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Career intentions of Australian physical education teachers

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate Australian physical education (PE) teachers' career intentions and factors influencing their intentions. A sample (*N*=234) of Western Australian PE teachers responded to a questionnaire determining PE teachers' work and the primary motivators for intention to leave the profession.

Half (51.3%) of the respondents wanted a change from their current PE teacher job and 39.8% were intending to leave PE teaching. The most frequent reasons for wanting to leave PE related to: non-use of expertise, workload, school administration, and lack of opportunities for personal and professional development. Consideration should be given to mediation strategies that serve to elevate physical educators' needs satisfaction for teaching autonomy, competence and relatedness. Personal and professional advancement in schools to help maintain all teachers, particularly experienced teachers appears warranted. PE teachers' workload is considerable and worthy of review with the intention to extend their *use-by-date* and retain their experience-enriched expertise.

Keywords: Attrition, area transfer, turnover, career trajectory, physical education

Introduction

Traditionally, it has been thought that teachers' careers begin in university with pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher education that occurs in school where teachers are socialised to the school system (Christensen & Fessler, 1992). However, teachers' careers are formed from several different stages and teachers develop individually. Teachers have different skills, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors at various stages during their work-life cycle (Woods & Lynn, 2001). Teachers' work-life cycle and different stages of their career have been identified in many studies and there are several models that describe different stages of teachers' careers (Day et al., 2006; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1989; Sikes, 1985). From these models, Fessler and Christensen (1992), Huberman (1989) and Sikes (1985) have identified similar stages in a teacher's career and it is these stages that frame this research in conjunction with the Basic Satisfaction Needs Scale (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004)**.** Recently, Mäkelä (2014) have modified this cycle to PE teachers. Even though there are similarities (e.g. all models include reference to an induction stage and frustration stage) there are also differences in these models (for example the number of stages vary).

Teacher career cycle

While teachers' individual career stages and their quality of work life can be impacted by a range of variables (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000), a career begins with the preparation stage undertaken in pre-service education (Christensen, 1992), with the next stage involving induction (Letven, 1992) (Figure 1). During the induction stage, teachers' work to gain acceptance from pupils, parents, colleagues and administration. Some teachers may face a reality shock during this stage. They experience disillusionment between reality

and the ideals espoused in the teacher education programs (Letven, 1992). After the first years of teaching, teachers are potentially seen to enter the commitment or competence building stage. Teachers have generally built their competence, they have committed to their work via additional responsibilities and they may stabilise their position in the school (Burke & McDonnell, 1992a, 1992b). However, it must be kept in mind, that the teacher career cycle is not a linear process. Teachers may progress differently and teachers do not necessarily experience every stage of the model (Woods & Lynn, 2001).

FIGURE 1.

After the stabilisation stage of the profession, some have reported a frustration stage (Price, 1992a) or the reassesment stage (Huberman, 1989). During this stage teachers' question themselves and their choice of profession, feeling disenchantment and frustration with teaching and seeking ways for expressing, fulfilling and satisfying oneself (Price, 1992a; Sikes, 1985). Teachers can feel locked into an unfulfilling profession without possibilities for promotion and job satisfaction declines (Whipp, Tan, & Yeo, 2007). As a consequence, stress increases and teachers may perceive a lack of support from community and school administration (Huberman, 1989; Price, 1992a). Upon encountering the frustration stage, employment options may be assessed and a departure from teaching realised. After the frustration stage, teachers' careers stabilise. A common characteristic of this stability (Price, 1992b) or serenity stage (Huberman, 1989) is that teachers are doing their job well, but nothing more, they are no longer eagerly developing their professional capacity (Price, 1992b). Worthy of note there are potentially teachers who avoid this and continue to work as enthusiastic as earlier (Woods & Lynn, 2001). Teachers may have lost their enthusiasm and energy, but they have a greater sense of confidence and self-

acceptance (Huberman, 1989). The final years of teachers' work-life includes preparing for retirement, referred to as career wind-down or disengagement (Huberman, 1989) and career exit (McDonnell & Burke, 1992b). Feelings may differ between positive and negative, depending on whether teachers have had rewarding or unfulfilling professional experiences (Day et al., 2006; McDonnell & Burke, 1992a; Sikes, 1985).

