly the major criterion for placement. Additional research will also allow examination of the role PETE faculty play in the placement of physical education teacher candidates and barriers and coping mechanisms employed in the current system versus what they would see as ideal.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Problem, Purpose, and Research Questions

The student teaching experience is a critical aspect of a teacher preparation program. It is where teacher candidates develop competencies and bridge the gap from student to teacher, from theory to implementing theory in practice. Student teaching is a vital opportunity for occupational socialization. Because of the significance of student teaching, it is imperative that teacher candidates are placed at student teaching sites that will allow for the best opportunity for positive experiences to occur. Unfortunately, literature shows that student teaching sites are chosen more out of convenience than out of quality. Add to that, physical education teacher education programs may face additional challenges when placing teacher candidates at quality sites. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the process of student teaching site placements of PETE teacher candidates as experienced by PETE faculty student teaching coordinators. Questions guiding this research were as follows:

Q1: How are PETE teacher candidates placed in their student teaching sites?

Q1a: Who decides the official placement of teacher candidates and what role do PETE faculty play in the placement selection process?

Q1b: What criteria are used to select placements?

Q1c: What, if any, are barriers to placing teacher candidates in ideal locations?
Method

In qualitative research it is important to communicate not only which methodologies and methods are used when conducting the research process, but to also justify the choice and use (Crotty, 1998). Knowing methodologies and methods used help to best understand the results and discussion as the viewpoint of the researcher is evident. Epistemological views and theoretical perspective, along with methodology and methods determine what and how data is collected as well as how it is interpreted. Knowing these factors as well as why they were chosen will allow for better understanding of the research. Therefore, this study utilized the four elements of social research outlined by Crotty: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods.

The epistemological view of this study was constructivism. This view was used because I believe that knowledge is constructed and meaning made based on an individual’s prior knowledge and experiences and not already a given to be discovered. A constructivist approach, “describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them” (Crotty, 1998, p.79), best structured this study as the process of placing student teachers needed to be examined as well as how that process was perceived by the PETE faculty. The actual placement procedures, as well as the beliefs concerning the procedures, how they could be improved, and the barriers to improvement were different for each faculty member and therefore each faculty member constructed their own meaning and understanding of the phenomenon, making their experiences individual and therefore unique. However, by examining procedures, PETE faculty also reflected on what was occurring and how they felt about the process in order
to create meaning concerning what was occurring at this crucial assignment of student teaching sites.

Interpretivism “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67), and best explains the theoretical perspective of this study. Because this study looked for PETE faculty to “seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2013, p.24)” concerning current placement procedures along with beliefs and barriers of an ideal system, an interpretivist perspective made the most sense. Additionally, I wanted to not only make meaning of each individual’s situation, but also establish collective meaning for the group as a whole by looking for common experiences, beliefs, barriers, and coping strategies. Therefore, falling in with this perspective, I will not be starting with a theory but rather “inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25) based on the information collected from the participants.

The placement of teacher candidates is an inherent component of most traditional teacher preparation programs. However, PETE programs may have additional challenges managing placements as someone other than PETE faculty, who may be unfamiliar with quality physical education, may be selecting the location or there is a need for two placement sites, requiring two quality cooperating teachers and contexts. Researching how PETE teacher candidates are being placed and how PETE faculty student teaching coordinators are experiencing placement procedures is an initial step into improving the student teaching experience. Since this study looked to describe “the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76, emphasis in original), a phenomenological methodology best
described the study methodology. The methods employed are described in the following four sections: participants, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

**Participants**

When conducting a phenomenological study, “It is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied,” (Creswell, 2013, p. 155). Based on the review of literature, I determined that a two phase approach to data collection would provide the most representative data to address the stated purpose of this study. Phase 1 collected basic information on how PETE teacher candidates were placed in the U.S. since the literature does not address this question currently. The information gathered through phase 1 allowed the researcher to determine ideal PETE program and associated faculty for inclusion in phase 2, where a more in depth study of the placement phenomenon was conducted. The following sections detail the selection criterion and rationale for participant selection in both phases.

**Phase 1.** Participants for phase 1 were selected using criterion sampling to ensure participants had experience with the phenomenon and was as follows: (1) PETE student teaching coordinators from (2) four-year traditional baccalaureate programs, (3) Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), formerly known as National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), accredited (4) state universities (5) throughout the United States. PETE student teaching coordinators were selected because it is assumed that they have the most direct experience with the phenomenon being studied and will provide richer data than other faculty members who may have knowledge regarding student teaching placements but who may not directly be involved in the process. Only traditional four-year baccalaureate programs were
considered because they typically conclude with a student teaching practicum and include novice students, whereas post-baccalaureate and master’s programs may include in-service teacher seeking an additional endorsement (in which case the experience may lead to placement considerations to not be a concern). Universities with accreditation from CAEP and national recognition from the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) were included as to maximize the chances that PETE program candidates met the national standards for teacher preparation. Universities that were classified as state schools further limited the sample pool, as these universities tend to have lower tuition rates and in doing so making them more affordable to more potential students. The United States was chosen as the setting because gaining insight into how the phenomenon is experienced in this country has yet to be studied. Cross-referencing CAEP accredited and NASPE recognized programs with institutions classified as state universities, 108 programs met the criteria. While obtaining contact information to send a letter of introduction, I discovered that eight programs either no longer had a PETE program or were no long accepting students in anticipation of program termination, leaving 100 active programs that met the aforementioned criteria.

**Phase 2.** In phase 2, six PETE programs were purposely sampled based on (1) university governance structure, (2) who selects the student teacher placement, (3) programs that use two or more placement sites, and (4) how many teacher candidates needed placements in winter/spring 2016. Programs were first organized into groups based on whether they were organized within the college of education or not to see if the placement experience was affected by governance structure. Within the governance structure, programs were then organized by who officially selects the student teacher
placements: the college of education alone, the college of education with PETE faculty input, or PETE faculty. Programs with two or more student teaching sites were included because the majority (33 out of 40) of programs use two or more sites and also because having to find two quality placements adds to the complexity of the process. Finally, programs with the number of student teachers close to the median and mode of eight were chosen so that the research may be more representative. The selection criterion and process, as well as the programs selected, were verified by two expert reviewers before the programs were contacted for interviews. See figure 1 for an example of the selection process.

| Step 1: Separate programs by governance structure- College of Education (COE) or Not COE |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| COE                                        | Not COE                                    |
| A, C, E, G, I, K, etc.                     | B, D, F, H, J, L, etc.                     |

| Step 2: Within governance structure, separate programs by placement official |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| COE places                                 | Not COE                                    |
| A, G, etc.                                 | B, H, etc.                                 |
| COE places w/ PETE input                   | D, J, etc.                                 |
| C, I, etc.                                 |                                          |
| PETE places                                | F, L, etc.                                 |
| E, K, etc.                                 |                                          |

| Step 3: Programs with only one placement were crossed off the list. |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| COE                                        | Not COE                                    |
| A, G, etc.                                 | B, H, etc.                                 |
| COE places w/ PETE input                   | D, J, etc.                                 |
| C, I, etc.                                 |                                          |
| PETE places                                | F, L, etc.                                 |
| E, K, etc.                                 |                                          |

| Step 4: Programs with the number of Winter/Spring 2016 student teachers near the median/mode of 8 were selected. |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| COE                                        | Not COE                                    |
| A, etc.                                    | B, etc.                                    |
| COE places w/ PETE input                   | D, etc.                                    |
| C, I                                       |                                          |
| PETE places                                | F, L                                       |
| E, etc.                                    |                                          |

*Figure 1. Example of Process for Phase 2 Participant Selection*
Data Collection

IRB approval from the university was secured before data collection was conducted (appendix A). A letter of introduction (appendix B) was sent to the PETE department head (as listed on the PETE department website) or to the dean of the college governing the PETE program if a department head was not listed at the initial 100 universities meeting the criteria. The letter explained the study, requested permission to conduct the research at their university and requested the name of the PETE student teaching coordinator. The initial request resulted in 37 responses with PETE contact information. A follow-up request was sent in February, 2016 and resulted in 22 additional responses, for a total of 59 contacts, or 59% of the sample.

Informed consent for both the questionnaire and for the possibility of interview participation was obtained before access to the questionnaire was granted. Once questionnaire responses were received and analyzed, a new subject pool was created for phase 2 of the research. In phase 2, selected participants were contacted to schedule interview times. Each of the universities and PETE student teaching coordinators were given pseudonyms as necessary to help maintain confidentiality of the participants.

Phase 1. The questionnaire link was emailed to the student teacher coordinator contacts in February 2016. This initial request for questionnaire completion yielded 21 responses. A reminder was sent eleven days later to those who had yet to complete the questionnaire, yielding 13 additional responses for a total of 34 responses. A final reminder was sent two weeks later and 6 more questionnaires were completed for a total of 40 responses, which is 68% of the contacts and 40% of the sample.
Program demographics (such as university structure, number of FTE faculty, number of student teachers, etc.) and other placement procedures were collected using a questionnaire (see appendix C) administered through Qualtrics. The questionnaire was structured, the use of which is described by Merriam (2009) to “gather common sociodemographic data” and for “everyone to respond to a particular statement or to define a particular concept of term” (p. 90). Conducting this phase through the primary method of email had advantages, particularly when the number of initially contacted subjects was 100 universities with 40 eventually completing the questionnaire. Time and cost of travel were reduced as well as the time and cost of transcription (Creswell, 2013). Conducting the initial data collection online also allowed for participants to have flexibility in completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to all PETE faculty student teaching coordinators within the sample with a one month response deadline, and with the option to participate further in the study. Data collected in this phase was used to determine university organization and size of programs, who placed teacher candidates, and what qualities determined placement sites. Results were compiled and analyzed to look for commonalities and differences in placement procedures based on university organization, who placed PETE teacher candidates and how those sites were selected. Universities that met the criterion for phase 2 and indicated further interest were considered for more in-depth research.

**Phase 2.** The data collection method for phase 2 consisted of six in-depth interviews with selected subjects, as stipulated by Creswell (2013). The format was semi-structured which “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p.
Interviews were conducted via phone (5) or FaceTime (1) and lasted approximately twenty to sixty minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Topics explored included how the PETE student teaching coordinators experience the placement process: what part they play in the process, what they think an ideal placement system would look like, barriers to an ideal system, and how they cope with the barriers. Other topics explored included how satisfied they are with the sites their teacher candidates are placed at and, if the sites are less than ideal, what components were missing from the site and how the PETE program compensated for those deficiencies. A general format for the interview can be found in appendix D. Once each interview was transcribed, it was sent to the participant so there was opportunity for corrections, clarifications, and/or additions (member checking).

Data Analysis

Phase 1. All questionnaires were completed in Qualtrics, which provided options to code and provide basic data analysis (range, mean, variance, standard deviation). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, measures of central tendencies, and standard deviations were calculated and reported for PETE programmatic trends. Pearson $r$ correlations were also calculated using SAS to determine if relationships exist between governance, placing official, and primary site selection criterion.

Phase 2. Open and axial coding were used in order to describe the essence of the phenomenon and “develop significant statements and group statements into meaning units” (Creswell, 2013, p. 190). Open coding was initially used by “making notations next to bits of data that strike you as potentially relevant for answering your research questions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). Once this process was complete, initial open codes
were reviewed and, where there were similarities, grouped together, known as axial coding (Merriam 2009). Axial coding analysis lead to theme and, where applicable, subtheme development of what the participants were experiencing. When describing and developing these themes, verbatim examples from the participants are used to provide a rich depiction of the phenomenon.

The transcribed interviews were read and short descriptors were annotated next to responses. This allowed the researcher to view the main take-away of the data in one word/short phrases, such as misunderstood, relationships with CT, relationships with COE, ideal criteria, time barrier, try to change, congruency, socialization, etc. When open coding was completed on all six interviews, the data were brought together in a 3x2 chart, organized by governance structure and placing official. Structuring the data in this way on one sheet of paper allowed for easier analysis and axial coding.

During axial coding, commonalities began to emerge: feeling that physical education is a misunderstood discipline, relationships, poor placement issues, the need for strong placements, the ideal criteria when selecting placements, the ideal placement system, barriers to the ideal placement system. While these ideas were common with the majority, and in some cases all, of the faculty interviewed, there was a differing emphasis. Having the data in a 3x2 chart allowed the researcher to see that while there were commonalities among faculty experiences, those programs with the same placing official shared and placed emphasis on many of the same ideas. The chart provided an opportunity to “establish(es) patterns and look(s) for a correspondence between two or more categories” (Creswell, 2013, p.199). Based on the presented patterns, data were organized into three cases.
Organizing the data into three cases determined by placing official allowed for more complete theme and subtheme development. While there were commonalities between cases, because of the different placement officials and experiences, some differences in theme development occurred. The data is first presented in a within-case analysis followed by a cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2013). During the within-case analysis of data the following themes and subthemes emerged by case:

**Case 1 (College of Education places student teachers) themes and subthemes:**

- **PETE is a misunderstood discipline**
  - Issues with college of education taught courses
  - College of education hired supervisors
- Relationships and placements
- Placement impacts
- Ideal placement criteria
- Ideas for better placement experiences

**Case 2 (College of Education places with PETE faculty input) themes:**

- Relationships and placements
- Placement impacts
- Ideal placement criteria
- Positive current system procedures

**Case 3 (PETE faculty places student teachers) themes:**

- Relationships and placements
- Placement impacts
- Ideal placement criteria

Themes that emerged during the cross-case analysis are PETE is a misunderstood discipline, relationships are imperative, the ideal, barriers, and placement impacts.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was developed through several strategies. Triangulation by way of using multiple sources of data were used. These sources can be from different
participants with different perspectives as well as follow-up interviews, if necessary, from the same participants (Merriam, 2009). A peer debriefer was utilized. This strategy allowed for a peer outside the process to ask the hard questions and point out any areas that were not clear (Creswell, 2013). Another strategy is to clarify researcher bias, which is done in the “Role of the Researcher” section concluding this chapter. This illuminates biases, orientations, and past experiences that may influence the approach to research and the interpretation of the data. Member checking was conducted (Creswell, 2013) with the participants to ensure their meaning was interpreted and conveyed accurately as well as to interject if anything is missing. Finally, a rich, thick description is used which allows for readers to decide about the transferability of the results, and was accomplished through providing detailed descriptions and verbatim quotations from the participants. Creswell (2013) recommends utilizing at least two validation strategies within a study in order to improve trustworthiness and this research employs five of the eight strategies frequently used in qualitative research.

