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Four Types of Role of Adapted Physical Education Teachers

Abstract

This article reports data drawn from a survey of students' views about their future teacher role. The students were recruited from adapted physical education specialization provided by the University School of Physical Education. The data are used to construct four types of role of adapted physical education teachers. The typology of role which has implications for the range and type of professional development opportunities which might be made available to teachers. The findings show that the majority of students found a holistic type as the most appropriate and they chose the type of teaching which took them closer to the person. As part of the study the authors have independently developed the Model of Roles of APE Teachers (APEROLE) over seven years of teaching practice.

Key words: *Adapted physical education, types, roles*

Introduction

Adapted physical education (APE) is still a new sub-discipline rather than an independent discipline (Broadhead 1981, Newell 1990, Sherrill 1988, Block 1992, 2000, Reid, Stanish 2003) and part physical education is the development of motor and physical fitness addressed to disabled children. APE teachers have not achieved a status of separate profession yet and some researchers concluded that general physical education (GPE) is not an academic discipline itself but rather an interdisciplinary field (Rose 1986, Henry 1978, Spirduso 1990, Barton 1993, Williams 1991). Broadhead (1981) suggested that adapted physical education did not have

the “wealth and quality literature that existed in other areas of physical education”. (Reid, Stanish 2003, p. 213).

For the purpose of this article we have used the following definition: adapted or special physical education as “...cross-disciplinary theory and practice that attempts to identify and solve motor problems throughout the lifespan, develop and implement theories that support access to sport and active lifestyle, and develop cooperative home school-community service delivery and empowerment systems” (DePauw, Doll-Tepper, 2000, p. 136)

The school system in Poland tries to undertake specific classroom community, organizational or curricular modifications to enhance the function of a child with a learning disability. The Adapted Physical Education (APE) teacher is a direct service provider, because special physical education is a component of special education services. The APE teacher is part of developmentally appropriate physical education. In other words, it is adapted and modified physical activity to be appropriate for the person with a disability (Goldberg 1996). Adapted education programmes include specific learning disabilities such as: mental retardation, autism, visual impairment including blindness, hearing impairment and deafness, speech or language impairment, orthopedic impairment, brain injury, emotional disturbance, psychiatric disorders, multiple disabilities, etc. Usually difficulties are expressed in speaking, writing, listening or thinking. Some diagnostic criteria are concentrating on emotional and behaviour difficulties. Universities across Poland offer programmes in special education, including undergraduate and master's. Usually courses include knowledge and skills needed for teaching students with disabilities such as special pedagogy, educational and clinical psychology, child growth and development, methodology of special games and plays, etc. The specialization for Adapted Physical Education with Disabilities in Wroclaw's University School of Physical Education was formed in 1994. The main goal was to encourage the conduct of service delivery for disabled children in education field and also stimulate professional preparation and research in physical education and recreation.

The aim of the study is to develop the practical “Model of Roles of APE Teachers” (APEROLE). A student achieves this by posing the question: What type of teacher do you expect to become? We asked students because we recognized that it is necessary for the future teacher to know what type of person she/he is. This question is in the background throughout the study and teaching interaction. We believe that the personal decision of the student to be close to one of the types, develops her/his teaching approach.

Settings and methods of APE teachers

APE teachers used to work in a variety of settings: home, hospitals, rehabilitation centres and schools. It is not only a physical placement or setting but rather a composite of practices, values and beliefs designed to assure a high quality special physical education for all children. Most special education teachers work with students at all school levels, some teachers work with infants and toddlers. Sometimes special education teachers who work with infants travel to the child's home. As kindergartens or schools become more friendly for children with special needs, more inclusive, special education teachers and general education teachers increasingly work together in the general education system (Craft 1994, Lieberman, Stanton, Colvin 1996, Bricker 1995, Downing 1996). APE teachers help general educators adapt curriculum materials and teaching techniques to meet the needs of disabled students. Depending on the disability, teaching methods can include individualized work with the pupil according his/her individual learning style and ability, and setting up personalized goals for each student includes a transition plan outlining specific steps for school and daily life progress (Heikinaro-Johansson, Sherrill 1994, Fiornini, Stanton, Reid 1996, Webster 1993).

APE teachers use various methods and techniques ranging from a regular physical education class to an adapted physical education class with specialized equipment and instruction to promote learning. They use three major strategies: group work, problem-solving small groups and individual work. Some have regular classrooms with only few modifications, and they teach like other teachers of particular subjects. Some work as special education resource teachers and offer special problem solving in small groups (Lienert, Sherrill, Myers 2001). And the most effective type of work is related to individualized help to students in general education classrooms where teachers develop an individualized education programme for each special education student. To meet a student's special need teachers try to design and modify school programmes and instruction teachers also work individually, they are encouraged to work with students who have other specific potentials and needs, including gifted pupils. An important part of an APE teacher's job involves interacting with others. They communicate with other teachers, parents, social workers, therapists, school psychologists or administrators. Teachers work closely with parents to inform them of their child's progress and suggest special exercises or specific techniques to encourage them to continue the learning process at home (Downing, Rebollo, 1999). From the psychological point of view physical education teachers contribute to children's confidence and self-esteem. They also provide the skills and knowledge for future work in sport, physical activity, recreation and leisure, which is a growing area of employment.

