EXPLORING PRESERVICE TEACHERS ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHING PHYSICAL EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY AT A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: Attitudes has been identified as one of the factors that can affect the teaching and learning process either positively or negatively. Formation of attitudes are determined by the interrelationship between three main aspects which are behaviour, cognitive as well as affective and can be influence by experiences either good or bad. In this paper, the attitudes of preservice teachers of a local Japanese University are explored based on their behaviour, cognitive processes and emotional inclinations towards teaching Physical Education using a case study approach in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Findings from this research suggests that the preservice teachers are concerned about their readiness to teach Physical Education and are open to professional development. It was discovered that the preservice teachers value student feedbacks as it encourages good teacher-student relationships.

Keywords: Attitudes, pre-service, Physical Education, teaching, case study.

I. INTRODUCTION

There are many factors that determine the effectiveness of a teacher. This includes their attitudes which reflect either positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable feelings (Oppenheim, 1992; Azjen, 1993; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) towards the subject taught as this may directly or indirectly influence their actions, decisions, teaching practices and possibly their students’ learning (Kulina & Silverman, 2000). Attitude formation looks at the interrelationship between three components affective, cognitive and conative which is also influenced by experiences gained by an individual over time. In the case of teaching Physical Education, if all three components (affective, cognitive and conative) of a teacher subscribes to the idea that physical activity and fitness is able positively affect students’ health, then that would form a positive teacher’s attitude towards the teaching the subject likewise if the teacher would have had a pleasant experience of learning Physical Education while in school, then there is a possibility that the teacher would have formed a positive outlook on the subject (Guan, Mcbride & Ping Xiang, 2005) referring to other research to determine its implication in the teaching and learning of Physical Education as well as teacher education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kulina & Silverman (2000) defines attitudes to be a group of beliefs that are clustered around a situation or object will form an attitude that is action-prone. However, Krietner & Kinciki (2007) explains even further that attitudes consist of several elements affective (emotional), cognitive (beliefs or opinions held consciously towards an object or situation), conative (behaviour or inclination for action triggered by the former two elements). Ahmad (2000:55) in Al-Qun IS & Qutaishat R.S. (2015) provides an extra element in his explanation of attitudes which is evaluation where the individual displays a positive or a negative response to stimuli. It is conclusive to say that attitude derives from a group or a cluster of beliefs or opinions towards a specific object or situation that is emotionally influenced and is displayed in the individual’s behaviour through responses which are either negative or positive. Another characteristic of attitudes is that it is not inherited or static but it is behaviour related and is learned. Therefore, attitudes can be modified by identifying the sources of negative attitudes and correcting them where as positive attitudes are sustainable by consistently ensuring that positive experiences occur (Oppenheim, 1992; Ghazali, 2008).

As for teachers’ attitudes, Guven (1988) explains that their attitudes towards the profession itself will not only determine the success and effectiveness of the teacher in that occupation, but also helps in increasing understanding of classroom practices as well as improving teacher’s education.
attitudes towards teaching consist of concepts that are not visibly expressed, but are formed unconsciously (Güneyli & Aslan, 2009) [18]. These concepts include teacher’s cognitive processes, classroom activities, professional changes, self–development and teaching skills (Pajares, 1992; William & Burden, 1997; Alay, 2003) [27] [34] [2] and has a direct effect on students in terms of academic success, personality and interests (Bloom, 1976; Jeans, 1995; Brooks & Sikes, 1997; Capa & Cil, 2000 as quoted in Seda, 2000) [5] [20] [29]. Seda (2012) [29] notes that a teacher’s attitude has great significance on their students learning as it motivates them to either respond in a positive or negative way. As attitudes are able to influence an individual’s choice of action, responses to challenges, incentives and rewards (Sylibeh, 1999 as quoted in Al-Qun & Qutaishat, 2005) [3], ultimately, attitudes of teachers towards their profession can be seen through their enjoyment of being in the profession, sincere behaviours towards their students, not dictators in the classroom, being good time managers, having the social awareness of the importance of their profession which will result in them believing in the need for personal and professional development. (Celikoz & Cetin, 2004) [10].