**Role of the Researcher**

I come to this research as a doctoral student in sport pedagogy. Once I have completed my doctoral program I will work in a PETE program preparing teacher candidates. There are several factors that may impact my perspective about the importance of how teacher candidates are being placed at student teaching sites. An initial influence includes experiences while completing an undergraduate physical education teacher preparation program at a major university in the Midwest. I had some say in my field experience placement in that I requested which city I wanted to be located. My elementary experience was first followed by secondary. I had one very
positive experience and one that, while not completely negative, was not a situation in which I would place a teacher candidate (through no fault of my eventual cooperating teacher). I also taught for six and a half years and was a cooperating teacher for one teacher candidate. I had no formal training to become a cooperating teacher, nor had I signed up to become one. I was notified by email one day that I would be getting a teacher candidate. When I questioned our district coordinator about this, I was told I was specifically selected to be a cooperating teacher for this particular teacher candidate, but was given no further information. I have also been a university supervisor for two physical education teacher candidates. This has allowed me to observe the interactions of the teacher candidate with the cooperating teacher and the environment and to think more about how placements are being made. I also participated in an internship where I had placements with two physical trainers. One placement was strong and the other was not. This experience has allowed me to evaluate how placements can influence socialization and impact career confirmation or questioning. Knowing that one day I will have teacher candidates of my own being placed in field experiences, and that I could possibly be a student teacher site coordinator, prompted me to explore the topic of placement. While conducting this study, I was not a TA/GA or part of a teacher education program. I was a stay-at-home mom, military spouse, and geographically separated from the university where I was enrolled.
CHAPTER IV

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH ARTICLE

Physical Education Teacher Education Student Teaching Placement Procedures Part 1:
A Descriptive Analysis

LeAnn E. Kesselring
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the placement procedures of physical education teacher education (PETE) programs in the United States. Of the 100 institutions invited to participate, 40 PETE programs completed the questionnaire. Participants reported the majority of their programs (62.5%) were organized under the college of education while 37.5% reported being organized under other colleges. No program reported being organized as a singular college. The median and mode for teacher candidates undergoing student teaching in the winter 2016 semester was 8. The majority of programs (92.5%) reported student teaching being one semester only and 80% reporting two or more cooperating teachers being utilized during that time. When asked who selected student teaching placements, 22.5% of programs reported the college of education alone, 45% reported the college of education with PETE faculty input, 27.5% reported PETE faculty, and 5% reported other. Congruency between the preparation program and the placement site was most frequently reported factor when selecting a student teaching site, followed by availability of the cooperating teacher, and then by particular cooperating teacher qualities. No correlation was found between governance structure, placement official, or primary factor for placement selection.

Keywords: physical education, student teaching, placement
**Introduction**

Student teaching is a common capstone experience of most teacher preparation programs in the United States. The internship is also widely regarded as the most formative experience within teacher education programs, rooting the beliefs and practices of teacher candidates. Behets and Vergauwen (2006/2012) stated “Student teaching is the critical element in teacher education programs, as it is the place where teacher competencies are developed” (pp. 408-409). Beck and Kosnik (2002) also noted that all levels of the student teaching triad (teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university faculty) view the student teaching practicum as a key element. Because student teaching is considered a crucial experience in the development of teacher candidates, it stands to reason that where and with whom the teacher candidate is placed for the internship is critical in fostering a quality learning experience. Finding appropriate placement sites which are optimal for each individual student is complex and multifaceted. Many factors contribute to an appropriate teaching placement, including quality of the program, the curriculum being taught, characteristics of the cooperating teacher (CT), the ecology of the site, and the congruency of theory and practice between the university program and the site itself.

Teacher candidates learn a great deal in the authentic environment of student teaching and may conform to the practices and expectations of the cooperating teacher (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). Smith (1993) also found that pre-service teachers in early field experiences, even while knowing the program was not quality, “continued to mimic inappropriate or outdated practices and teaching behaviors employed by their CTs” (p. 164). Occupational socialization is important to understand throughout a teacher
education program, and with student teaching being the most formative aspect, it is essential teacher candidates are put in situations that can maximize the potential for positive socialization. A poor placement site can socialize a teacher candidate to enact practices that are not in line with quality physical education and manifest additional detrimental effects. Finding quality placements can be difficult for any program, however, physical education teacher education (PETE) programs can also face additional placement challenges such as the governance structure of the university, knowledge of the placement official about quality physical education, and the need for multiple placements.

**Occupational Socialization**

Occupational Socialization research is commonly grounded in Lawson’s (1986) occupational socialization theory. As observed by Locke (as cited in Coleman & Mitchell, 2000), “The best program in the world can produce trainees with the desired behaviors and values - but any public school that does not share the same values can reshape the trainee in a few days” (p. 99). Student teaching is a time of transition from being a student to becoming a teacher. It is also a time where all three components of occupational socialization- acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization- are experienced (Lawson, 1983). Occupational socialization is defined by Lawson (1986) as “All kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of physical education and later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teacher educators and teachers” (p. 107).

Experiences and perceptions from birth through the K-12 years in physical education and sport influence the decision to pursue physical education as a career.
(acculturation). Professional socialization describes when would-be and in-service teachers gain and/or maintain knowledge, skills, and values necessary in the field. Professional socialization begins during the undergraduate degree program and continues throughout an individual’s teaching career through professional development and experience.

Organizational socialization occurs when “prospective and experienced teachers acquire and maintain a custodial ideology and the knowledge and skills that are valued and rewarded by the organization” (Lawson, 1983, p. 4). When thoughts and perceptions are gained, changed, or confirmed, socialization occurs. Perceptions of the physical education profession gained during acculturation may or may not be vastly different than the ideals presented in a physical education teacher preparation program. Professional socialization confronts or confirms perceptions throughout the process, coursework, and experiences of an undergraduate teacher preparation program. In general, the intent of teacher preparation programs are to ingrain (socialize) within students the ideals necessary to conduct a quality physical education program. Professional socialization continues during the student teaching experience, when teacher candidates experience what it is like to be a physical educator on a daily basis. Positive experiences during professional socialization can result in teacher candidates who graduate and are primed to teach quality physical education (Richards & Templin, 2011), and can have a persisting influence on beginning teachers (Curtner-Smith, 2001).

Student teaching is also a time of organizational socialization where the context of the teaching site and the parameters and values of the cooperating teacher and students being taught influence perceptions of the career. With student teaching being such a
formative experience in a teacher education program and a major contributing factor to the socialization processes, it is imperative that placement sites are chosen to reflect the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to promote occupational socialization in a manner that promotes quality physical education and teacher candidate success.

**Poor Placements**

Not only is it vital teacher candidates are provided the best opportunities for a successful student teaching experience, it is critical they are not placed at inadequate practicum sites. At a site not suited to support a quality student teaching experience, teacher candidates may become negatively socialized, or as Templin (1979) expressed, “The student teacher is re-educated in the occupational socialization process as he or she prepares to teach physical education” (p. 492). At some sites, the cooperating teacher provides the way things need to be done. They may impose that there is only one way to operate and work within their classroom - their way (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Sudzina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997). If how the cooperating teacher runs their classroom is not in line with the teachings of the PETE program, the teacher candidate can become confused and stressed. With the cooperating teacher being the model of how the “real world” of teaching is enacted, teacher candidates may follow the lead of the cooperating teacher, even if the practice is negative and regardless of their entering philosophies (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979). In many programs, cooperating teachers provide the final evaluation of the student teaching experience, which is a contributing factor to the approval or denial of certification. Some teacher candidates may be put in a position that in order to gain a passing evaluation, they have to conform to the practices of the
cooperating teacher despite what they have learned throughout their undergraduate program (Templin, 1979). Situations where conflicts arise between the teacher candidate and cooperating teacher can also lead to “negative classroom interactions and weak summative evaluations” (Sudzina et al., 1997, p. 29). Armaline and Hoover (1989) noted “Field experiences are sites where the potential for miseducation is as great as it is for education that transforms…” (p. 47). Because student teaching is so influential, one semester can undo seven or more semesters of occupational socialization of what quality physical education is and how to enact it in a practical setting. Miseducation during student teaching can be extremely problematic when teacher candidates graduate and begin teaching physical education. If there has been a re-education to ineffective practice, students are not getting a quality education, a poor perception of the profession is perpetuated, and universities lose out on potential (eventual) student teaching sites with quality programs with congruent philosophies.

Another problem with poor placements is that teacher candidates may question their abilities or worth of the profession, and may even choose to no longer be a physical educator. Smith (1993) found in a study examining early field experiences for sophomore physical education majors that when exposed to substandard experiences, the prospective teachers (PT) considered leaving the program. One PT, who described what she observed as recess, later considered majoring in some other field. Another, who said the cooperating teacher didn’t really teach, ended up dreading going to the experience every week and was no longer as excited to pursue physical education as a career. LaBoskey and Richert (2002) found that when a teacher candidate was put in a practicum experience that was not congruent with the university philosophy she began “questioning
herself and the enterprise of teacher” (p. 14) and “she began to consider leaving the profession” (p. 15). This particular teacher candidate had a strong placement following the first weaker one that seemed to reestablish her faith in herself and the teaching profession. The main impact observed from these situations is that teacher candidates with the strong teaching orientations who want to implement the quality physical education programs universities are educating them to enact, are the ones who have the difficulty with poor placements. The teacher candidates PETE programs want to graduate into the workforce question the integrity of the profession when placed in substandard situations. Curtner-Smith (2001) observed that even a first-year physical educator (who accepted a job in a less than ideal situation) found that “his strong teaching orientation meant that he was not prepared to lower his standards and expectations, hence, by the end of the year he was seriously considering alternative careers…” (p. 100). These teachers with high standards and expectations of themselves and the programs they implement are the teachers we need in the schools. Unfortunately, poor placements can cause the physical education profession to lose out on what it needs the most.

**Known Practices**

Research concerning factors that contribute to a quality student teaching site has been conducted. There are pedagogical practices that undergraduate programs instruct and are supported by research, such as practice time (Derri, Emanouilidou, Vassiliadou, Tzetis, & Kiomourtzoglou, 2008; Ennis, 2003; Metzler, 1989), communication (Ennis, 2003), and other critical variables of effective teaching described by Rink (2003), which should be modeled for, and put into practice by, the teacher candidate. What is enacted in the classroom at the student teaching site should support what is taught in the preparation
program. Student teaching is a bridge between theory and practice and congruency between what has been instructed and what is put into practice is a factor of a quality site (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Coleman & Mitchell, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Smith, 1993). Cooperating teacher orientation and qualities also play a significant role in the success of a student teaching experience and the relationship between a teacher candidate and cooperating teacher can enhance or distract from the goals of student teaching (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002; Sudzina et al., 1997). The ecology, or context, of the placement site can also affect the quality of the student teaching experience (Koerner et al., 2002; Ronfeldt, 2012, 2015). If a teacher candidate has to worry more about equipment and facilities or isolation and marginalization than pedagogical practices, the effects of the practicum may not be optimal. And while the aforementioned issues are realities many in-service physical educators face, the primary focus of student teaching needs to be effective teaching, best practice, and working toward positive occupational socialization.

Knowing how critical and valuable student teaching is, it stands to reason that there is an understanding of how significant the placement of teacher candidates into quality student teaching sites is within a teacher preparation program. McIntyre et al. echoes this sentiment saying that the placement for all field experiences, both early and student teaching, is a “crucial stage in teacher preparation” (p. 173), and Jones (1992) calls for a conscientious selection of sites for student teaching. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case. Placements are often made out of opportunity rather than finding quality programs, cooperating teachers, and sites (McIntyre et al., 1996; Sudzina et al., 1997). Kay and Ishler (1980) conducted a survey asking institutions to identify criterion
used to select exploratory field experience sites. Of the 200 institutions that responded, the most frequently cited criterion was availability of site personnel, proximity to the university/ease of transportation was cited second most frequent, and the quality of the program being cited by less than a third of the respondents (30.5%). While the criterion was listed specifically for those field experiences prior to student teaching, all field experiences are important and if the quality of the program is only a factor for less than a third of the responding institutions at the early stages, can more be expected for placement for the student teaching experience? There is little research that explores the phenomenon of teacher candidate placement and how it is being enacted, and virtually none in the realm of physical education teacher education where there exist other possible challenges such as not being housed, organizationally or physically, with the college of education. Many programs and therefore PETE faculty have little or no say in site selection.

If someone other than PETE faculty is placing teacher candidates, they may not know what features are needed for a quality physical education placement. And, as aforementioned, quality may not be a consideration as availability and proximity tend to be the major criterion for placing teacher candidates at student teaching sites. Researchers have recommended that faculty placement or oversight of placements would help to provide better site selection (Norris, Larke, & Briers, 1990; Siedentop & Locke, 1997; Smith, 1993). Kalick (1971) recommended tailoring the student teaching experience to the individual students and Hobson et al. (2009) discussed deliberately pairing teacher candidates and cooperating teachers. There are recommendations for placement, but the limited research on placement procedures indicates that this is not occurring.
Physical education teacher education has its own challenges with regards to student teaching placements, with little to no research examining how this phenomenon is being experienced. Knowing how crucial and formative the student teaching experience is, it is imperative teacher candidates are being placed in the best possible situations to ensure growth. While there is research that illuminates factors that contribute to a successful placement, more research is needed into how PETE teacher candidates are being placed and how PETE faculty student teaching coordinators are experiencing the phenomenon. Knowing current placement practices will also allow deeper examination of the role PETE faculty play in the placement of physical education teacher candidates and barriers and coping mechanisms employed in the current system versus what they would see as ideal. This paper was first in a two part inquiry of physical education teacher education student teaching placement site selection and its purpose was to provide a descriptive analysis of current placement practices of PETE teacher candidates.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants were selected based on criterion sampling to ensure they have experience with the placement process using the following conditions: (1) PETE student teaching coordinators from (2) four-year traditional baccalaureate programs, (3) Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), formerly known as National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), accredited (4) state universities with active PETE programs (5) throughout the United States. PETE student teaching coordinators were selected because it is assumed that they have the most direct experience with the phenomenon being studied and will provide more exact data than
other faculty members who may have knowledge regarding student teaching placements but who may not directly be involved in the process. Only traditional four-year baccalaureate programs were considered because they typically conclude with a student teaching practicum and include novice students, whereas post-baccalaureate and master’s programs may include in-service teachers seeking an additional endorsement (in which case the experience may lead to placement considerations to not be a concern). Universities with accreditation from CAEP and national recognition from the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) were included as to maximize the chances that PETE program candidates meet national standards for teacher preparation. Universities that were classified as state schools further limited the sample pool, as these universities tend to have lower tuition rates and in doing so making them more affordable to more potential students. The United States was chosen as the setting because gaining insight into how the phenomenon is experienced in this country has yet to be studied. At the time of this study there were 100 PETE programs in the United States that meet all the criterion outlined to be a participant. The number of eligible programs was determined by cross-referencing the most updated list of CAEP accredited and NASPE recognized baccalaureate programs with universities classified as state universities.