Work-related motivation, engagement and psychological adjustment are impacted by ones' stasifaction for the intrinsic needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci, Ryan, Gagne, Leone, Usunov, & Kornazheva, 2001). By definition, the need for autonomy represents one's desire for input, choice, and a sense of volition or the initiator of one's pursuits (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004). Competence reflects one's desire to feel capable with respect to one's environment, succeeding at optimally challenging tasks, and relatedness refers to the desire to feel understood, respected by, and connected to significant others. An autonomy supportive work climate; which is highly influenced by superiors, colleagues and stakeholders, faciliates needs satisfaction for these three basic nutriments (Deci et al., 2001). Opportunities for an interpersonal climate can influence such tasks as goal setting, decision making, and work planning. A worker's career satisfaction and psychological well-being, as characterised by the various work-life cycle stages, appears linked to work performance (Deci et al., 2001) and consequently career intention.

A teacher's career aspirations and decisions are dependent on a myriad of personal and professional complexities (e.g., family, competence, colleagues, administration). When encountering the various stages during their work-life cycle, the experience is both contextual and individualised**.** Whilst some flourish, some stagnate, and others pursue a transition to other teaching-related areas or alternate professions. Teachers' career

transitions are commonly called turnover and can be divided into three components: 1) *attrition* means that teachers leave the profession (moves outside the teaching profession); 2) teacher *area transfer* refers to teachers changing their subject area; and 3) *migration* refers to when teachers relocate from one school to another, but remain teaching the same subject (Boe, 2007).

PE teachers' job satisfaction and career intentions

Even though teachers' careers are widely studied, there is little recent literature related to PE teachers' **career intentions.** Most of the studies report qualitative research (e.g., Armour & Jones, 1998; Moreira, Sparkes, & Fox, 1995; Woods & Lynn, 2001), but there is **a** gap in recent research using quantative methods. Some studies have concentrated on the beginning of PE teachers' careers and identified the challenges of the first years of teaching (Solomon, Terry, & Carter, 1993) while others have concentrated on the experienced teacher and their career decisions (Macdonald, 1999; Whipp, et al., 2007). According to Evans and Williams (1989) a high proportion of English male (80%) and female (40%) PE teachers were looking for a career outside of PE teaching. It has been reported that teachers who leave the profession do so usually before 5 years of service (Huberman, 1989, Ingersoll, 2001), with one in six Australian teachers exiting in the first 2 years of employment (Martinez, 2004). This finding is consistent for PE teacher attrition rates, with half (50%) of the graduates from an Australian University (1975–1993) leaving PE teaching by 1994, and 25% doing so within 4 years of beginning teaching (Macdonald, Hutchins, & Madden, 1994). In Finland, 23% of graduated PE teachers (1980-2006) had left the PE teaching profession after a mean period of 9.0 years (SD=7.1 years), while 39%

of Finnish PE teachers were intending to change their profession (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, Laakso, & Whipp, 2014; Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp, 2014).

