

Teacher Planning, Instruction, and Reflection

What Was the Question?

Hall and Smith (2006) examined physical education teacher cognitions as they relate to planning, instruction, and reflection. They proposed that these three components have typically been investigated separately, linearly, and in "controlled" settings. As an alternative, they suggest that it may be beneficial to treat them as highly interrelated parallel processes. They also attempted to identify differences in the ways in which novice and experienced teachers perform these tasks and how such information might affect the design of teacher education programs (TEPs).

What Was Done?

Using sources from 85 studies related to planning, instruction, and reflection, the authors aggregated findings to deconstruct the meaning of each of these processes, show how they are interdependent, identify how novice and experienced teachers differ in these activities, and suggest strategies for using these constructs to de-

velop pedagogical capabilities in preservice teachers.

What Was Found?

Planning. The act of planning is what often guides lesson focus and content in order to meet course objectives and ultimately achieve student learning. However, much of the planning research fails to examine it as a part of a wider process (i.e., planning, teaching, and reflecting). It is noted that most novices are required to develop detailed written lessons in TEPs, while many experienced teachers use note cards or mental snippets for their lesson plans. Yet, the planning literature seems to indicate that experienced teachers' plans (written or unwritten) are more efficient and relevant to the curriculum and to student learning than those of novice teachers.

Instruction. Experienced teachers typically use a plan as a guide for completing their lesson objectives, but they are quick to adapt a lesson to meet those objectives. In contrast, novices typically will stick to their plan, regardless of their students' needs. According to the authors, a larger knowledge base appears to be the single most important factor in accounting for the instructional flexibility of more-experienced instructors (i.e., they have a greater capability to adapt in real time). This suggests that "TEPs should encourage decision-making based on the responses of the student as opposed to always 'sticking to' the plan" (p. 432). The authors also propose that a preservice teacher's ability to make "in flight" decisions during a lesson would be enhanced by having more pedagogical-content knowledge (i.e., what to teach and how to teach it).

Reflection. Many TEPs require students to teach a lesson and then reflect on the lesson's implementation, focusing mainly on the

preconceived plan. This approach, however, gives little or no consideration to context or student learning. The authors found that little research has been completed on the types of teacher reflection that occur throughout the lesson or on what is known as "reflection-in-action."

What Does the Study Mean?

The authors suggest that future research should attempt to examine planning, instruction, and reflection processes from a holistic perspective (i.e., interdependent and parallel) and should be conducted in the natural teaching environment. They propose that it would be possible to provide an in-depth, holistic understanding of the planning, instruction, and reflection process by employing a case study design and real-life contexts. Hall and Smith also recommend that TEPs abandon the linear approach to teaching, planning, and reflection (i.e., produce a scripted lesson, deliver it, reflect afterwards, and receive feedback from an instructor that might limit student reflection). Instead, they suggest using a progression of teaching episodes that would consider more "what if" situations to help preservice students develop a greater awareness of contextual variables and strategies to deploy as lessons evolve. They also recommend that students be taught to reflect *during* a lesson in addition to *after* its completion. Such reflections should also be connected to decisions about subsequent teaching.

References

- Hall, T. J., & Smith, M. A. (2006). Teacher planning, instruction, and reflection: What we know about teacher cognitive processes. *Quest, 58*, 424-442.
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