**Procedure**

A letter of introduction was sent to 100 institutions via email. The letter of introduction contained a description of the research and a request for permission to conduct research at the institution granted by providing PETE contact information. The initial request resulted in 37 responses with PETE contact information. A follow-up
request was sent and resulted in 22 additional responses, for a total of 59 contacts, or 59% of the sample.

An email with the questionnaire link was sent to the student teacher coordinator contacts and yielded 21 responses. A reminder was sent to those who had yet to complete the questionnaire, yielding 13 additional responses for a total of 34 responses. A final reminder was sent and 6 more questionnaires were completed for a total of 40 responses, which is 68% of the contacts and 40% of the sample.

All questionnaires were completed in Qualtrics © (Qualtrics, LLC), a web-based survey tool, which provided options to code and basic data analysis (range, mean, variance, standard deviation). Informed consent was obtained before access to the questionnaire was granted. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, measures of central tendencies, and standard deviations were calculated and reported for PETE programmatic trends. Pearson $r$ correlations were also calculated using SAS to determine if relationships existed between governance, placing official, and primary site selection criterion.

**Results**

The following data are descriptive in nature and represent 40% off PETE programs meeting the aforementioned criteria. The data describe PETE programs and the placement procedures of their teacher candidates at student teaching sites from the perspective of the PETE student teacher coordinator. The findings are organized into the following sections: program demographics, student teaching structure and content, and student teaching site selection.
Program Demographics

The majority of survey participants’ PETE programs were organized within the college of education (62.5%), with the rest reporting being organized within a “different college” (37.5%), such as health sciences or kinesiology. No participants reported their PETE program being organized as a singular college.

Respondents reported having a range of 1 to 13 full time faculty. The most frequently recounted number of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty (mode) was two, reported by 30% (12) programs, with the average being 4.34 (±2.97). Participants reported being a faculty member anywhere from 1 to 25 years with the average being 12.05 (±7.26) years. As a criteria for participation, all forty PETE programs offered bachelor’s degrees. In addition, 32.5% of programs offered a post-baccalaureate degree, 45% offered master’s degrees, and 12.5% offered Ph.D. degrees.

Student Teaching Structure and Content

At the time of the survey (spring 2016) respondents reported a range of 1 to 85 teacher candidates student teaching that semester, with an average being 12.18 (±14.81) and median and mode being 8. Participants anticipated a range of 0 to 85 teacher candidates student teaching in the 2016 fall semester with an average slightly lower than the spring semester of 10.03 (±14.15).

The majority of programs (92.5%) required one semester of student teaching, however, that percentage will drop to 87.5% as two programs anticipated changing to a two-semester student teaching requirement in the near future. The remaining three programs each had a different programmatic student teaching requirement of one quarter, two semesters, or three semesters.
While student teaching, seven programs utilized one cooperating teacher (17.5%). Thirty-two participants reported their student teachers experienced at least two cooperating teachers (twenty-nine reported two cooperating teachers, two respondents report three cooperating teachers, one was unclear in their description if there were two or three cooperating teachers), and one participant reported “other” but did not provide a description.

When asked “what levels are required for student teaching in your program?” thirty-two participants (80%) responded both primary and secondary levels. Six programs only required one level, three of those citing that all levels are covered in early field experiences. Two participants reported that the level(s) experienced during student teaching was determined by the teacher candidate and the state licensure they desired.

For twenty-nine of the respondents (72.5%), there was not a specific placement order between primary and secondary. Three programs placed primary first, one program places secondary first, and seven programs reported there was no order due to there only being one placement site.

**Student Teaching Site Selection**

When asked “how long have you been the student teaching coordinator?” 35 participants responded with a numerical answer ranging from 0 to 25 years and a mean of 7.05 (±6.64) years. Five other participants responded with “n/a” or that they did not consider themselves a coordinator since they do not make the placement, three of which cited that the college of education made the placements and one going as far as to say “we have no impact on their placement decisions.”
Participants were asked “who officially places (selects a site/cooperating teacher) physical education teacher education teacher candidates?” Sites were selected by the college of education for nine programs (22.5%), by the college of education with PETE input for eighteen programs (45%), by PETE faculty in eleven programs (27.5%), by students in one program and by the school district in one program. Based on this report, twenty-nine PETE programs (72.5%) had at least some input into where their student teachers are placed.

Participants were also asked to identify the primary, second, and third features/qualities used to select student teaching sites. This question was a forced response with the option to elaborate on CT qualities, context qualities, and “other.” Table 1 reports these data.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature/quality</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congruence between the PETE program and the site</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of the cooperating teacher/site</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular cooperating teacher qualities*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know/don't have a say</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other**</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity of the site to the University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular site context qualities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years the cooperating teacher has taught</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*particular qualities were listed in open response and will be identified in the discussion

**other features will be identified in the discussion

Congruence between the PETE program and the student teaching site was most frequently reported as both the primary selection criterion and the most considered feature overall. Availability of the cooperating teacher/site was the second most cited
feature and particular cooperating teacher qualities was the third most considered feature. “I don’t know/don’t have a say” was reported 15 times and was the fourth most frequently recorded feature.

Pearson r correlations were calculated using SAS to determine if there were any relationships between governance structure and placement official, governance and primary quality used for placement site selection, and placement official and primary quality used for placement site selection. The coefficients calculated were -0.04, -0.09, and -0.28, respectively. The data show that there were no correlations between governance structure, placement official, and primary quality used for placement site selection.

**Discussion**

Student teaching is the capstone of most traditional teacher preparation programs and is widely accepted as the most formative experience of a teacher candidate’s journey from student to teacher. Where and with whom teacher candidates are placed can significantly impact the teacher they become. Physical education teacher education programs know what best practices look like in the gym. Administrators and educators without a physical education background, while having a plethora of knowledge and experience, may not know what a quality physical education program entails. Because of this and the formative nature of student teaching, it is imperative that PETE faculty have a say in where and with whom their teacher candidates are placed. Unfortunately, data collected in this study demonstrated that 27.5% of programs do not have any input into where their teacher candidates complete their student teaching experience. In fact, of the six programs that had twenty or more (range 20-85) student teachers in the spring 2016
semester, only two had any input into the placements. There were 113 teacher candidates in just those four programs where PETE program and faculty had no say in the student teaching placement. Poor placements can lead to socialization that is contradictory to quality physical education, undue stress on a teacher candidate, and some students questioning or deciding to leave the profession.

Nearly two-thirds of programs surveyed fell under the college of education. Governance structure, however, did not impact who placed student teachers—just because a program fell under the college of education, did not necessarily mean the college of education placed the student teacher. When organized under the college of education, twenty percent of the PETE programs did not have faculty input regarding the placement site. In contrast, forty percent (6 of 15) of the programs governed by colleges other than education had no say in where teacher candidates complete their student teaching. These programs reported their teacher candidates being placed solely by the college of education, by the school district where the student teaching would take place, or by student selection of the placement. A possible explanation for this is that, due to less frequent interactions, there may not be as solid of a relationship between the college of education and the PETE program when the PETE program is not governed by the college of education. Governance structure also did not correlate with which feature/quality was the primary consideration for a student teaching placement. There was also no correlation between the placement official and which feature/quality was the primary consideration, indicating that PETE programs are also deciding which sites to use based on differing criteria.
Qualities used when selecting placement sites varied, however, the most noted feature identified was congruence between the PETE program and the placement site. This is different than what available research reports (Kay & Ishler, 1980; McIntyre et al., 1996; Sudzina et al., 1997), which was opportunity. This discrepancy could be because the available research is dated and there has been a shift over time of primary considerations or possibly because this research focused on PETE programs where primary qualities considered may be different than classroom education. Congruence is important because content and pedagogical practices being taught at the university should be supported by the program in which a teacher candidate is placed. Having congruence reinforces what is being taught at the university and enables teacher candidates to apply the theory and skills they have learned in their campus-based courses in live settings.

“Consistent messages from the theory classrooms on campus to the applied activities in the schools are far more powerful than contradictory messages from these two aspects of the certification program” (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000, p. 51). Coleman and Mitchell (2000) further detail benefits of a shared technical culture between the university and the placement site, to include the potential of a better understanding of expectations, a shared vision of what is important and how to achieve that vision, and the potential for reinforcement of professional values and behaviors espoused by the PETE program. Congruence is essential to the success (reinforcing positive socialization of the teacher candidate) of the field experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Smith, 1993). Being able to apply what is learned on-campus to what and how they are teaching in schools will help to promote positive socialization in the student teaching experience.
Congruence between PETE programs and placement sites can be achieved through utilizing professional development schools, CT training, using graduates of the program as CTs, properly trained university supervisors, and/or PETE working closely with CTs. For larger programs who may be needing forty or more placement sites (20 teacher candidates needing two cooperating teachers each), this may prove difficult unless systems are already in place and time and budget allow for the development of the congruence. Some placement site options may have a philosophy that is strong, well-documented and ground in theory but differs from the philosophy of the university. A placement such as this would not necessarily be negative, but can still be less than ideal due to the possible lack of a shared technical culture, which may lead to inconsistent messages and confusion. Because less than ideal placements can and do happen, LaBoskey and Richert (2002) recommend four ways to prepare for such placements: 1. having the more congruent placement come first in the student teaching experience, 2. “having well-designed, well-integrated coursework that supports the learning of program principles” (p.32), 3. having well-trained and supported university supervisors, and 4. collaboration with the cooperating teacher. By working together, universities and placements can promote student teaching experiences where the university knows quality teaching and mentorship are being supported.

Opportunity was cited in general education literature (Kay & Ishler, 1980; McIntyre et al., 1996; Sudzina et al., 1997) as one of the main features (such as availability of the cooperating teacher and university proximity to the school) of placement selection. In this study, cooperating teacher availability was the second most cited feature for selection of PETE cooperating teachers, with nine out of forty selecting
it as the primary feature considered. Thinking that maybe this feature was just used to determine the pool of candidates and CT qualities or a similar feature was used to then choose the best possible placements, the secondary selection feature of those nine programs was reviewed. Unfortunately, four of the programs that cited availability was the primary feature then reported proximity of the site to the university as the second feature considered in placement. Another program cited “I don’t know/don’t have a say,” another that a placement is in an underserved school, and a third was “what the student needs.” Therefore, seven of the nine that reported availability at the primary feature when choosing a student teaching placement did not list a feature related to the quality of the placement site (i.e. congruence or CT qualities) as the second feature. This, coupled with the four programs who maintained they didn’t know or have a say in which qualities determined placement selections, resulted in eleven (27.5%) of the programs selecting placements where the top two considered features do not relate to the quality of the experience. These eleven programs had over 120 teacher candidates student teaching in the spring 2016 semester. With student teaching such a formative experience this could be seen as a disservice to teacher candidates and the physical education profession as a whole.

The third most selected quality of placement determination was particular CT qualities. Eighteen programs selected this as a top three feature and only four programs chose this as the primary consideration when selecting student teaching placements. This is troubling as the cooperating teacher plays such a persuasive role in the student teaching experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Behets & Vergauwen, 2006/2012; McIntyre et al., 1996; Sudzina, et al., 1997; Templin, 1979), as Behets & Vergauwen (2006/2012) point
out “All participants agree that the CTs have the most significant influence on PTs (preservice teachers), especially on their attitudes” (p. 417). Several cooperating teacher qualities have been cited in the literature by all members involved in the student teaching process, the teacher candidate, the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, and PETE program (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hobson et al., 2009; Koerner et al., 2002; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Sudzina et al., 1997). The predominant themes of good cooperating teacher qualities suggest they are effective educators, supportive, and create a safe environment. Within the current study the most frequently listed quality was that the CT utilized best practices and/or was an effective teacher. Three programs worked to match personalities of teacher candidates with cooperating teachers and three programs cited mentor attributes such as high expectations, giving feedback, and being trained to be a CT. With cooperating teachers being so influential on the practices and attitudes of future practitioners, it is disconcerting that less than half of the programs surveyed listed CT qualities within the top three features used to select a student teaching placement and even more disturbing that only 10% used it as the primary feature.

Unfortunately, the fourth most selected quality overall was “I don’t know/don’t have a say.” For ten percent of the programs surveyed, this was the primary feature selected. At some universities the PETE faculty have absolutely no say as to where their teacher candidates will experience the most formative aspect of their teacher education program. The fifth most selected quality was “other” with descriptions including teacher candidate preference, school district preference, program diversity requirements (i.e. work in a Title 1 environment), and quality of the experience (i.e. mentor qualities, personality matches, cooperating teacher being a successful supervisor previously).
Summary

This study examined and described the placement procedures of PETE teacher candidates into student teaching sites for 40 programs out of a possible 100. The purpose of the research was to gain an understanding of who was placing PETE teacher candidates and what the main criteria was for site selection. Some key findings were that (a) the majority of programs are governed by the college of education and that when governed by the college of education PETE faculty have more of a say in placement selection; (b) congruence between the PETE program and the student teaching placement is the primary consideration; (c) 27.5% of programs don’t have a say in placement selection; (d) in line with known research in general education, although while not the primary consideration, availability before quality is a major feature in placement selection.

Overall, the findings from this survey provided an overview of how teacher candidates are being placed at student teaching sites across the United States. However, these findings did generate many more questions. Possible areas of future research could explore why there is not more of an emphasis on selecting placements based on quality of the experience; how PETE programs can have more of a say in the placement process of their own teacher candidates; how PETE programs can go about getting/selecting better placements; and, finally, exploring how well placement administrators know the communities in which student teachers are being placed. In order to ensure quality placement are selected for PETE teacher candidates, PETE faculty need to have involvement in the selection process. If quality placements are not selected for the student teaching experience, the potential for miseducation is heightened resulting in teachers
who may implement poor quality programs, question the profession, or even leave physical education all together.