In the PE teaching profession, there are multiple factors that facilitate job satisfaction; however, working with young people is reported to be a one of the most significant (Moreira, et al., 1995). On the other hand, there are aspects that lead to job dissatisfaction and drive some teachers away from the PE teaching profession. Several studies have reported that marginal status and lack of respect for PE are causing dissatisfaction (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Henninger, 2007; Macdonald, 1995; Whipp et al., 2007). PE teachers are seen to teach *lower down on the scale*, a non-academic subject or being just a sport teacher (Kougioumtzis, Patriksson, & Stråhlman, 2011; Macdonald, 1999; Moreira et al., 1995; Shoval, Erlich, & Fejgin, 2010). Moreover, isolation from colleagues or lack of collegiality are familiar in PE because of working in different facilities and being distant to the staffroom (Stroot, Faucette, & Schwager, 1993; Woods & Lynn, 2001). In response, early career PE teachers report feelings of being *Robinson Crusoe*, alone on an island, where nobody understands their language (Shoval et al., 2010). This lack of collaboration, especially with PE colleagues, inhibits their ability to compare practises, ideas, and experiences in PE (O'Sullivan, 2006). Lack of support from colleagues and administration is closely linked to isolation and lower levels of motivation (Carson & Chase, 2009). PE teachers have reported a lack of support because they are expected to solve problems themselves without anyone to share their ideas and thoughts (Shoval et al., 2010). Support from administration and colleagues could potentially increase PE teachers' quality of worklife (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014), perceptions of workplace relatedness

(Carson & Chase, 2009) and extend their self-percieved teaching *use-by-date* (Whipp et al., 2007).

Another common concern among PE teachers is lack of resources, including equipment or sufficient facilities for teaching (Evans & Williams, 1989; Kougioumtzis et al., 2011; Smyth, 1995). When PE teachers have to work with minimal resources, this serves to complicate the implementation of curriculum tasks (McCaughtry, Barnard, Matin, Shen, & Kulinna, 2006), limits opportunities to offer quality PE for pupils (Armour & Jones, 1998) and negatively impacts teachers' perceived competence and autonomy (Carson & Chase, 2009).

A lack of planning time or high workload are common in PE (Whipp et al., 2007). Teachers report an inability to deal with multiple demands (Shoval et al., 2010) and this leads to a lack of energy to engage in creative thinking and to sustain high-level achievement for students (Whipp et al., 2007). Also common in PE are problems with student behavior, discipline and motivation (Shoval et al., 2010; Solomon et al., 1993), which can lead to job dissatisfaction (Kulinna, Cothran, & Regualos, 2006).

Physical educators, in particular the experienced, have expressed dissatisfaction with a lack of opportunities. They report poor promotional opportunities, as a consequence they feel locked into the system (Armour & Jones, 1998; Moreira, Sparkes, & Fox, 1995; Whipp et al., 2007). Also, PE teachers face problems and difficulties that *high status* subject teachers do not. They also have fewer academic posts to apply for and opportunities to display their competencies. Experienced PE teachers are also frustrated with a lack of possibilities for professional development (Armour & Jones, 1998) or taking part in educational debate or decision making (Macdonald, 1995; Whipp et al., 2007). PE teachers

have also reported a desire to better use their knowledge and skills (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014). PE teachers may also feel that they are lacking intellectual challenges (Macdonald, 1995) and express concern for the repetitiveness of teaching PE (Lynn & Woods, 2010). However, this issue is potentially not isolated to PE teachers, but also reported to be problematic for other teachers (Froehlich, 2007).

Western Australian PE, at the time of data collection, under the jurisdiction of the Curriculum Council, a body independent of the Government school authority, was compulsory for all years of school including year 10. The existing outcomes-based curriculum was framed by five overarching curriculum guidelines. First, within *knowledge and understanding*, PE classes are expected to access health-promotion information, relating physical activity, sports, diet, disease prevention, and the various factors that may shape physical development. *Skills for physical activity* incorporate the provision of fundamental movement skills of locomotion, body management, and object control in free and structured settings, achieved through incremental skill practice using independent, paired, and team-based activities. The third PE curriculum requirement is termed *self-management skills*, and raise awareness of the consequences of one's actions, set effective goals, manage stress, and understand appropriate physical activity levels. Fourth, *interpersonal skills* focuses on the way in which PE classes should help develop communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and empathy through the adaption of roles during class (e.g., participant, leader, player coach). Finally, *attitudes and values*, which was not assessed, centers on recognising the value of hard work, physical activity, fair play, teamwork, as well as social and moral responsibility, and respecting and including others. It is noteworthy that the significant majority (80.7%) of a sample of Western Australian