**III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

Pajares (1992) [27] states that a teacher’s curricular and instructional decisions and the efficacy of their student’s learning are affected by his or her belief system. In the case of preservice teachers, their teaching readiness, beliefs and attitude formation is influenced mostly by their personal experiences and enforced by what they have learned throughout their training via written and physical test, feedback from their supervisors, presentations and research (Bandura, 1987; Chedzoy & Burden, 2005; Morgan & Bourke; 2005; Strakova, 2015) [4] [11] [25] [32]. However, as much as formal training and observation of other trained teachers (Lortie, 1975; Calderhead & Robson, 1991) [23] [8] is important in producing well-equipped teachers, a teacher that has a positive outlook towards the subject taught as well as the teaching environment could possibly enhance the effectiveness of the teacher as well as the learning capability of the students. It would be interesting to explore the attitudes of the preservice teachers’ towards teaching physical education. Therefore, this research hopes to answer the question (1) What are the attitudes of preservice Physical Education teachers towards teaching Physical Education?

The findings of this research hope to provide evaluative insights towards improving teacher training as well as to consider factors that could possibly enhance the effectiveness of teaching Physical Education within the teaching community. However, the findings of this research are limited to preservice teacher community in Japan as they undergo training according on the requirements provided by the Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture and Science which is only applicable in their country.

**IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

a. **Research Context: Physical Education Teacher Requirements in Japan.**

Teacher candidates are firstly selected via the university entrance examinations and placed in the Education Faculty of respective universities that offer the teachers training program. These teacher candidates will then have to fulfill the requirements provided by the Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture and Science (MEXT), which include completing a specific number of credit hours for the subject content and teaching pedagogy modules as well as participating in practical training at a local school designated by the university. Teacher candidates are only certified to teach after they have acquired a teaching license either before or after graduating from the university by sitting for an official examination conducted by the Committee of Teachers Qualification.

b. **Subject**

Subjects for this research consist of 34 preservice teachers from the Education Faculty of the Niigata University who are currently in their 3rd year and 4th year who did their practical training for two weeks in local schools as part of their course requirement. They trained in elementary school, junior high school, high school and special needs school and are well versed with the Physical Education syllabus used in their respective school levels. However, the preservice teachers are only competent in the Japanese language and have minimal competence in conversational English as all of them are of Japanese descendent.

c. **Instrument**

The instruments used to gather information relevant to the research consist of a 27-item questionnaire with 8 items looking at the behavioural aspect, 13 items looking at the cognitive aspect and 6 items looking at the emotional aspect of attitudes towards teaching Physical Education. The questionnaire was adapted from existing questionnaires of the similar research theme and other sources. A written interview was used to collect the subjects’ responses due to the researcher’s lack of communicative competency in the Japanese Language. The questions focused on personal experiences with Physical Education, the importance of Physical Education, understanding of an effective Physical Education lesson as well as the role of a teacher in the Physical Education classroom. Instruments are bilingual; in English and Japanese to...
ensure subjects’ understanding of the instruments’ content.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

VI. FINDINGS

Based on Table 1.0, the mean score individual items for each category is ranged from 1.188 to 5.673 with higher scores reflecting a more positive attitude except for the Negative Perceptions about Physical Education category in which lower score reflect a more positive perception. Therefore, the preservice teachers are cognitively and emotionally positive towards teaching Physical Education with their respective means of 4.2396 (SD=0.6435). They are also behaviourally positive towards teaching Physical Education with the mean of 3.4414 (SD=0.6552). Preservice teachers do not have negative perceptions towards teaching Physical Education as indicated with the mean of 2.4375 (SD=0.7943). Therefore, the preservice teachers have generally positive attitudes towards teaching Physical Education as indicated with the mean of 3.4125 (SD=0.7415).

In the cognitive aspect of attitudes towards teaching Physical Education, the item ‘I make sure that I can perform the movement, exercise or game correctly before my Physical Education lesson.’ was identified to have the highest mean score of 4.1288. As Darling-Hammond (2005) [12] states that a well-prepared teacher can impact the achievement of students as compared to poverty, language background and minority status, findings in the behavioural aspect of attitudes towards teaching Physical Education suggest that the preservice Physical Education teachers understand the importance of being well-prepared before conducting their lessons and make effort to do so. This is also supported by the written responses of the preservice teachers when asked their opinion to what makes an effective Physical Education lesson and the role of the teacher in the classroom, ‘being well-prepared before the lesson’ and ‘being able to provide clear instructions, guidance and demonstrations’ was one of them.