The study had several limitations. The first was the number of responses from Deans/Department Chairs providing the appropriate faculty member’s contact information, coupled further by the number of those contacts who completed the initial questionnaire. Accurate data were also dependent on the truthfulness of the respondents.

This descriptive study of forty nationally accredited state universities aimed to describe how PETE teacher candidates were being placed at their student teaching sites. More research into why placements are occurring this way and avenues for improvement is needed. Part two of this study begins this effort by exploring how PETE faculty feel about the current system through interviews with six PETE student teacher coordinators in different situations. Student teaching is the capstone experience of most teacher preparation programs and many would argue the most formative. In order to best prepare teacher candidates and ensure quality physical education, placements conducive to the values of the program and the profession need to be selected for student teaching.
References


CHAPTER V

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ARTICLE

Physical Education Teacher Education Student Teaching Placement Procedures Part 2:
In-Depth with Six Programs

LeAnn E. Kesselring
Abstract
The purpose of this study was to explore how PETE faculty experience the student teacher placement process of PETE teacher candidates within different governance structures and placement systems. Based on questionnaire responses (See chapter 4), six programs were selected and the PETE faculty student teacher coordinator for each program was interviewed. Three programs were organized under the college of education and three were not. Within each governance structure, each of the following placement official structure was represented: college of education, college of education with PETE faculty input, and PETE faculty. Programs were organized into cases based on placement official and within case analysis was conducted, followed by cross-case analysis of the three cases. All participants agreed that PETE faculty should have a say in placement selection, but the ideal placement system may be different for different programs. Other themes include the importance of relationships with those involved in the placement process and that placements do have an impact on teacher candidate development so care should be taken when selecting placements.

Keywords: physical education, student teaching, placement
A capstone experience has to be that. It has to move them to the next step. Otherwise it’s not a capstone experience- it’s a waste of time.

- Wendy, student teacher coordinator

**Introduction**

Student teaching is widely regarded as the most formative experience of a teacher preparation program. The final practicum is where the theory learned in the classroom is put into practice full-time- the bridge from student to teacher. Many phrases have been used to describe the importance of student teaching, which include, “critical element” (Behets & Vergauwen, 2006/2012; Coleman & Mitchell, 2000), “key aspect” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996), “crucial role” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002), and “most influential” (Ronfeldt, 2012) to the point where this notion is widely accepted in the teaching field. The importance of student teaching is a view shared by members representing all aspects of a teacher education program- “All participants, preservice teachers (PTs) or student-teachers, university teachers (UTs), and mentors or cooperating teachers (CTs) are in full agreement that the teaching practicum is the most important and effective learning experience in a physical education teacher education (PETE) program” (Behets & Vergauwen, 2006/2012, p. 409). Armaline and Hoover (1989) go on to say “In fact, many teachers, like graduating seniors, will note that the only things worthwhile in their professional education programs were the field experiences” (p. 47). With the student teaching experience being so formative, it is imperative that the occupational socialization that occurs during student teaching is achieved through quality physical education programs with quality cooperating teachers at sites with supportive ecologies. Unfortunately, general education research finds that most student teaching placements are
made out of convenience rather than quality of the placement, with little to no research on the placement process for physical education teacher education.

There are several factors that contribute to the quality of a student teacher placement, most notably, pedagogical practices and congruency (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Smith, 1993), cooperating teacher qualities (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Koerner, Rust, & Baumgartner, 2002; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Sudzina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997), and context of the site (Koerner et al., 2002; Ronfeldt, 2012, 2015). Teacher candidates need to be in a student teaching environment where best practices are being used. A quality placement will allow them to first observe how a good program is enacted and then practice what they have learned and observed in their teacher preparation courses and from their cooperating teacher.

**Poor Placement Effects**

Pedagogical practices and teacher qualities exhibited by the cooperating teacher will have a lasting effect on the teacher candidate. “Thus, the placement of the prospective teacher for both early field experience and student teaching is a crucial stage in teacher preparation” (McIntyre et al., 1996, p.173). Not only is it important teacher candidates are placed at student teaching sites that exemplify quality, it is critical they are not placed in situations that undermine the socialization of the teacher preparation program. At sites that are not congruent with what has been taught and learned in the classroom, “The student teacher is re-educated in the occupational socialization process as he or she prepares to teach physical education” (Templin, 1979, p. 492). Some cooperating teachers may assert their beliefs and practices on a teacher candidate and
only allow those same methods during student teaching (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Sudzina, et al., 1997). With the cooperating teacher being the model of how the “real world” of teaching is enacted, teacher candidates may emulate the practices of the cooperating teacher, even when they know the practice is substandard and regardless of their entering philosophies (Coleman & Mitchell, 2002; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979). Armaline & Hoover (1989) summed this up by saying “Field experiences are sites where the potential for miseducation is as great as it is for education that transforms…” (p. 47). The semester spent in the student teaching practicum is so influential it has the potential to negate what has been learned throughout the teacher preparation program. The experience can cause the student teacher to question his/her abilities and the desire to pursue the profession itself (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002). The undoing of occupational socialization for quality physical education is extremely problematic when these teacher candidates graduate and begin teaching physical education. If there has been a re-education to ineffective practice and novice teachers are not delivering quality physical education, then a poor perception of the profession is perpetuated and universities lose out on potential (eventual) student teaching sites with quality programs with congruent philosophies.

**Known Practices**

Research in education shows that many CTs and sites are chosen out of convenience (McIntyre et al., 1996), simply, the availability of a cooperating teacher and proximity to the university (Kay & Ishler 1980; Smith 1993). With PETE programs usually connected to the school of education, who has the oversight of physical education teacher candidate placements- the college of education or PETE? In agriculture teacher
education programs, Norris, Larke, and Briers (1990) found that “the strongest belief held
by teacher educators was that faculty members should make the final decision concerning
placement of student teachers” (p. 63). It is important that those who are most familiar
with program instruction and values coordinate, or at least participate in the coordination
of, student teaching sites that will support what is taught within the program. When a
student teaching site coordinator is unfamiliar with effective and quality physical
education, poor and unsuccessful placements can be made (Smith, 1993). Siedentop and
Locke (1997) prescribed that there is enough program control over field experience site
placements to ensure only quality, congruent philosophies are present for the experience.
Norris et al. (1990) and Sudzina et al. (1997) further advocate for matching teacher
candidates and cooperating teachers. While there are recommendations for PETE faculty
over-site of placements and research to show how critical a placement can be in the
development of a teacher candidate, there is a gap in the research which explores how
PETE teacher candidates are being placed at field experience sites.

This article is the second part of a two part study. The first study explored the
demographics and the overall student teacher placement system of forty PETE programs
in the United States. The purpose of this aspect of the study was to explore in-depth how
PETE faculty student teacher coordinators experience the student teacher placement
process of PETE teacher candidates within different governance structures and placement
systems.
Method

Participants

The sample pool was derived from analysis surveys from 40 accredited PETE programs in the US (see Chapter 4), where demographics and current practices were explored. Participants in this study were purposely sampled from those 40 programs to ensure they have experience with the placement process using the following process: PETE programs were first organized by governance structure (college of education vs. other college) and the student teacher placement official (college of education official, college of education official with PETE faculty input, and PETE faculty), only programs with two or more placement sites, and those programs with the number of student teachers in the 2016 winter/spring semester near the median and mode of eight from the initial survey results. Figure 1 is an example of this process.

Organizing by governance structure and placement official was chosen to explore any similarities and differences in how placements processes are experienced by PETE faculty. Programs with two cooperating teachers were chosen because the majority of programs (33 of 40) have at least two placements and having to coordinate two quality placements is typical of PETE and adds to the complexity of the process. Using programs with the number of student teachers near the median and mode were included so that results can be more generalizable to more programs.
Step 1: Separate programs by governance structure - College of Education (COE) or Not COE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>Not COE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A, C, E, G, I, K, etc.</td>
<td>B, D, F, H, J, L, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: Within governance structure, separate programs by placement official

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>Not COE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COE places</td>
<td>A, G, etc.</td>
<td>B, H, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE places w/ PETE input</td>
<td>C, I, etc.</td>
<td>D, J, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETE places</td>
<td>E, K, etc.</td>
<td>F, L, etc.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: Programs with only one placement were crossed off the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>Not COE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COE places</td>
<td>A, G, etc.</td>
<td>B, H, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE places w/ PETE input</td>
<td>C, I, etc.</td>
<td>D, J, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETE places</td>
<td>E, K, etc.</td>
<td>F, L, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 4: Programs with the number of Winter/Spring 2016 student teachers near the median/mode of 8 were selected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>Not COE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COE places</td>
<td>A, etc.</td>
<td>B, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE places w/ PETE input</td>
<td>C, I</td>
<td>D, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETE places</td>
<td>E, etc.</td>
<td>F, L, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Example of Process for Phase 2 Participant Selection

Procedure

Based on governance structure, placement official, two placements, and number of student teachers, six programs were selected for in-depth study into their placement experiences via interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>College of Education</th>
<th>Not College of Education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Ed places</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Ed places with PETE Input</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETE places</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Programs Selected for Interviews
Once the programs had been identified, emails were sent to the person who completed the initial questionnaire to ensure continued participation and to request an interview. All six faculty members who were contacted agreed to participate, phone interviews were then conducted with five of the faculty members, while a sixth interview was conducted via FaceTime. The length of interview ranged from 19 to 57 minutes with an average of 39.5 minutes. Only the PETE student teacher coordinator from each program was interviewed as that individual has the most authentic experience with the placement process. The interviews were fully transcribed and the transcriptions were sent back to the participants to ensure accuracy and to offer the opportunity for clarification or further input prior to analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Open and axial coding were used in order to describe the essence of the phenomenon and “develop significant statements and group statements into meaning units” (Creswell, 2013, p. 190). The transcribed interviews were read and, using open coding as described by Merriam (2009), short descriptors were annotated next to responses. This allowed the researcher to view the main take-away of the data in one word/short phrases, such as misunderstood, relationships with CT, relationships with COE, ideal criteria, time barrier, try to change, congruency, socialization, etc. When open coding was completed on all six interviews, the data were brought together in an initial 3x2 chart, organized by governance structure and placing official, similar to Figure 2. Structuring the data in this way allowed for easier and more systematic analysis and coding.
During axial coding, where initial open codes were analyzed for similarities (Merriam, 2009), commonalities were determined: feeling that physical education is a misunderstood discipline, relationships, poor placement issues, the need for strong placements, the ideal criteria when selecting placements, the ideal placement system, and barriers to the ideal placement system. While these ideas were common with the majority, and in some cases all, of the faculty interviewed, there was a differing emphasis. Having the data in a 3x2 chart allowed the researcher to see that while there were commonalities among faculty experiences, those programs with the same placing official shared and placed emphasis on many of the same ideas. The chart provided an opportunity to “establish(es) patterns and look(s) for a correspondence between two or more categories” (Creswell, 2013, p.199). Based on the presented patterns, data were reorganized into three cases.

Organizing the data into three cases determined by placing official allowed for more complete theme and subtheme development. While there were commonalities between cases, because of the different placement officials and experiences, some differences in theme development were noticeable. The data for the three cases will first be presented in a within-case analysis followed by a cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2013). During the with-in case analysis of data, the following themes and subthemes emerged by case:
Case 1 (College of Education places student teachers) themes and subthemes:

**PETE is a misunderstood discipline**
- Issues with college of education taught courses
- College of education hired supervisors

Relationships and placements
Placement impacts
Ideal placement criteria
Ideas for better placement experiences

Case 2 (College of Education places with PETE faculty input) themes:

Relationships and placements
Placement impacts
Ideal placement criteria
Positive current system procedures

Case 3 (PETE faculty places student teachers) themes:

Relationships and placements
Placement impacts
Ideal placement criteria

Themes that emerged during the cross-case analysis were PETE is a misunderstood discipline, relationships are imperative, the ideal, barriers, and placement impacts.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through several strategies. Triangulation by way of using multiple sources of data provided by different participants with different perspectives (Merriam, 2009) was used. A peer debriefer was also utilized which allowed for a peer outside the process to ask the hard questions and point out any areas that were not clear (Creswell, 2013). Another strategy was to clarify researcher bias, which has been done in “Role of the Researcher” concluding this section which illuminates biases, orientations, and past experiences that may influence the approach to research and the interpretation of the data. Member checking was conducted (Creswell, 2013) with the
participants to ensure their meaning was interpreted and conveyed accurately as well as to interject if anything was missing. Finally, a rich, thick description was used which allows for readers to decide about the transferability of the results, and was accomplished through providing detailed descriptions and verbatim quotations from the participants.

**Role of the Researcher**

I come to this research as a doctoral student in sport pedagogy. Once complete, I will work in a PETE program, preparing teacher candidates. There are several factors that may impact my perspective about the importance of how teacher candidates are being placed at student teaching sites. An initial influence includes experiences while completing an undergraduate physical education teacher preparation program at a major university in the Midwest. I had some say in my field experience placements in that I requested which city I wanted to be located. My elementary experience was first followed by secondary. I had one very positive experience and one that, while not completely negative, was not a situation in which I would place a teacher candidate (through no fault of my eventual cooperating teacher). I also taught for six and a half years and was a cooperating teacher for one teacher candidate. I had no formal training to become a cooperating teacher, nor had I signed up to become one. I was notified by email one day that I would be getting a teacher candidate. When I questioned our district coordinator about this, I was told I was specifically selected to be a cooperating teacher for this particular teacher candidate, but was given no further information. I have also been a university supervisor for two physical education teacher candidates. This has allowed me to observe the interactions of the teacher candidate with the cooperating teacher and the environment and to think more about how placements were being made. I also
participated in an internship where I had placements with two physical trainers. One placement was strong and the other was not. This experience has allowed me to evaluate how placements can influence socialization and impact career confirmation or questioning. Knowing that one day I will have teacher candidates of my own being placed in field experiences, and that I could possibly be a student teacher site coordinator, prompted me to explore the topic of placement. While conducting this study, I was not a TA/GA or part of a teacher education program. I was a stay-at-home mom, military spouse, and geographically separated from the university where I was enrolled.

**Within-Case Analysis**

The data is presented as three cases consisting of two programs within each case. The cases are organized by who placed the teacher candidate at their student teacher site—the college of education, the college of education with PETE faculty input, or PETE faculty— and are each comprised of one program governed by the college of education and one governed by a college other than the college of education (see Figure 2). A brief summary of each program is given followed by common themes and differences across the two programs. Following the three cases, the data is discussed across the six participating programs. All names provided are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the faculty member and PETE programs.