health and physical education (HPE) teachers had expressed reservations for the State Government education authorities existing outcomes-focused assessment and reporting requirements (Whipp, Anderson, Yeo, & Tan, 2006). Such demands and policy have significant influence on job satisfaction and intention to stay in the profession**.** A critical weakness, according to the HPE teachers, was its lack of clarity and transparency; the majority of teachers preferred to report using a method other than 'outcomes'. Moreover, at the time of the data collection process, the state of Western Australia and its PE teachers were awaiting the imminent arrival of a new national curriculum and assessment structure. Only 16.3% of the PE teachers from the existing study confirmed any level of satisfaction with the proposed new curriculum. Also, Physical Education Studies (PES) was first externally examined in Western Australian schools as a university entrance subject in 2009, this affording academic equivalence with traditional subject such as Physics, Mathematics and English. The PES course is framed by sport science principles and includes content related to biomechanics, functional anatomy, exercise physiology, sport psychology and motor learning.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career intentions of Western Australian PE teachers and the factors influencing their intentions. This study also examines the reasons that magnified teachers' intentions to leave the profession and the variables that were potentially consistent with PE teachers' intention to leave; for example age, gender, amount of teaching and work demands other than teaching PE.

Method

Participants

To determine the career intentions of PE teachers, a parcel of five structured questionnaires were mailed to the School Principal of 193 Western Australian secondary schools (98% of the defined sample) with reply-paid envelopes, a letter of ethical approval from The University of Western Australia and where appropriate another signed letter of approval from the Western Australian Department of Education or the Western Australian Catholic Education Office. After signing and return mailing the agreement to participate in the research (consent), instructions directed each principal to disseminate the package to Head of the PE department. The package included an information letter and instructions directing each Head of Department to provide a copy of the terms of agreement to participation, instructions, and the PE teacher's questionnaire, with a reply-paid envelope. The 234 respondents were initially categorised into two groups; those who were intending to stay in PE teaching (*stayers)* or leave PE teaching *(changers)*. An unknown numbers of PE teachers employed in schools, non-recording of school names and participant names prevented any calculation of return and non-return rates.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was based on the PE teachers' career intentions questionnaire, previously used by Mäkelä et al. (2012). This questionnaire was test-retested for reliability. Since this questionnaire was previously validated with a relatively large sample, it was decided to use it in Australia with some modifications. In response to previous work (Whipp et al., 2007) questions were added to determine satisfaction with opportunities to participate in work-related decision making. In addition, the questionnaire was modified in consultation with local PE teachers (N=6) and two academic staff to ensure relevance to the Western Australian school system and PE. As a result, questions were added relating to;

teaching styles used, student outcomes of focus, assessment of student learning, and personal safety. The items related to career intentions yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .96 and a mean interclass correlation of . 96 (F=22.24, p<.001), which confirmed realibity.

Background. The questionnaire sourced participants' gender, age, PE teaching experience, school level, marital status, dependent children, university qualifications, school sector, school location, teaching hours, total work hours and country of birth. Age was categorised into groups: 20-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years and 51 years and older. Teaching experience in PE was categorised into two groups, early career teachers (teaching less than six years) and experienced teachers (teaching six years or more). Consistent with others, (Huberman, 1989) teachers with less than six years experience were grouped, as this time represents a critical survival stage, a point of relatively high attrition, and once transitioned can lead to a stage of stabilisation (Huberman, 1989).

Satisfaction. The questionnaire included also 21 questions from the Basic Satisfaction Needs at Work Scale (Baard et al., 2004). These questions were referenced to "feelings about your PE teaching job during the last year" with a response scale anchored at 1 (*not at all true*) and 7 (*very true*). Clustered questions provided perceptions of the physical educators' levels of needs satisfaction for teaching autonomy, competence and relatedness. Behaviour motivation, teacher burnout and stress can be influenced by having the experience of choice (*autonomy*), a sense of efficacy in performance (*competence*), along with feelings of connectedness to the significant others in one's worklife (*relatedness*) (Carson & Chase, 2009). The association of these three self-determination nutriments to

intrinsic motivation, job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions (Carson & Chase, 2009) confirm the importance of their inclusion in this research.