Teachers also design and create specific small groups to assign work geared toward a particular problem related either to student's physical movement, or interpersonal communication, or social cooperation. They help students learn routine skills and be aware of socially acceptable behaviour. After school and graduation they prepare special education students for daily life and provide them with career counselling. In Poland technology does not play an important role in special education teaching and learning. Special physical education teachers try to use more and more specialized equipment such as audio, videotapes, computers with interactive educational software programmes or with synthesized speech programmes.

Roles and responsibilities

Satisfaction and effectiveness of work of APE teachers depend on the collaboration of a multidisciplinary team of local community professionals. Special physical education teachers and other experts are involved in the problem identification and development of students with disabilities. Team members play a specific role and are responsible for particular fields (Table 1)

Table 1. Roles and responsibilities of multidisciplinary team members

Team member	Roles and responsibilities
Child	Expresses the needs and presents his or her individual perception of the problem.
Parents/guardians	Provide medical, psychological, social information and act as advocates for the child and look after and manage child's behaviour at home.
Class teacher	Identifies behaviours of child that interfere with learning and implements school activity modifications and specific behavioural interventions and helps to provide case management services to child and family.
School teachers	Identify specific child behaviours related to particular school subject and activity and report any changes to class teacher
APE teachers	Identify specific needs and behaviours related to psychomotor skills in physical education and recreation
Family physician	Assesses child for medical problems that affect child's ability to develop and provides necessary specialist consultation.

School psychologist	Acts as leader of a multidisciplinary team to implement curriculum, to assist with evaluation or behaviour modifications and provides child-individual or family counseling and administers and interprets academic and behavioural assessment for parents or teachers
School nurse	Consults effects of medication or any medical procedures with parents and teachers.
Speech/language specialist	Identifies and assesses child's ability to express or receive information and treats speech and language impairments.
Social worker	Identifies and assesses social and financial child's family needs.
School administrator	Administers all school services and professionals and ensures that child is receiving appropriate education regardless of disabilities.

The role of APE teachers remains still unclear. Some researchers (Sherrill 1988, Lytle, Collier 2002, Lytle, Hutchinson 2004) suggest a multiple role as consultants, which includes planning, assessing, counselling, teaching or advocacy. Dougherty (1995) stressed the role of a human service consultant with advocacy, training, education or collaboration tasks. Block and Conatser (1999) mentioned four roles of APE teachers: advocator, trainer/educator, fact finder, and process specialist. In Poland the closest traditional role is a trainer/educator and his/her main task is to use knowledge and skills derived from study, university programme and practical experience work. A graduate must be able to:

- identify specific child's needs related to a particular health problem;
- communicate and interact effectively and appropriately in a verbal, nonverbal and written form;
- be socially responsible for and sensitive to students, their families or caregivers, general community and related service providers.

Professionals in relation to children and youth with disabilities are obliged to:

- recognize, value and address diversity in psychomotor skills in physical education and recreation,
- develop positive atmosphere to accept children with disabilities as human beings with specific psychomotor needs,
- expand maximum positive learning opportunities in physical education and recreation,
- provide permanent skill development, support physical education and develop a maximum psychomotor potential,
- explore adaptations that will allow children with disabilities to be full participants in physical education and recreation,
- create a partnership between physical educators and members of multidisciplinary teams to provide more effective work.

Method and sample

This article reports data drawn from a survey of students' views about their future teacher role. The students were recruited from adapted physical education specialization provided by the University School of Physical Education. The questionnaire included only open questions about the past and present experience/satisfaction and whether they had any previous experience working with disabled children. They were also asked about their fields of interest in life. The most important question for the researchers concerned the future intention and role as a teacher. This part of the questionnaire principally dealt with the options and types of approach in the future work. In addition, the students were asked about the reason to study adapted physical education and if they were intending to stay in teaching this particular group of children in the nearest future.

The data from the sample of students (n=220) reflect the findings in relation to the role of teaching and the type of teacher. Future intentions are rather kind of aspirations. The students stressed that they may intend to do something in a particular way without ever actually experiencing or doing it. They were aware that future work may be influenced by many factors.

Results and Discussion

Of the 220 respondents, more than one-third (36%) declared (Table 2) intentions to be a teacher of the holistic type (G+H). The three other types were equally distributed (A+B,C+D,E+F). The figures are unsurprising but they show clear differences between two approaches. While 80% of the students preferred the "person" approach (A+C+E+G), only 20% applied for the "group" approach (B+D+F+H).