**Case 1: College of Education Places Student Teachers**

**University A, coordinator Sara.** University A is located in a southeast town on the outskirts of an urban area and had an undergraduate enrollment of less than 5000 students. Sara was a member of a PETE program governed by the college of education which offered a Bachelor of Science degree. The program had three full time faculty
members and in spring 2016 had five student teachers. Student teaching sites were selected for PETE teacher candidates by a placement coordinator within the college of education who contacted a school district who assigned coordinating teachers. Sara was adjunct faculty at the university and had been supervising the PETE program teacher candidates during student teaching, a role she lobbied for after discovering the previous supervisor had no expertise in physical education and was not providing adequate feedback.

At the time of the study Sara noted that the program was currently in transition with faculty and the program as a whole, “…we’re working from old, archaic kind of ways and we try to make it better so to speak. So that’s been, it’s been kind of hard. You have to redo and rethink but it is difficult for change to occur.” She also described how some PETE faculty may have divided foci with other related programs such as exercise science or health promotion, as well as a brand new major.

Sara expressed discontent with the current system. Some concerns discussed included not having any real knowledge of how the teacher candidates are placed, with the school districts choosing the placement, the motivation for having a student teacher is unknown, and there is no PETE faculty presence at the student teaching seminars or support for the required teacher work sample. She, along with a PETE colleague, had been working on what changes they would like to see in order to present their ideas to the Dean.

**University B, coordinator Henry.** University B had an enrollment of less than 20,000 undergraduate students and is located in a southwest town in the U.S. Henry was a PETE faculty member within a college of health sciences. The program was a Bachelor
of Science degree. The students in the program graduate with a degree in kinesiology with a minor in secondary education and a K-12 teaching certification. There were two full time faculty members and in the spring 2016 had “approximately thirteen” student teachers. For student teaching placements, PETE teacher candidates requested three school districts (from a pool of over 90 districts the university partnered with) and a placement coordinator within the college of education field experience office contacted the corresponding school district and the school district assigned the cooperating teachers. Students may request a placement in their hometown, which in many cases were granted. With some of the teacher candidates, Henry tried to make suggestions of placements to request as he was a coordinator of physical education for a local district and now coordinates elementary early field experiences. However, many of the teacher candidates chose to go home or to an area demographically similar.

Henry expressed discontent, frustration, and at times, almost hopelessness. He was very passionate about PETE and felt the program was not preparing quality physical educators as adequately as it could. Much of his frustration stemmed from the program not really having any autonomy. While not governed by the college of education, students still took twenty-four education credit hours, including their general method courses, whereas only elementary methods and secondary methods were taken in the PETE department. Additionally, students were required to take 42 credit hours in related areas such as kinesiology courses, Henry noted “Most of the courses are foundational-biomechanics, motor learning. Many of them that do not really prepare our teachers what we teach in schools.” Henry said he would prefer some of those requirements that aren’t really used in physical education be dropped in favor of more PE content courses. He also
discussed that many times university supervisors and seminar instructors have contacted him for guidance on standard physical education practices. Henry was also an advocate for change in several areas of the PETE program, but has been met with minimal success. One victory, which took over a year to realize, was when the program could not get accredited because the teacher work sample the college of education required was rejected for physical education because it was too generic and designed for the classroom. Henry had to meet with committees and give presentations and in the end was eventually able to modify the teacher work sample to assess the physical education majors, which in turn lead to program accreditation.

**Common themes: University A&B.** The following themes were determined through the interview responses of Sara and Henry: PETE is a misunderstood discipline, relationships will help make better placements, placements do have an impact, ideal placement criteria, and ideas for better placement experiences.  

**Physical education teacher education is a misunderstood discipline.** Both Sara and Henry felt that the discipline of physical education and what quality physical education should entail was not understood by the college of education. They felt this way because of issues concerning required courses taught through the college of education and with whom they hired as supervisors for PETE teacher candidate student teaching experiences.

**Issues with college of education taught courses.** General methodology at Henry’s university was taught through the college of education which he described as “pretty scary” because, until recently, the course was “taught by an individual that had no clue
about physical education teaching methodology.” He was happy to report, however, that recently an individual with a physical education background now teaches the course.

The capstone project, a teacher work sample, was completed through the college of education at both universities. As aforementioned, Henry had some success with this hurdle because the teacher work sample the college of education wanted the PETE program to use prevented them from being accredited and recognized by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). “The generic teacher work sample was not, was not good, was not actually assessing what we need to assess.” Sara had also experienced issues with the teacher work sample being completed and graded within the college of education:

Our students are right up there, they’re writing up their lesson, let’s say, for the teacher work sample. And this is a specific example where a student of mine was doing a lesson on hockey and in the directions he used the word ‘puck.’ And any PETE person would know what a puck is. It’s not even like an issue. But this teacher in this seminar, this seminar teacher she did not I guess really understand what a puck was. And hockey’s not…which I still don’t believe. So he had to, each time had to define, I mean define a puck. And I’m just like it’s a battle.

At both universities the seminar course taken in conjunction with student teaching was through the college of education. This can be an issue if PETE teacher candidates are bringing issues, concerns, or ideas to the conversation and there is no one to support them. When navigating issues encountered specifically in physical education within the seminar course, called a compendium course at Henry’s university, he said “If the compendium, or this instructor have any problems, then they call us. Every time, it doesn’t fail. I spend quite a bit on the phone with them.” Sara also felt that because of the lack of knowledge on the part of the instructors, the teacher candidates were not getting the support they needed, “if they’re so far removed from the subject matter of what our
students are teaching, how are they able to help them in any way?” At Sara’s university the seminar course also had multiple sections so at times the PETE teacher candidates were not in class with each other which did not allow for shared experiences or support of one another.

*College of education hired supervisors.* The college of education may employ very knowledgeable and skilled supervisors. But if those supervisors do not know physical education content and pedagogy, they, in most cases, are unable to appropriately support PETE teacher candidates. Sara once observed a supervisor and commented “he just kind of watched the lesson and afterwards just said ‘ok, how’s it going?’” and observed further “No sitting down to have a little conference, no feedback, nothing.” Sara attributed the unsatisfactory interaction to the supervisor’s lack of physical education knowledge. Henry also had difficulty with college of education hired supervisors and sometimes had to spend many hours on the phone explaining to them how physical education is taught. Many times they don’t even know the basic concepts and standards of physical education Henry pointed out, commenting “I have supervisors calling me ‘do you write objectives on the affective domain? What is that?’”

*Relationships and placements.* Relationships play a part in selecting and fostering student teaching sites that are conducive to positive learning experiences. Both Sara and Henry discussed developing relationships with the placement personnel at the school districts where their teacher candidates are placed for student teaching. Sara summed it up with her ideal:

If we could work with that person [district PE coordinator]…and have a relationship with the county [district] where we had more control so that we could say ‘ok, we’ve got this many student teachers this semester. Can we have…so-
and-so at such-and-such elementary school?’ and…specifically place them with, at the specific school.

For Henry this would be a daunting of a task with 90 school district partners. He did talk of wanting to limit the number of district options available to PETE teacher candidates, and, if he was able to do through the college of education placement office, fostering working relationships with district coordinators would be a possibility. Both Sara and Henry discussed the importance of having a relationship with the cooperating teacher. Knowing a teacher and how they instruct and manage a classroom would help to determine if that teacher is one a program would want as a cooperating teacher. If that teacher is selected, working together, the PETE program and the cooperating teacher can promote a positive learning experience for the teacher candidates. Because elementary methods falls within his program’s purview, Henry did have the opportunity to select the mentor teachers for the early field-based experiences. “I work with elementary PE teachers, I teach elementary methods and I know teachers that are quality teachers. So I send my students there.” While this was great, he also acknowledged that they got very little from this experience compared to the very important experience of student teaching, where he had no control over the cooperating teacher selection.

Placement impacts. Sara and Henry both agree that the student teaching experience can impact future instruction of teacher candidates. Positive socialization occurs if the placement site reinforces quality physical education and what it taught in the teacher preparation program. If, however, the placement site does not support what has been taught in the undergraduate program, the effects can be very detrimental. Sara described the situation as “So we do all this work for four years and then they go to student teaching and if it’s not a good situation, that last experience they have is, like, it.
You know, and they’re going to go be PE teachers like that, you know, or even worse they’ll ultimately go back to the type of PE they had as young people.” Henry commented that if a teacher candidate is put in a “busy, happy, and good” style placement then all the theory and coursework from the teacher preparation program is “just a waste of time, basically.” Both coordinators added that they do discuss with teacher candidates that some placements may be less than ideal and may not be employing best practices. They would tell the teacher candidates that they can use the situation and learn from it, that as Henry puts it “you could see what to do and what you can also see is what not to do.”

**Ideal placement criteria.** Sara and Henry both agreed on three criteria that contribute to a placement being ideal. The first is that quality teaching practices are occurring. “An ideal placement would be a teacher that certainly is a quality teacher, that knows the content well, that has a thorough command of the content, has excellent, effective teaching skills…and that could be linked to what we do here at the school” said Henry. Which leads right into the second criteria of congruency. If the theory being taught in the teacher preparation program is supported during the student teaching experience, the teacher candidate will be socialized better into the profession. Sara emphasized congruency by saying that part of the ultimate experience would be “…first and foremost to have a cooperating teacher who is on board with the university and helping us to fulfill the things we would like to fulfill in student teachers.” Both student teacher coordinators also discussed a third criteria of aspects of the context of the placement site, ranging from having a gym and adequate equipment to the school having a positive, nurturing environment for teachers.
Ideas for better placement experiences. Sara and Henry were both unhappy with the current placement system and were working to find ways to have a say in where teacher candidates fulfill their student teaching requirements. Both wanted to see quality sites identified and used as a pool from which the PETE teacher candidates could choose. Henry also wanted to limit the number of options (as of now his university partners with over 90 school districts) and Sara wondered about the use of professional development schools. Both also agreed that a way to enhance the student teaching experience would be to ensure the university supervisor had adequate knowledge of physical education content and pedagogical practices.

Differences. Sara and Henry did not have many differences when discussing placement issues. When contemplating if the PETE program had more control over the placements, their thoughts did take different directions. Sara wondered about the placements themselves, “is it better to find a placement where it’s a great program already established or is it better to find a placement where those PE teachers, current PE teachers, or in-service PE teachers are going to allow our student teachers to have complete 100% freedom to try what we want them to try, for example.” She went on to say that ideally, it would be both of the above. Henry thought more about the logistical side, the paperwork, time, and the differing district procedures, which also makes sense with such a small faculty size. Henry also discussed having a relationship with the placement office, but felt that the need for the college of education to have control was outweighing the chance of input from PETE faculty.
Case 2: College of Education Places
Student Teachers with Input from
Physical Education Teacher
Education Faculty Student
Teaching Coordinator

University C, coordinator Kevin. University C is in a large suburban area in the mid-west and had an undergraduate enrollment between 20,000 and 25,000. Kevin was a member of a PETE program that was governed by the college of education which offered a Bachelor of Science degree, a post-Baccalaureate degree, and a Master of Science degree. There were five full time faculty members and in spring 2016 the program had eight student teachers. Student teaching placements were made after teacher candidates requested their preferences, Kevin, as the PETE placement coordinator, collaborated with a PETE colleague to select placements and submitted the requests to the placement office in the college of education. The placement office then submitted the requests to the school districts. Kevin did also coordinate with health education faculty so that teacher candidates were at the same schools for both health and physical education.

Kevin was fine with how the placement system worked at his school.

Well, you know, it works. I’m not sure whether it’s as ideal as contacting the schools myself, but on the other hand, it saves me that step to be quite honest. We’ve gotten accustomed to this process and it is actually quite nice not to have to contact all the board offices and wait for replies. I can send all of the requests in one go to our placement office and they then send them out to the individual school districts so they’ve taken that off our hands, which is nice.

Kevin also went on to say that for the most part the PETE program was selecting the student teaching sites and the college of education placement office was communicating with the school districts with the requests, the follow-up, and paperwork associated with student teaching. He also stated that the reason this system worked for them may be because they were not a big program, “We only, we probably average about eight or nine
[student] teachers per semester so it’s not a big program. That’s another reason why it makes it more doable for us perhaps.”

**University D, coordinator Michelle.** University D is located in a small city in the west and had an undergraduate enrollment between 10,000 and 15,000 students. Michelle was a member of a PETE program governed by the department of kinesiology which offered a Bachelor of Science degree. There were two full time faculty members and in the spring 2016 had eight student teachers. At University D, the PETE department was “responsible for the degree and the teacher education department is responsible for the licensure.” Michelle stated this means that the teacher education department “completely own student teaching.” The teacher candidates within this program had a semester-long pre-internship where they rotated through in-service teachers at various levels so they could “experience different teachers, different teaching styles, different schools, and such.” After eight weeks the mentors and pre-interns evaluated each other. At that time, Michelle sat down with another PETE colleague and, having the evaluations, knowing the students, and knowing the mentors, decided on student teacher placements and then suggested those placements to the teacher education department. Those placements were made at the 8-10 week mark of the pre-internship. Once the placements were confirmed, the pre-interns continued their hours but only with the mentors they had been assigned for student teaching the next semester.

Michelle expressed that the current system of placement for her program worked well now, which was not the case before she was a member of the faculty when the teaching education department was making the placements based on where the teacher candidates wanted to go. At the time Michelle was hired on as faculty, the teacher
education department also hired a new placement coordinator and she was able to forge a positive relationship with the new coordinator and was successful in gaining PETE input into student teaching placements. She did like how things were working at the time of the interview, but was aware that the teacher education department could, at any moment, take control of placements as there was no protocol stating PETE had any input in student teaching placements and student teaching is a teacher education department course.

**Common themes: Universities C & D.** The following themes were determined through the interview responses of Kevin and Michelle: relationships will help make better placements, placements do have an impact, ideal placement criteria, and positive current system procedures.

**Relationships and placements.** Both Michelle and Kevin emphasized having a relationship with the department/college of education when it came to placements. Michelle went into detail about how much effort she exerted to create that relationship by doing things like spending at least two hours per week in the placement office her first year in the PETE coordinator position and baking them cookies from time to time. She also discussed how the department of education gave the PETE teacher candidates their grades for student teaching and how she navigated some of that with the placement coordinator.