Career intentions. Finally, those respondents who indicated an intention to change from their current job, were asked to select from the range of prescribed options relating to their career intention; retire, remain in their existing school but change focus out of PE, move to another school and teach PE, relocate to another school and change focus out of PE, or move out of school teaching and into another profession with a request to specify their preferred career option.

Reasons to leave the profession. Respondents were asked to consider the aspects that had influenced their intentions to change their work. Fifty-seven statements relating to teaching PE and workload, stress, opportunities, facilities, school administration, colleagues, pupils, parents, working conditions, teaching and learning outcomes, rewards, status and respect were anchored with a response scale confirming the level of influence from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very markedly*). A final question relating to their level of confidence that they could achieve the intended destination of change was anchored at 1 (*no confidence*) and 5 (*very high confidence*).

Data analysis

Data analysis began with descriptive statistics, representing the means and standard deviations for *changers* and *stayers*. The differences in intention to leave the profession and background variables were analysed with independent samples t-tests, analysis of variances (ANOVA) and Mann-Whitney U-test. Cohen's *d* statistic was used to report effect size of differences.

Principal axis factoring (PAF) with direct oblimin rotation was performed on the 57 items of the questionnaire to determine the reasons for considering leaving the profession. These items were related to 10 factors, which were labeled as follows: opportunities (item loadings .480-.923, pupils (item loadings .500-.998), school administration (item loadings .673-.978), workload (item loadings .695-.909), realisation of teaching (item loadings .610-.993), colleagues (item loadings .559-.888), working conditions (item loadings .462-.891), expertise (item loadings .879-941), respect (item loadings .458-.696), and isolation (item loadings .464-.505). The eigenvalues of the ten scales were as follows: 20.35 (factor 1), 5.00 (factor 2), 3.51 (factor 3), 2.79 (factor 4), 2.44 (factor 5), 2.37 (factor 6), 1.87 (factor 7), 1.70 (factor 8), 1.43 (factor 9), 1.15 (factor 10), all serving, when combined, to explain 69.70% of total variance.

Results

Of the 234 PE teachers in this study 55.9% were male and 44.1% were female. From these teachers 53.6% were married and 17.4% were living with a partner. Over half of the respondents (51%) were teaching in government schools, nearly one third **(30%)** were teaching in independent schools and one-fifth **(19%)** in the catholic school system. These schools were distributed by the location as follows; metropolitan schools 73.6%, regional or remote schools 26.4%. The total amount of teaching hours was 18 hours per week (*SD*=5.2) and total workload was 45 hours per week (*SD*=8.3).

Sixty percent of the PE teachers intended to remain teaching PE (*stayers*). From these teachers, 15% intended to stay in PE teaching, but change schools (*migrators)*. Forty percent of the PE teachers surveyed intended to leave PE teaching (*changers*); with the majority (53.2%) intending to leave teaching, 4.5% were planning to retire, 22.7% wanting

to move to another school and change focus, and 19.6% intending to remain within their existing school, but change focus. From those who intended to change focus in schools, 58.1% wanted to become a member of administration, while 41.9% considered moving to another subject or becoming a classroom teacher. From those who intended to move outside of schools, 44.5% desired to be involved in a sport or health related profession (e.g., personal training, coaching, health promotion, physiotherapy). Sixteen percent identified the mining industry as their choice of profession outside of teaching, while 17.8% identified unspecified business as their preferred profession.

There were no significant differences for teaching hours (p=.36, d=.12) or total workload (p=.85, d=.03) between those who intended to leave the profession and those who intended to stay in PE teaching. However, *changers* identified more sport related extra-curricular assignments than *stayers* (p=.033, d=.29) and non-sport-related extra-curricular commitments (p=.046, d=.28) (Table 1). Moreover, those who intended to change focus in school (*movers*), identified more sport-related extra-curricular working hours than those who intended to leave teaching (*leavers)* (p=.008, d=.58). Those who intended to leave the profession had more PE teaching experience than those intending to stay in PE. Intention to leave was highest in those aged 41-50 years, with 58.8% of this age group who were intending to leave PE wanting a change of profession, while 41.2% were intending to change teaching focus.