Table 2. Students' intentions in relation to role of teaching

Role of teaching	%
A. encourages personal development and positive attitude to life	19
B. develops skills and knowledge to be more independent	4
C. provides help and support in personal life skills	18
D. works with members of the team to provide a functional programme.	4
E. prepares equipment and materials for the development of skills	17
F. provides and enables commitment to groups and institutions	2
G. inspires a program geared to the assessed personal needs, goal and objectives	26
H. conducts assessment on long and short-term needs dealing with community.	10

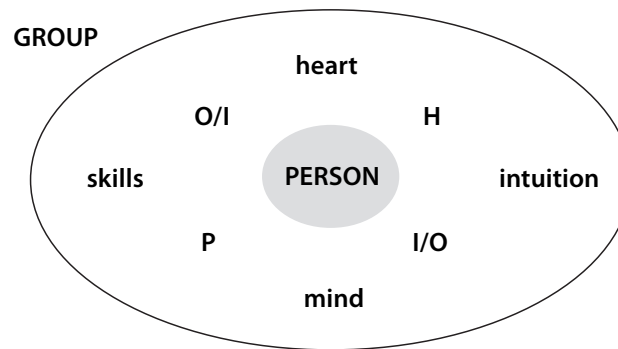
For more than seven years of interaction for developing a typology of roles model students' "voice" has been conceptualized as a result of the authors' teaching with appreciative students' comments. Their approach is inherently reflective, as the basis is phenomenology. Their study experience of learning interaction forms the fundamental basis of the module delivery and its natural reflection in future practice. Generally, their aim is to qualitatively improve the teaching situation. As future teachers working with children, they want to develop pupils as independent and confident human beings who are familiar with the broad, holistic life approach (Patel 1994). As they mentioned, the holistic type seeks to develop people in the most complex way. The holistic teaching provides pupils with knowledge and the knowledge creation process by engaging them. It provides a sense of participation in the knowledge of other people and their community and it leads to independence (Stanton, Colvin 1996). According to some researchers (Antonak, Levneh 1988, Hodge, Davis, Woodard, Shemil 2002), attitudes are likely to change only if experiences are carefully structured and they mention some practical goals of APE study (Rink 1993, Hogan 1990). APE teachers programmes should facilitate the development of positive empathy, accepting, etc.

Table 3. Four types of role of APE teacher

Type	Role
Type "P" - The professional type (encouraging, working, learning)	A. "Teacher" – encourages personal development and apolitive attitude to life.
	B. "Instructor" – develops skills and knowledge of pupils that enables them to participate independently to the highest degree possible, based on assessed needs.
Type "I" - The interpersonal type (supporting, communicating, connecting)	C. "Supporter" – provides help, professional consultation, life skills, special training and support services including in-service training to regular & special education teachers, school personnel and peers concerning needs and appropriate methods.
	D. "Cooperator" – works with members of the IEP team (i.e. speech, occupational, physical, orientation & mobility and vision specialists) to provide a functional and meaningful programme.
Type "O" - The organizational type (providing, sustaining, enabling)	E. "Facilitator" – prepares and utilizes equipment and materials for the development of skill as it is related to Adapted Physical Education (i.e. beeper balls, sponge balls, batting tees, etc.).
	F. "Activist" – provides and enables some commitment to groups, organizations and institutions.

Type	Role
Type "H" - The holistic type (leading, reinforcing, informing)	G. "Creator" – inspires a program geared to the assessed needs, goal and objectives, functional as well as motivational levels of the student.
	H. "Integrator" – conducts assessment, which focuses on both long and short-term needs of the student dealing with environment and community.

Fig. 1. Model of toles of APE teachers (APEROLE).



Conclusion

1. In the contemporary school all teachers face unprecedented challenges in school classrooms and local communities. The rapid expansion of knowledge and a demand for new skills means that children and young people must learn more than previous generations. Some of them come to school with additional burdens like physical or mental disability, poor health, and improper behaviour, or social disadvantage.
2. Tomorrow's teachers will need to have a much broader array of teaching strategies. They will need to know more as professionals and to be better prepared to face problems as human beings. As a result of these changes, we believe that graduates will be more professional practitioners who positively look after pupils' learning process and their growth (Block, Rizzo 1995).
3. All universities as well as the University of Physical Education recognize the necessity for teacher education to prepare APE teachers academically through proper curricular offerings in general education and pedagogy and in the activity related to adapted physical education areas.

The result of this study revealed that there is a need to examine teacher training programmes in APE. Nearly all participants of the study indicated that professional preparation should provide more practical-workshop kind of work related to interpersonal communication or negative emotions.

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