…she goes out and sees them too and if I see big issues- I’m trying to keep that relationship going and so I’ll go sit in her office and be like ‘I went and watched Kelly go teach the other day and I really saw this and this is a concern.’ Because she is not a PE person, you know? ‘I know you are going next week, could you really watch out for this?’ And she’ll be like ‘oh, yeah, ok.’ Because she doesn’t see PE at all. She’ll watch a dodgeball lesson and she’ll tell me how fantastic that dodgeball lesson was.
Because both programs work with the department/college of education for placements, it makes sense both Michelle and Kevin would emphasize the relationship with the placement coordinator. This is particularly true with Michelle, where, because she put in the time and effort to foster a relationship, her PETE program now has a say as to where PETE teacher candidates are placed for student teaching.

Placement impacts. Many placement impacts were discussed by Michelle and Kevin, but one that both brought up was having strong teacher candidates put into weaker placements. Kevin put it this way: “If you have a strong student teacher, they can survive a less than adequate placement.” Survive, not thrive. Michelle, who had a limited number of placements due to geographic location, discussed having to place a teacher candidate in a “horrible placement.” “She wasn’t going to get any mentoring… It’s unfortunate because we know the value of having a good mentor, but I also have to make do with what I have available.”

Ideal placement criteria. Michelle and Kevin really emphasized cooperating teacher qualities when discussing what they looked for in ideal placements. Michelle looked for a teacher who engages in professional development, particularly beyond what was offered by the school district which to her “shows that disposition of ‘I care, I want to stay on top of stuff, I want to, you know, be the best I can be.’” She said that these cooperating teachers also tend to employ best practices and invest in their students. Kevin also looked for quality teaching in cooperating teachers and felt he had many options because a lot of graduates from his university’s program were teaching in the local area. He looked for sites with strong classroom management in place so that a teacher candidate could step in and teach and “that way, if there are management problems we
know it’s not due to the site but it’s due to the student teacher.” Kevin also looked for a cooperating teacher to be utilizing a standards-based approach so there was some structure for teaching and learning.

**Positive current system procedures.** While both Michelle and Kevin made placement suggestions to the department/college of education and both discussed possibly wanting full control of placement, they also indicated some positives about the current system. Michelle really appreciated that the department of education completed all of the paperwork involved with placements, including contacting principals, completing background checks, and chasing down students for missing information. Kevin said he had “gotten accustomed to this process and it is actually quite nice not to have to contact all the board offices and wait for replies.” He said it is nice to be able to send all of the requests to one office who handled the logistics from there.

**Differences.** Michelle frequently brought up how physical education is a discipline that is not quite understood by the department of education. Not understanding what quality physical education is can become an issue when the department of education “owns student teaching.” Michelle said “I’ve been doing a lot of education with the education department on what is quality PE.” In particular, one topic included how PETE formats lesson plans because the confusion between the department of education and PETE teacher candidates had gotten so bad many of the PETE students just planned out health classes instead of planning lessons for the gym. Michelle also put an emphasis on cultivating a relationship with the school district and cooperating teachers, and would have liked to provide training for them, however, the department of education had refused her attempts to enact this, telling her that student teaching (inclusive of the
cooperating teachers) was their responsibility. Kevin mentioned that many of the cooperating teachers in his area are graduates of his PETE program, meaning the relationships are, for the most part, already there. Michelle also discussed deliberately placing teacher candidates at specific sites according to their needs, whereas Kevin indicated his placements were not deliberate because he knew his sites were quality placements, “we know which cooperating teachers are strong and which are not and so it’s not necessarily us figuring out a match between a cooperating teacher and a student teacher but just making sure any student teacher gets placed with a cooperating teacher who’s strong.”

**Case 3: Physical Education Teacher**

**Education Faculty Student Teaching Coordinator Places Student Teachers**

**University E, coordinator Rachel.** University E is located in a mid-east town distant from an urban area and had an undergraduate enrollment of less than 10,000 students. Rachel was a member of a PETE program governed by the college of education which offered a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master of Science degree. There were thirteen full time faculty members and in spring 2016 had ten student teachers. Student teaching placements were made after teacher candidates requested their top three preferences at a college of education meeting, the college of education passed those preferences on to the PETE coordinator who then made the placements “based on their preference, where they’re living, availability of the districts being open to student teachers, and also based on recommendations from whoever perhaps supervised in those districts in the past.” The assistant to the dean of the college of education placed all other
student teachers in other disciplines. Rachel was the assistant chair of the PETE department and one of her responsibilities was to place student teachers.

Rachel was happy with the placement system. The procedures at the time of the interview allowed her to know the systems and the personnel involved, which enabled her to deliberately place her teacher candidates at sites which would potentially provide the best learning experience.

If they have a minor in aquatics, I’ll try to put them in a place with a pool. Or if they have something in adapted, I’ll try and put them with one of our districts that has an adapted program. And sometimes it is personality or if it’s not one of our strongest students, I may put them with a co-op that I think can help them through it.

**University F, coordinator Wendy.** University F is located in a western town that is remote from an urban area and had an undergraduate enrollment between 10,000 and 15,000 students. Wendy was a member of a PETE program governed by the college of health sciences and which offered a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master of Science degree. There were three and a half full time faculty members and in spring 2016 had nine student teachers. For student teaching placements, teacher candidates had a choice between three or four school districts each year (these rotated frequently) and gave Wendy their top two choices. Wendy then went through the district chain of command to get the request and paperwork down to the cooperating teachers.

Originally, the teacher candidates were allowed to choose their student teaching sites. Wendy found out quickly after she was hired that many teacher candidates chose to go home for what she calls the three “Cs” – comfort, cost, and convenience. After a few years, she made a recommendation to the PETE faculty– that she take on the role of placement coordinator as well as the university supervisor as a three credit class.
Wendy’s proposal was accepted and she made all of the placements and all of the site visits, as well as, run a weekly video conference alternating cooperating teachers and teacher candidates. For her, this system was “about as ideal as you can get.”

I identify the community they choose from and I also identify specifically which student teacher I want placed with which cooperating teacher. And I know the cooperating teachers very well and so I try to place them like personalities or if I feel the student needs a different kind of mentor I will make sure they get placed with that mentor.

The fact that Wendy did all of the site visits helped her to build relationships with cooperating teachers and understand them and how they teach. It also helped her to understand the context of the school environment where the teaching takes place.

**Common themes: Universities E & F.** The following themes were determined through interview responses from Rachel and Wendy: relationships will help make better placements, placements do have an impact, and ideal placement criteria.

**Relationships and placements.** Rachel and Wendy both discussed how they worked with the districts to make placements and how they had to have those relationships due to differing procedures for the process. Both placement coordinators also discussed having relationships with the cooperating teachers which allowed them to make deliberate placements based on the needs of the teacher candidates and also accommodate the cooperating teachers, who may have specific requests as to when or how often they would want a student teacher. By having relationships with the cooperating teachers, Rachel and Wendy ensured there was congruency between their program and the student teaching experience.

**Placement impacts.** Both placement coordinators worked to deliberately place their teacher candidates with specific programs/cooperating teachers to enhance the
capstone experience. They felt that poor placements cannot prepare teacher candidates as well as an ideal placement, but that things can still be learned from a poor placement. In a less than ideal placement, Rachel discussed having a strong university supervisor to help the teacher candidate, “You have to, the supervisor has to be pretty good too, to say ‘ok, I understand your frustration. How would you do this differently? Or if this is your class or you district, what changes would you make?’”

**Ideal placement criteria.** Rachel and Wendy both expressed that being effective teachers and using best practices are necessary in an ideal placement. They also talked about cooperating teacher training, which helps with mentorship and congruency between theory and practice. Because they both choose placements, they have the ability to be deliberate and selective.

**Differences.** During Rachel’s interview she discussed how it was fortunate that she was able to make the placements because the needs of PETE teacher candidates may not be understood by the college of education, “I would not want the assistant to the dean who places all the other student teachers, I wouldn’t really want him to place ours. Because we are a unique discipline. We’re in the college of ed but they don’t always have an idea of what we do down here.” The reason this may not be an issue for Wendy is because her program is not governed by the college of education and there is less interaction. Another difference between the programs is the use of a seminar-type class to address thoughts, ideas, and issues. Rachel’s program did not have such a course. Wendy’s program did web-conferencing every other week with the teacher candidates and on the in-between weeks with the cooperating teachers. The frequent communication allowed for everyone to stay on the same page and timeline and to also address concerns.
and victories. Rachel’s program in the past had developed teaching centers for physical education where certain districts in the area were chosen and the potential cooperating teachers went through training. The program has expanded since the initial development and so the “teaching center model is not quite the same as it was,” however, she liked the congruency and support the model provided.

Cross-Case Analysis

Phase 2 of the larger study set out to explore how PETE faculty experience the placement of their teacher candidates at student teaching sites. Specifically, questions were asked about how the participants felt about the current placement process, what criterion is important in a placement, what impacts a placement can have on a teacher candidate, and what they would consider an ideal placement process. Despite differences in the governance structure and who places teacher candidates at student teaching sites, there are commonalities between programs.

Physical Education Teacher Education is a Misunderstood Discipline

Physical education is a unique discipline. Three domains are taught, cognitive, psychomotor, and affective, and children are moving both in personal and general space in an area larger than a typical classroom. The way objectives are taught and organized is very different than a classroom setting. Unfortunately, to an observer outside the profession of physical education, the “busy, happy, good” mentality is many times seen as quality. That is to say, if the kids look busy and happy, good PE must be happening. Those dedicated to quality physical education also want students to be busy through appropriately developed tasks and happy, but know that without employing best
practices, the good is really just a façade. When discussing the “busy, happy, good”

theory with Sara she went on to state:

And some of these university teachers [in the college of education] teaching,
teaching our students, you know, they think it’s just play. You know, organized
play. And there’s just so much more to it. And it’s hard for our students then, you
know, we want them to be passionate about what they’re doing and they’re just
getting beaten down at every, you know, every turn. They’re having to sell their
profession.

Four of the six participants expressed sentiments about physical education not being
understood by those in the college of education. Two of those programs were where the
college of education places PETE teacher candidates without any input from PETE
faculty. Michelle, who had input but the college of education had the final say, also
expressed on several occasions that there are differences in physical education from that
of classroom education that the college of education just doesn’t understand, which leads
to confusion and a lack of support for PETE teacher candidates. Michelle disclosed that

Typically my, in their education classes, my students will just plan out health
classes. It just makes it easier. Because the education professors just really do not
understand physical education management and all the different aspects of the
lesson and so they really get frustrated and so we, it’s bad to say, but the easiest
thing is for them just to plan out health lesson plans like they’re going to be
teaching a wellness class or in a health classroom and that way kids are all sitting
in chairs and they have a projector and all that kind of stuff. And so they just stay
away from gym lessons in the education department.

Rachel, where the PETE program is in the college of education but gets to place the
PETE teacher candidates expressed relief that PETE faculty select student teaching sites
because the college of education does not always understand physical education.

Kevin, who had input and was organized within the college of education, and
Wendy, who selected placements and was not in the college of education, did not discuss
feeling that PETE is misunderstood. This may be because Kevin expressed that his
current system was working well for him, although he did say that PETE programs should have a say in placements and that if they complain about not having one they need to be insistent and “kick up a fuss.” Wendy had full control over placements and was also the university supervisor so there is no outside involvement with her program’s placement process.

The question derived from these conversations is then, if the college of education does not understand the discipline of physical education and what quality actually is, how are they going about placing PETE teacher candidates at sites that are conducive to growth and positive rather than negative socialization? This is a source of extreme frustration, especially for Sara and Henry, who had no say in the placement process, but would like, and have asked for, change. Norris et al. (1990) reported in their study that teacher educators felt faculty members should have the final say in placement selection. Within the discipline of physical education, Siedentop and Locke (1997) put forth a guide that could be used to determine if a PETE program “is to reliably make a difference in the physical education of children and youth.” The fourth and fifth most important factors (out of ten) concern student teaching: school sites and control over clinical assignments. Siedentop and Locke contend that there must be enough sites for all teacher candidates “to observe and practice in a good program where they receive expert mentoring by resident staff” (p. 31). The majority in this study felt that physical education is a misunderstood discipline by those in other education fields. Without an understanding of what quality physical education entails, it was felt that without at least PETE faculty input, teacher candidates were not being placed in programs that would maximize appropriate socialization in the discipline. When Siedentop and Locke list control over
placements, they do not require full control, but “enough to ensure that students have only sound clinical experience in good PE programs that match their preparation” (p. 31). PETE programs, who know what best practice in a gym environment looks like, need to be able to have some input into where their teacher candidates are placed for the most formative experience of the teacher preparation program.

**Relationships are Imperative**

A way to facilitate good placements is to foster relationships. Two-thirds of the programs interviewed had placements finalized by the college of education and all mentioned the dynamics between the programs. The two faculty from programs that had no say in the placement process expressed frustration in where the college of education placed teacher candidates and also in the lack of transparency in the placement process. Both Sara and Henry expressed that they have attempted to work with the college of education and would like to have a say, but had been denied the opportunity. Both programs that had input into the placements also discussed having a relationship with the placement official within the college of education. Michelle in particular discussed fostering a relationship with the placement official because that relationship is the only reason the PETE faculty have input on student teacher placements.

All program coordinators interviewed discussed having relationships either with the districts where teacher candidates are placed or with the cooperating teachers themselves. For two of the programs, a relationship with district offices would be very beneficial because the district office actually selected the placement of the student teachers. The college of education contacts the district office and tells them how many teacher candidates they have and the district chooses where to place them. A school
district choosing placements can become problematic because then there really is no
quality control from any university program, let alone the PETE program. Half of the
program coordinators expressed concern over knowing the motivation behind placements
made by school districts. Possible motivations for assigning teacher candidates to
particular cooperating teachers brought up by the placement coordinators included the in-
service teacher needed help either because his/her program was failing, a teacher was
retiring and didn’t really care about quality teaching anymore, a teacher was coaching
and wanted assistance with teaching responsibilities, or because the teacher would get a
stipend or some other benefit. Having a relationship with the district would provide
insight into the motivation for the selection of placements and potentially allow for more
input and influence for quality placements.

Cultivating relationships with cooperating teachers has many benefits. Half of the
PETE coordinators interviewed deliberately placed their teacher candidates. They were
able to do this because they knew the cooperating teachers, how they ran their programs,
and the context in which they taught. The coordinators were able to determine which
placement would be the biggest benefit to each teacher candidate, whether it was
personality matches, pairing based on strengthening areas needing improvement, or the
context such as facilities. LaBoskey and Richert (2002) found that compatibility was
important in a placement for professional growth and that “we need to do all we can to
find and develop such opportunities” (p. 30). Having relationships with cooperating
teachers also promotes more communication between the university and the in-service
teacher. Sara listed developing a relationship with the cooperating teacher as part of the
ideal situation, “They know what our program is all about. They know the expectations
we have on the student teachers and then we can work together so that these kids have a
great experience.” These relationships can allow for more support for the teacher
candidate and will also help provide congruency between theory and practice.