From those who intended to change profession, 35.6% identified that they had high or very high levels of confidence to achieve the change. However, 24.2% of respondents reported a low level of confidence to change profession, while 39.1% identified that they had a moderate level of confidence to change. There were no significant differences

between *movers* and *leavers* in confidence levels to achieve their goal for professional change.

Reasons to leave the profession

The most frequent reasons to leave the PE teaching profession included a desire to better use their own skills and knowledge (53.0% of respondents) and expertise (52.6% of respondents), work stress (38.8%), lack of time to complete allocated work (37.4% of respondents), a high workload (36.4% of respondents) and an inflexible administration (34.5%). When each item was grouped for conceptual similarity, perceptions of non-use of expertise ranked 1st (items mean 52.8% of participants) with both individual items identified most frequently (Table 2). Concerns relating to workload were most numerous in the top 10 list of concerns (rating 3rd, 4th, 5th and 8th for frequency), with 31.1% of respondents declaring it a marked concern, this being the second highest grouped item mean. Teachers' dissatisfaction with administration was represented in six of the top 20 individual items of concern and ranked third of the conceptualised issues (mean item response frequency = 26.2%). Issues related to teachers' opportunities to participate in and influence their work ranked fourth (mean item response frequency = 20.9%) with four items appearing in the top 20 (rating 7th, 11th, 19th and 20th). Three individual items relating to pupils were also ranked in the top 20 (rating 14th, 15th, 16th and 20th for frequency), and was the equal fifth ranked concept identified (mean item response frequency = 15.1%), along with concerns for respect (Table 2). In contrast, realisation of teaching and colleagues were ranked lowest of the 10 concepts evaluated. Comparison between *leavers* and *movers* revealed that *leavers* identified workload to be a stronger influence on their decision to leave than *movers* (p=.00**2**, d=.64), while *movers* identified their expertise to be

a more significant reason to change their job than *leavers* ($p<.001$, $d=.97$). For experienced teachers (worked six years or more) workload influenced more on their consideration to leave the profession when compared to that reported by the early career teachers (teaching less than six years) ($p=.028$, $d=.60$). Older PE teachers (age 51years and older) identified pupils as a more significant reason to leave than younger teachers (50 years and younger) ($p=.008$, $d=.89$).

Satisfaction

When responses to the Basic Need Satisfaction Scale items were compared between different groups, *stayers* in the PE teaching profession were more satisfied with the autonomy, competence and relatedness in their job than those who intended to leave the PE teaching profession ($p=.002$-$.024$, $d=.34$-$.42$, respectively). *Stayers* were more satisfied with relatedness and competence in their work than *movers* ($p=.013$-$.015$, $d=.44$-$.45$). When comparing those who intended to stay in their present PE teaching job and those who intended to stay in PE but change school, *migrators* reported a significantly lower satisfaction for teaching relatedness ($p=.001$, $d=.56$). Experienced teachers (teaching six years or more) were more satisfied with competence in their work when compared to the early career teachers ($p=.002$, $d=.46$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine PE teachers' career intentions and the factors influencing their intentions. From the 234 PE teachers in this study, 40% identified intention to leave the profession. Majority (53.2%) of PE teachers' who had an intention to leave, were considering leaving teaching entirely. These results are consistent with that reported in Finland (39%; Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014), and lower than data

previously reported for Australian PE teachers (50%; Macdonald et al., 1994) and lower than in England where 80% of male and 40% of female PE teachers identified intention to leave the profession (Evans & Williams, 1989). In the current study there were no differences between males and females intention to leave the profession ($\chi^2(1)=.195$, $p=.659$). Moreover, there was no difference in intention to leave between the school sectors, ($\chi^2(2),=.656$, p=.720) or school locations (χ^2 (2)=1.200, $p=.549$). The youngest (20-30 years) and oldest (50 years and older) PE teachers had lowest intentions to leave the profession. These data can be evaluated through the teacher career cycle.