In the cognitive aspect of attitudes towards teaching Physical Education, the item ‘Teachers need to be consistently trained from time to time to be effective in the Physical Education classroom.’ was identified to have the highest mean score of 4.5938 suggests that preservice teachers understand that both, Physical education as well as the teaching profession is not stagnant and constant development is necessary to meet the needs of the society. Valkanos, Giossi & Anastasiadou (2010) [33] notes also that this understanding of the need for professional development among teachers or in this case preservice teachers indicates that they have positive learning attitudes and display the eagerness to improve their teaching performance. It is also possible that this cognitive perception may have also indirectly influence the preservice teacher’s behaviour in preparing themselves well for their lessons. In addition, when preservice teachers were
asked about their opinions concerning characteristics of an effective Physical Education lesson in the written interview, responses like ‘creating fun and interesting ways to make learning effective’ and ‘exposing students to knowledge outside of the classroom’ were given. This suggests that the preservice teachers need to be well informed of the latest teaching trends in Physical Education as well as new knowledge with regards to the subject. Therefore, the findings also suggest that the preservice teachers are cognitively open towards learning and this may enable them to easily acquire new information, skills and become more efficient in their teaching performance (Stan, Stanovici & Palos, 2013) [30].

In the emotional aspect of attitudes towards teaching Physical Education, the item ‘I like teaching Physical Education because students give me positive responses.’ was identified to have the highest mean score of 4.1563 and suggests that the preservice teachers value responses provided by their students as student’s feedback benefits the teaching and learning environment in various ways such as enhancing students learning experience, promoting good teacher-student relationship, helps teachers identify good teaching practices, measuring students satisfaction, helps students reflect on their experiences as well as ensuring the effectiveness of the course design and delivery (Brennan & Williams, 2004) [6].

The feedback provided by preservice teachers in the written interview with regards to their personal experiences learning Physical Education, responses such as ‘I wish the teacher was not so strict and fierce’ and also ‘having good conversations with the teacher’ indicated that they possibly hoped for a better relationship with their own Physical Education teacher and also wished that they would be able to have a good relationship with their own students as they listed this aspect as one of the characteristics of an effective Physical Education lesson.

Although findings show that the preservice Physical Education teachers do not have negative perceptions toward teaching Physical Education, the item ‘In my opinion, Physical Education is time consuming and complicated to teach.’ which was identified to have the highest mean score suggests that preservice teachers may still be processing and trying to grasp the Physical Education’s content knowledge which in itself multidimensional in nature as well as coping with the complex teaching skills required to teaching it (Graham, 2008) [16]. This is situation is proposed by Fuller & Brown (1975) [14] as ‘teaching situation concern’ in which preservice teachers face frustrations and limitations in the teaching environment as they not only have to be aware of the content knowledge of the subject that they teach and methods of teaching it, they too need to cope with the needs of the classroom.

**CONCLUSION**

The findings of this research show that the preservice teachers have generally positive attitudes towards teaching Physical Education and could indicate that they are highly motivated to teach. It also suggests that the preservice teachers are concern about their readiness to Physical Education in a real-life setting and that they acknowledge the need for professional development to meet the needs of the students as well as to create good teacher-student relationship which may enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

The findings of this research provide the parties involved in teacher education as well as the preservice teachers themselves a general idea of their readiness to teaching Physical Education. It also informs of the possible difficulties that preservice teachers may face in their preparation to teach Physical Education in which teacher education programs should address. However, as attitudes can be modified by identifying the sources of negative attitudes and correcting them where as positive attitudes are sustainable by consistently ensuring that positive experiences occur (Oppenheim, 1992; Ghazali, 2008) [26][15], there is an open possibility for future research in this field in which the attitudes of preservice teachers are re-evaluated after experiencing real life teaching situations in school.

a. Limitations of the research
This research is limited due to these factors:-

i. **Participants selection**
This research was extended only to the 3rd and 4th year students of Niigata University due to the accessibility of the participants who were recommended by the lecturer in charge. Privacy policies in the university were also one of the factors considered when selecting the participants.

ii. **Homogeneity, Locality and Learning Experience**
Although participants are 100% of Japanese descendant, the culture and learning experience of the university’s community may vary from other university communities in other parts of Japan. The participant sample was taken from a national university in one of the prefectures of Japan in the Kyushu region, the findings of this research may not depict the attitudes of preservice teachers in other regions of Japan.

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