Congruency between the theory learned in a teacher education program and what
is observed, enacted, and supported in a student teaching setting is critical. LaBoskey and
Richert (2002) found that when a teacher candidate was put in a practicum experience
that was not congruent with the university philosophy she began “questioning herself and
the enterprise of teaching” (p. 14) and “she began to consider leaving the profession” (p.
15). When teacher candidates, and even in-service teachers (Curtner-Smith, 2001), are
confronted with teaching practices that are not in-line with what they have been taught is
best practice, frustration can set in causing the teacher candidate or in-service teacher to
question the profession, resort to poor teaching, or potentially leave the profession all
together. Five of the six program coordinators expressed the importance of congruency
between their program and the student teaching site. Kevin and Wendy both felt fortunate
that many of their program graduates now serve as cooperating teachers- they know the
PETE program from the inside. Congruency allows for both the teacher candidate and the
cooperating teacher to have clear expectations about the student teaching experience and
promotes positive socialization into the physical education profession.

The Ideal

When discussing the ideal criteria for a placement site and features that were
primarily considered when PETE faculty have input, all participants agreed that
congruency and quality teaching by the cooperating teacher were imperative. This is in
line with research finding congruency is essential for the success of a student teaching
experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Smith, 1993) and quality teaching is necessary (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). In order to ensure this criteria is being met, the participants also agreed that PETE faculty should at least have input into the student teaching placements, if not make the placements themselves, which is in line with what Norris et al. (1990) found in their study with agriculture education. There were differing versions of what would be considered an ideal placement system, but that may have been due to the processes each participant had experienced. Henry would like to have full control over placements, but then goes on to worry about the time to foster the relationships and to complete all of the paperwork. Following this, he then worried about the money and budget because if PETE faculty were to take on placements, more faculty/staff would need to be hired. Henry also felt that if the options were more limited (currently his university uses over 90 school districts for placements) with a pool of great sites, the placement process could be streamlined, relationships and congruency fostered, and more positive student teaching experiences achieved.

Kevin, who had input regarding placements would ideally like to go direct with the districts, however, goes on to say that the current system does work and he liked that the college of education did all of the placement paperwork. Michelle, who also had input concerning placements, had the same view as Kevin. While on one hand she wished she had complete control over placements, she did like that the college of education did all of the paperwork involved with coordinating placements. One thing Michelle would like though, is something formal that grants PETE input into placements, saying “And I’m real careful, I know it’s a delicate balance because on paper student teaching is 100%
theirs. And they don’t have to use me, they don’t have to take my suggestions for placements, they can do whatever they want.”

Wendy described her self-created situation ideal. She knew her pool of cooperating teachers, worked directly with the districts, deliberately placed teacher candidates, and supervised the student teaching experiences. Wendy maintained frequent contact with the cooperating teachers through bi-monthly meetings and also provided a graduate course through the university for those who wished to become cooperating teachers to ensure proper mentorship and congruency.

Different placement procedures will be ideal for different universities and situations. What remains is that PETE faculty interviewed believed they should have significant input into where the teacher candidates are placed for student teaching, especially when, as aforementioned, physical education is a discipline where best practice may not be understood by those outside of the profession. Teacher educators strongly believe “faculty members should make the final decision concerning placement of student teachers” (Norris et al., 1990, p. 63) and Siedentop and Locke (1997) concur, recommending that program faculty have enough input into placement sites to ensure quality.

**Barriers**

Henry, Sara, and Michelle all reported that a barrier to their ideal placement system was the college of education wanting to maintain control over the student teaching experience, despite, by their perception, not understanding what quality physical education entails. Time was another barrier discussed as cultivating relationships to find ideal placements and the paperwork to place student teachers can be very time consuming
and release time or compensation would be needed. Henry summed up his struggle for changing the system, the frustration evident in his tone, this way:

I will continue to try to fight the good fight. I just don’t have the time to do it myself. So if the [kinesiology] department is committed to do this correctly, then I would say they have to put the time and the resources to do it. So I have brought it up many times but it’s still on the table. Nothing pushed through.

**Placement Impacts**

Where and with whom a teacher candidate teaches can have a significant impact. The placement can reinforce or undo what is taught in the preparation program. PETE programs work to instill knowledge and skills in teacher candidates that will allow them to enact quality physical education programs. Placements (both early field experiences and student teaching) that are not congruent with quality programs can lead to negative socialization and can lead teacher candidates to question or even leave the profession (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979). The participants in this study all agreed that a poor placement cannot prepare student teachers as well as a good or ideal placement. Michelle summed it up as “I think a poor placement, no matter how much the supervisor compensates, no matter how many discussions I might have and things like that, they are still going to miss out on opportunities because of that, unfortunately.” Two other participants said poor placements are a “waste of time.” Wendy added “We can work with them really hard for three semesters [the upper division classes], but if we pull the rug out from under them in their capstone experience by putting them in a crummy placement, we have just undone any forward steps we have tried to take in the preparation program.” The participants did recognize that poor placements do occur and sometimes cannot be changed. Several participants said that in these situations they advise their students something can still be
learned- whether it’s what not to do, analyzing a situation and brainstorming what could be changed, or observing and practicing aspects other than content and pedagogy, such as discipline or how to talk to students. Three participants also said that if they know a placement is weak, they will place a strong teacher candidate in that situation.

“If you have a strong student teacher, they can survive a less than adequate placement. Particularly if they are able to identify the aspects of the program or the aspects of a cooperating teacher that are not best practice.” Kevin continued his thought, saying,

I would say probably your average student teacher will benefit much more from a strong student teaching placement and it really does make a difference. I can think of one or two individuals who I was a little concerned about when they went into their student teaching but with them able to see a fantastic role model of a cooperating teacher it really made a difference in terms of their development. So no, in a nutshell, I really think that the quality of the student teaching experience and the quality of their cooperating teacher really do matter.

A strong placement provides a learning experience for teacher candidates to bridge the gap from student to teacher and put the theory learned in the classroom into practice. It also provides an opportunity for occupational socialization and career conformation, where programs can confidently graduate teachers into the field who are ready to implement quality physical education programs.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences PETE faculty have with the student teacher placement process. The goal was to look for commonalities and differences between programs with differing governance structures and/or placement officials. Some key findings were that (a) many felt that physical education is a unique discipline that is not always understood by those not in the profession; (b) relationships with various members involved in the placement process and student teaching experience are very important to
ensure quality placements are made; (c) the ideal placement process is different for different programs, however, PETE faculty need to have input into where their teacher candidates are placed; and (d) PETE faculty feel the placement does have an impact on the teacher candidate development and that it can undo or reinforce the preparation programs teaching, depending on the placement.

The study had several limitations. First, accurate data were dependent on the openness of the participants. Further, the study was limited to six subjects. This reduced the generalizability of data. Interpretation of the data were influenced by the judgement of the researcher and the findings were further influenced by the analysis and interpretations of the researcher.

This research has several implications. A strong placement is preferable in order to positively socialize future physical educators into the profession. Teacher candidates who graduate and implement quality physical education programs will not only increase physical literacy of K-12 students, but will also potentially raise the status of physical education. A poor placement can have several negative impacts ranging from socializing teacher candidates to implement poor quality or “roll-out-the-ball” programs, a questioning of ability or worth or the profession, or cause quality prospects to leave the profession. In order to promote placements into sites conducive of the values of the PETE program, PETE faculty need to have input as to where teacher candidates are placed. And while programs governed by the college of education seem to have an advantage when it comes to input, a program does not need to be under the college of education to advocate for a say. As the participants of this study emphasized, relationships are key. Building relationships with the placement officials and offering to help lighten the load by making
suggestions and/or arranging placements are ways to increase input into placement selection.

Overall, the findings from this study provided an overview of how different PETE student teacher coordinators experience the student teaching placement process. The findings revealed more issues to explore in order to change and enhance the placement process. Possible areas of future research include how programs who do not have any input go about changing the placement process along with barriers and coping mechanisms, methods for developing relationships with the different members of the placement process and student teaching experience, and more in-depth study of the impacts of placement sites on PETE teacher candidate development and attitude toward quality both during the student teaching experience and after becoming an in-service teacher.
References


CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study (articles 1 and 2) was to explore the process of student teaching placement selections of PETE teacher candidates as experienced by PETE faculty student teaching coordinators. Questions guiding this research were:

Q1: How are PETE teacher candidates placed in their student teaching sites?

Q1a: Who decides the official placement of teacher candidates and what role do PETE faculty play in the placement selection process?

Q1b: What criteria are used to select placements?

Q1c: What, if any, are barriers to placing teacher candidates in ideal locations?

The current PETE placement procedures as well as how those procedures are experienced by PETE faculty were explored both quantitatively and qualitatively and will be further discussed in the following sections: student teaching placement official, physical education is a unique discipline, availability as a selection feature, congruency as the primary selection feature, the role of relationships, different ideals for different programs and placement impacts.

Student Teaching Placement Official

Nearly two-thirds (62.5%) of programs surveyed fell under the college of education. Governance structure, however, did not impact who placed student teachers.
Just because a program fell under the college of education did not necessarily mean the college of education placed the student teacher without PETE input. When organized under the college of education, twenty percent of the PETE programs did not have faculty input regarding the placement site. In contrast, forty percent (6 of 15) of the programs governed by colleges other than education had no say in where teacher candidates complete their student teaching. A possible explanation for this is that there may not be as solid of a relationship between the college of education and the PETE program when the PETE program is not governed by the college of education due to less frequent interactions.

The data collected in this study demonstrated that the faculty of 27.5% PETE programs (out of the 40 surveyed) do not have any input into where their teacher candidates complete their student teaching experience. For the majority of these programs (9 of the 11), an official in the college of education selected the placement, while for one program the school district selected the placement and for the other the teacher candidate chose where to student teach. While 27.5% may not seem like a lot, the lack of PETE input into student teaching placement selection can impact a significant number of future professionals. For example, in the spring 2016 semester, six PETE programs surveyed had twenty or more (range 20-85) student teachers and only two had any input into the placements. There were 113 teacher candidates in just those four programs where the PETE program and faculty had no say in the student teaching placement. Ensuring quality experiences and occupational socialization is imperative for teacher candidates and the physical education profession as a whole, but with no oversight or input into the most formative experience of the teacher preparation program, the ability to provide that
is compromised. Poor placements can lead to socialization that is contradictory to quality physical education (Coleman & Mitchell, 200; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979), undue stress on a teacher candidate (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Sudzina et al., 1997), and some students questioning or deciding to leave the profession (Smith, 1993; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002). Researchers have recommended that faculty placement or oversight of placements would help to provide better site selection (Norris et al., 1990; Siedentop & Locke, 1997; Smith 1993). Kalick (1971) recommends tailoring the student teaching experience to the individual students and Hobson et al. (2009) discusses deliberately pairing teacher candidates and cooperating teachers. In order to be able to select the best student teaching sites possible for PETE students, PETE faculty need to at least have a say in the placement process.

**Physical Education is a Unique Discipline**

The majority of PETE student teacher coordinators interviewed expressed that physical education is a unique discipline that is not always understood by those who are not trained in the specialty. Content, standards, and pedagogy in the gymnasium can be vastly different than the classroom. The PETE faculty interviewed cited many examples of working with personnel with no physical education background, from instructors in the college of education where student teaching seminars and teacher work samples may be completed to university supervisors providing feedback to student teachers. The issue of being a misunderstood discipline is concerning, and even more so when PETE faculty have no input as to where teacher candidates are placed for their most formative experience of the teacher preparation program. Eleven (27.5%) of the 40 programs surveyed in phase one of this study did not have any input in the placement of their
teacher candidates at student teaching sites. If the personnel making placements do not understand what quality physical education is and which sites will promote the values of the PETE program, the placement process becomes indiscriminate and selection features other than quality, such as availability, may take precedence.

**Availability as a Selection Feature**

Research in education has found that opportunity, such as availability or proximity, was the main consideration when making a student teaching placement (McIntyre et al., 1996; Sudzina et al., 1997). “Practicum placements in local schools are often based on such factors as cooperating teacher availability, location, and grade level or subject matter considerations. Information about individual cooperating teachers is largely unknown and matches with preservice teachers’ characteristics are, for the most part, arbitrary” (Sudzina et al, 1997, p.29). The data from this study show that, for PETE placements, availability of the cooperating teacher was the second most considered feature overall, coming before site context and cooperating teacher qualities. Availability being a main feature in placement selection is a disservice to teacher candidates and the profession as a whole. For some programs, however, there may be no choice. As this study shows, some programs had no input in the placement process and therefore no say as to which features should be considered. For other programs, such as Michelle’s, there was a limited number of placements available because of the location of her university. For those in the same or similar situations where geographic/population barriers exist to quality placements, alternative methods may be a possibility. As new options, such as remote video supervision, and research evaluating those options become available, the opportunities to select more quality placements may expand.
Congruency as the Primary Selection Feature

The data from this study show that when PETE programs had input into placement selection, the primary feature considered was congruency between the preparation program and the student teaching site. Congruency is important so that the professional socialization occurring during the preparation program coursework is continued during the practical application in the “real world” scenario of student teaching (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; Smith, 1993). Having a link between the preparation program and the student teaching site provides stability and clear expectations for the practicum for both teacher candidates and cooperating teachers (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000). Congruency can be achieved through several avenues, such as using alumni, training, and frequent contact. When programs can utilize alumni as cooperating teachers, there is a better understanding of the PETE program expectations. For example, two participants reported having a pool of alumni who were cooperating teachers in their area as a benefit when selecting placement sites. Using program alumni is an advantage because the placement coordinator knows the cooperating teachers well having educated them and the cooperating teacher knows the values, content, and expectations of the preparation program. Training by the PETE program for cooperating teachers, either specifically to be cooperating teachers (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000) or more general professional development, can also develop congruency. Frequent contact by PETE faculty to potential student teaching placements both before and during practicum experiences will also allow for common goals and expectations to be developed. Wendy, who was not governed by the college of education and deliberately places teacher candidates, relied on frequent contact (every other week minimum) with
cooperating teachers while they have student teachers, which was achieved through thirty
minute web conferences with all cooperating teachers in a school district. Topics
discussed include issues, break-throughs, questions, which requirements should be
completed, and any necessary paperwork due. Congruency can also be fostered through
cultivating relationships.