Early career teachers (teaching experience 1-5 years**)** are more likely to stay in the profession, if they are supported by personal and organizational environments. At the organizational level, it is important for teachers to receive support from peers and administration (Letven, 1992). However, inconsistent with the concern for personal connection, in this study, novice teachers reported significantly lower relatedness needs satisfaction than their older counterparts. Colleagues have a key role in establishing a positive climate that assists novice teachers to master survival skills and successfully transition their career to the competence building stage (Letven, 1992). Whilst some of the early career teachers appeared to overcome this deficit, a continuation of this state may account for some entering, the frustration (Price, 1992a) or the reassesment stage (Huberman, 1989). PE teachers may experience disenchantment, stress, coinciding with a magnification in the perception of a lack of support from community and school administration (Huberman, 1989; Price, 1992a).

Teachers who are 50 years of age or older are potentially in the career wind-down stage, where they are preparing to leave the profession. For example, in Finland 90% of

those PE teachers, who had left the profession, had left before age of 50 years (retired omitted) (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, Laakso et al., 2013). They may have either a positive or negative period following a rewarding career or unfulfilled work life experience (Burke & McDonnell, 1992a).

Although a significant number of PE teachers desired a new profession, not all PE teachers who consider leaving, actually leave the profession. According to LeCompte and Dworkin (1991) only 29% of class teachers, who considered leaving the profession, eventually left. Somewhat consistent with this phenomenon, of the respondents in the current study, only 37% who declared an intention to leave reported a high or very high confidence level to fulfill their intention. However, only follow-up of these teachers could validate this speculation. Whilst only hypotetical, perhaps a lack of available promotional possibilities or other job alternatives, rendered PE teachers relatively low in confidence to achieve the desired change. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that intentions to change profession may vary during the academic year depending on satisfying and unsatisfying factors that present unexpectedly, seasonally, or even on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, with nearly three-quarters (71%) of the teachers living with a partner; personal or financial commitments may also have impacted on the potential for career change. The implications of retaining a considerable number of frustrated or potentially amotivated PE teachers (Carson & Chase, 2009) is concerning and worthy of further investigation.

From those who considered changing focus in teaching (N=95), the majority (58%) identified school administration to be the first choice for their new career. There are no recent comparative data for Australian PE *changers* preferred work destination or PE teachers who had successfully transitioned into administration; however, it is questionable

if all could be accommodated in administration roles. Furthermore, the number of these teachers who held masters level qualifications (*N*=5), which might be deemed necessary to be a school administrator or at least assist to appear superior to other applicants, was relatively small.

The Australian PE teachers in this study were consistent with their Finnish colleagues when expressing a strong desire for opportunities to better use their expertise (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014). In line with this finding, Lynn and Woods (2010) reported that repetitiveness or, as others defined, routinisation of PE teachers' work (Macdonald et al., 1994) leads to boredom and thereby inhibitis PE teachers' accessing their expertise (Macdonald, 1995). PE teachers may have gained expertise outside of teaching, for example with possible duties in coaching, and hence feel that they have additional skills not regularly used when teaching PE.

Worthy of note, Physical Education Studies (PES) was first externally examined in Western Australian schools as a university entrance subject in 2009, this affording academic equivalence with traditional subjects such as Physics, Mathematics and English. The PES course is framed by sport science principles and includes content related to biomechancs, functional anatomy, exercise physiology, sport psychology and motor learning. Sixty nine percent of PE teachers in this sample were teaching PES. Of those who wanted to leave PE teaching, less than half (48%) were teaching PES at the highest level, while 58% of *stayers* taught PES. However, there were no differences in concerns for a desire to better use their skills between those who were teaching PES and those who were not (p=.42).