**The Role of Relationships**

Relationships with different personnel involved in student teaching placements
are important to ensure quality sites are chosen. As discussed in the previous section,
knowing and working with cooperating teachers helps foster congruency, which is an
important feature in a quality placement (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000). The length of time
serving as a placement coordinator has advantages when cultivating relationships. Wendy
had been the placement coordinator for her program for fifteen years and before that
taught in the state for nineteen years. The continuity and longevity of the placement
coordinator had allowed her to be “intimately knowledgeable of the physical education
teachers in this state…” The amount of time spent in the position had allowed her to
develop relationships with key personnel in the placement process. Rachel also spoke of
time as a placement coordinator as a factor when choosing sites, “I may continue to
assume this responsibility because after five years I kind of… it’s always frustrating at
times but at least I know the system and I know the players…” Michelle also worked at
building relationships with in-service teachers, attending local district professional
developments and speaking and working with current and potential cooperating teachers.

When student teacher placements are overseen by the college of education, a
relationship with both administrators and the placement official can be crucial. Having a
positive rapport with administrators in the college of education allows for an exchange of information about the PETE program’s philosophy, goals, and needs. Michelle worked hard to develop a relationship with personnel in the college of education, saying “I’ve been doing a lot of education with the education department on what is quality PE.” She also worked to develop a relationship with the placement coordinator so that she was able to have input into where the teacher candidates conduct their student teaching. Michelle expressed that this relationship was important because there was no formal agreement that said PETE had input into placements, it was due to her diligence in making that connection that she had involvement in the process. Fostering the relationship in her case may have even been more difficult than the majority of programs, as her program was not governed by the college of education. The data from this study showed that when the college of education made the placements, if the program was governed by the college of education, the PETE program was more likely to have input in the process. This may be because the personnel involved are more likely to cross paths and be familiar with one another. Already having a working relationship could potentially allow for more negotiation with regards to input into placements.

**Different Ideals for Different Programs**

While it is imperative that PETE faculty have input into student teacher placements to help ensure quality (Siedentop & Locke, 1997), the ideal process is different for different programs. Different barriers may also exist for individual programs based on university history (how things have always been done), teacher preparation structure, and funding. Both Henry and Sara want to have a say in where their teacher candidates go for student teaching, however, they have received push back from the
college of education when requesting input. At their universities, the college of education controlled the student teaching experience, and did not seem to want to hand over any part of that control. Henry did also voice concerns over time and funding if PETE was given control over making the placements. He was concerned that if put in charge of making placements, release time and/or additional faculty would need to be hired so that the coordinator would have time to complete all necessary paperwork, cultivate relationships, and visit/supervise teacher candidates. Kevin and Michelle, for the most part, felt there was a nice balance between being able to make recommendations for placements (which were followed), but not having to worry about the paperwork that was involved with the placement process. Wendy and Rachel enjoyed having the freedom to control their selection process and use it to make more deliberate pairings between teacher candidates and cooperating teachers and/or placement contexts. For Wendy, student teacher placement and supervision was considered a three credit course of her teaching load. As assistant chair for her program, student teacher placement coordinator was part of the job description for Rachel. The situations for both Wendy and Rachel allowed them the time to invest in getting to know the personnel and processes involved, including paperwork completion, in making student teacher placements in their respective regions.

**Placement Impacts**

Placements do have an impact on teacher candidate development and socialization (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Richards & Templin, 2011). Where and with whom a teacher candidate student teaches can reinforce or undo what is taught in the preparation program. PETE faculty understand that at times it can be an uphill battle to inculcate the
values, knowledge, and skills in teacher candidates that will allow them to enact quality physical education programs. Students come to a teacher preparation program with up to thirteen years of observation and experience within physical education. If those programs were not quality and/or the teacher candidate enters with a coaching rather than teaching orientation, occupational socialization can be more difficult (Coleman & Mitchell, 2000; LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979).

Encounters in early field experiences and student teaching that are not in line with what it taught in the preparation program can lead to negative socialization and can lead teacher candidates to question or even leave the profession (LaBoskey & Richert, 2002; McIntyre et al., 1996; Smith, 1993; Templin, 1979). If there is disconnect between theory and practice- the classroom and the “real world”- it can be difficult to promote quality if the “real world” does not support it. The PETE faculty interviewed all agreed that a poor placement cannot prepare teacher candidates as well as a good or ideal placement.

Michelle felt that “…a poor placement, no matter how much the supervisor compensates, no matter how many discussions I might have and things like that, they are still going to miss out on opportunities because of that, unfortunately.” Two other interviewed coordinators said poor placements are a “waste of time.” Wendy added “We can work with them really hard for three semesters [the upper division classes], but if we pull the rug out from under them in their capstone experience by putting them in a crummy placement, we have just undone any forward steps we have tried to take in the preparation program.” Without being able to observe and practice within a quality program context, the teacher candidates may have a difficult time conceptualizing what a great program would be. The participants recognized poor placements do occur and
several said in those situations they advise their students something can still be learned—whether it’s what not to do, analyzing a situation and brainstorming what could be changed, or observing and practicing aspects other than content and pedagogy, such as discipline or how to talk to students. Three participants also said that if they know a placement is weak, they will place a strong teacher candidate in that situation. Michelle once had to tell a teacher candidate put in a poor placement “you are the strongest candidate- that’s why you’re at that school. Because I know you can handle it and you’re going to do amazing.” Having to put any teacher candidate in a situation which is poor is a disservice to that student, the PETE program, and the physical education profession. “If you have a strong student teacher, they can survive a less than adequate placement. Particularly if they are able to identify the aspects of the program or the aspects of a cooperating teacher that are not best practice.” Kevin continued his thought, saying,

I would say probably your average student teacher will benefit much more from a strong student teaching placement and it really does make a difference. I can think of one or two individuals who I was a little concerned about when they went into their student teaching but with them able to see a fantastic role model of a cooperating teacher it really made a difference in terms of their development. So no, in a nutshell, I really think that the quality of the student teaching experience and the quality of their cooperating teacher really do matter.

Kevin spoke of surviving a placement. Student teaching should be a time where teacher candidates have the opportunity to practice theory in a supportive environment, not just survive. Development as a teacher and the cementing of foundations of practice can occur during student teaching- strong and average teacher candidates alike should have the opportunity to work toward their highest potential.
A strong placement provides a learning experience for teacher candidates to bridge the gap from student to teacher and put the theory learned in the classroom into practice. Wendy may have put it best, saying,

“An ideal placement at either elementary and particularly secondary will give the student teacher a picture of what the ideal can be. It really can be this good. Quality physical education really can be this good and so that’s what I’m going to try and create when I get my job.”

A strong placement also provides an opportunity for occupational socialization and career conformation, where programs can confidently graduate teachers into the field who are ready to implement quality physical education programs.

**Conclusion**

Student teaching is the capstone experience of many teacher preparation programs. The practicum is often the last opportunity for faculty and PETE programs to positively socialize teacher candidates to enact quality physical education. Choosing student teaching sites that emulate the teachings of the PETE program sets not only the teacher candidate up for success, but the physical education profession as well. As observed by the interviewed PETE faculty, physical education practices and pedagogy are different than the typical classroom and what is instructed by the college of education. PETE faculty believe they know what best practice looks like in a physical education program and should have input as to where teacher candidates experience student teaching. If a program currently does not have a say in placement selection, PETE faculty need to, as Keven said, “kick up a fuss” about having input. If there is push-back, a way forward must be sought. One way is to cultivate the relationships those interviewed expressed as being important. Work with those in the college of education and the placement office and express the need for quality placements and what quality looks like.
for physical education. To get a foot in the door, ask to just make suggestions- if placements are already lined up by PETE, this could lighten the workload of the placement coordinator. Of course, in order to be able to make suggestions, one would need to know where quality placements are and if they are available. Knowledge of acceptable sites would come from fostering relationships with local districts and potential cooperating teachers. Cultivating relationships does take time, but the future of teacher candidates and the physical education profession are worth it.

The placement where student teaching is enacted does have an impact on the teacher candidate. Poor placements can lead to negative socialization causing poor programs to be enacted when the teacher candidate becomes an inservice teacher. A poor placement can also cause a strong teacher candidate to question his/her own teaching ability, the worth of the profession, or even choose to leave the teaching field. A strong placement however, can strengthen teacher attributes, even in those struggling when entering the student teacher experience, as observed by Kevin. A strong placement shows teacher candidates how a quality program is enacted and that, they too, one day can run a quality program.

While this research answered questions about student teacher placement procedures, more questions and ideas for research were raised. Studying the process and ideas used by a program to acquire input in the placement process could provide insight on barriers and how to (hopefully) overcome them and be of benefit to other programs seeking ways to have input. How teacher candidates experience placements, particularly if one is poor and the other closer to ideal, would add to the literature regarding placement impacts. Research into how teacher candidates transition from student to
teacher and the programs they enact, particularly if their student teacher placement was not congruent with their preparation program, could also provide data on the impact of the student teacher placement. Student teaching is widely regarded as the most formative experience in a teacher preparation program. With this in mind, from a PETE faculty perspective, it is imperative they have input into site selection to promote quality physical education.
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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 5, 2016

TO: LeAnn Kesselring, M.S.

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [834451-1] Physical Education Teacher Education Teacher Candidate Placement Procedures

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: January 5, 2016

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Thanks for such a well written request.

Please remove the word anonymous from your consent form and replace it with confidential. I am not asking you to upload the new form since this study is Exempt. Since you know who the participants are in the interview the study can not be confidential.

Best Wishes,

Maria Lahman

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
January 28, 2016

Dear Dean, Chair, and/or PETE Department Head,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Sport Pedagogy Program at the University of Northern Colorado. I am conducting research regarding student teacher placement practices.

I would like to explore what your physical education teacher education department personnel do to help place teacher candidates at student teaching sites. Your traditional baccalaureate program was chosen due to your CAEP accreditation and classification as a state school. I am seeking permission to conduct research within your department.

I am requesting that you identify a PETE faculty contact who officially coordinates and/or manages PETE student teacher placements, so that I may gather program demographic and placement procedure information with an initial seventeen question survey. Based on data analysis a follow-up interview may be requested.

Once you get back to me with appropriate contact information, I will send the informed consent form and survey link to your PETE student teaching coordinator via email in February, and if necessary, will request an interview via facetime or Skype. Here are the details for the interviews:

- Each semi-structured interview will be scheduled for 30-60 minutes at a time convenient to the individual participant
- Each interview will be digitally recorded and then typed into transcripts prior to data analysis
- Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym and data will be treated confidentially

Another aspect of the research involves reviewing any guidelines that your department uses for the placement of teacher candidates. If selected for the interview phase, I will request a copy of any electronic or paper documents and they may be part of the analysis and final report.

I am requesting a response to this inquiry that would indicate your department’s preliminary commitment to participate in the study. Please let me know of any other permission that is needed to conduct this research at your university. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me or my research advisor, Dr. Mark Smith, Associate Dean, The College of Natural and Health Sciences at 970-351-1736.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

LeAnn Kesselring
Doctoral Candidate, UNC Graduate School
Phone Number: 307-221-9203
E-mail: fran8260@bears.unco.edu
APPENDIX C

INITIAL SURVEY QUESTIONS (PHASE 1)
Questionnaire Questions

1. Name of your University:

2. How is PETE organized within your University?
   ____Organized within the College of Education
   ____Organized within a different college (such as Health Sciences or Kinesiology)
   ____PETE has its own college

3. Is the PETE department physically located in the same building as the governing college?
   ____Yes
   ____No

4. How many FTE PETE faculty are in your program?

5. What levels of degree are offered in your program? Check all that apply.
   ____Bachelor's
   ____Master's
   ____Ph.D.

6. How long have you been the student teaching coordinator?

7. How long have you been a faculty member at this university?
8. How many teacher candidates in your program are student teaching in Winter/Spring 2016?

9. How many teacher candidates in your program will be student teaching in Fall 2016?

10. How long is student teaching in your program?
   ___ One Semester
   ___ Two Semesters
   ___ Other (Please Describe)

11. How many cooperating teachers/sites does a teacher candidate experience?
   ___ 1
   ___ 2
   ___ Other (Please Describe)

12. What levels are required for student teaching within your program?
   ___ Primary (elementary) and Secondary (middle/junior high school or high school)
   ___ Primary only
   ___ Secondary only
   ___ Other (Please Describe)
13. Is there a standard placement order?

___Primary first, secondary last
___Secondary first, primary last
___There is no specific order
___Other (Please Describe)

14. Who officially places physical education teacher education teacher candidates?

___A College of Education administrator
___A College of Education administrator with PETE faculty input
___PETE faculty
___Other (Please Describe)

15. What is the primary factor/quality that determines a student teaching placement?

___Availability of the cooperating teacher/site
___Proximity of the site to the University
___Congruence between the PETE program and the student teaching site
___Number of years the cooperating teacher has taught
___Particular cooperating teacher qualities (such as?)
___Particular site context qualities (such as?)
___Other (Please Describe)
16. What is the second factor/quality that determines a student teaching placement?

___Availability of the cooperating teacher/site

___Proximity of the site to the University

___Congruence between the PETE program and the student teaching site

___Number of years the cooperating teacher has taught

___Particular cooperating teacher qualities (such as?)

___Particular site context qualities (such as?)

___Other (Please Describe)

17. What is the third factor/quality that determines a student teaching placement?

___Availability of the cooperating teacher/site

___Proximity of the site to the University

___Congruence between the PETE program and the student teaching site

___Number of years the cooperating teacher has taught

___Particular cooperating teacher qualities (such as?)

___Particular site context qualities (such as?)

___Other (Please Describe)
APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS (PHASE 2)
Semi-Structured Interview Guiding Questions

1. Review size and organization of program.
2. Review how student teacher placements are made.
3. Is the system of placement ideal for you (PETE faculty)? Likes/dislikes?
4. What are the barriers in the current system to prevent your idea? (How) Do you cope with these barriers?
5. What would you consider to be an ideal placement (CT qualifications, site context)?
6. How do you evaluate student teaching placements?
7. Are you happy with where your teacher candidates are placed? Likes/dislikes?
8. If you are unhappy with any particular sites, what makes them less than ideal? Did you have a say about this placement? If you did not, did you raise any concerns? How does your program compensate for a poor placement?