Lack of respect and isolation, whilst ranking sixth and eight, respectively, for the reasons to leave (Table 2) share synergy with issue of relatedness needs satisfaction, and are also found in previous studies. PE has been percieved to be a non-academic subject, or not a legitimate subject (Henninger, 2007; Macdonald, 1999) with lack of respect seen as a form of marginalisation. PE teachers are also expected to prove themselves intellectually before they can attain the status that is equivalent to that of others (Whipp et al., 2007). PES teachers in this research reported significantly higher levels of competence satisfaction (p=.001, d=0.51) than those who did not teach PES. Since there is little research (e.g., Macdonald, 1995) that discusses PE teachers perceptions of the impact of teaching a university entrance subject on quality of work life, level of respect and intention to remain a teacher, this appears worthy of further investigation.

Concern for the workload was one of the most prevalent reasons for PE teachers wanting to leave the profession and this is consistent with previous studies (Macdonald et al., 1994; Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014; Shoval et al., 2010; Templin, 1989; Whipp et al., 2007). Also comparable with past findings, the PE teachers reported the professional demands of time and energy in relation to workload difficult to manage (Macdonald et al., 1994; Shoval et al., 2010; Whipp et al., 2007). Such concerns are analogous with PE teachers perceiving they have a *use-by-date* (Whipp et al., 2007). In this study, extra-curricular assignments significanly influenced PE teachers considerations to leave PE teaching. Extra-curricular activities have been identified to cause long days with coaching duties and lead to role conflict (Richards & Templin, 2012; Templin, 1989). Workload can also be related to the organisation of teaching. If teaching schedules are challenging or time allocation for teaching is inadequate, moving back and forth between school structures and

facilities can be frustrating (Fejgin, Talmor, & Erlich, 2005; Lynn & Woods, 2010). PE teachers in this study also identified the lack of time allocated to complete their work as a significant influence on intention to leave.

A perceived lack of respect from school administrators has been identified previously as one of the primary reasons to leave the PE teaching profession (Whipp et al., 2007). Moreover, lack of respect can be translated to an increased insensitivity in the delegation of workload (Whipp et al., 2007). Lack of respect may also be seen in the form of lack of interest in what PE teachers are doing in their classes (Henninger, 2007). In this study, PE teachers identified lack of respect or support from administration and limited trust in administration as significant in their consideration to leave the profession. Consistent with previous reports of administrators' ability to impact on PE teachers' feelings of connectedness at work (Carson & Chase, 2009), not surprisingly, the *leavers* and *movers* were significantly less satisfied with their sense of teaching relatedness when compared to the *stayers*.

In PE, teachers are working outside of school in sports halls, swimming pools, sports fields etc, and this reduces the opportunity for interaction with others (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014; Woods & Lynn, 2001). There might be also separate PE staffrooms and this also reduces the possibility to interact with others and hence to support professional development. Such interaction and perceived support are considered essential for beginning teachers (Christensen, 2013; lisahunter, Rossi, Tinning, Flanagan, MacDonald, 2011). Because of isolation, PE teachers may not have the same opportunity to share their vision and ideas (Lynn & Woods, 2010) and they lack a sense of collegiality (Macdonald et al., 1994). Lack of possibilities for involvement in decision making and not being listened to

were identified by one-fifth of PE teachers as influencing their intention to leave. This is related to the scope to influence ones' job but also because of isolation, PE teachers may not have the opportunity to share their concerns with other teachers. Administrators impact on PE teachers' feelings of isolation at work (Carson & Chase, 2009) and consistent with this, the *leavers* were significantly less satisfied with their teaching autonomy when compared to the *stayers*, while *changers* also expressed significantly lower satisfaction for teaching autonomy and a sense of efficacy in performance (competence) when compared to *stayers*.

When encountered, a lack of equipment significantly impacts on PE teachers' perceived satisfaction for autonomy and competence (Carson & Chase, 2009). Consistent with this, the *leavers* in the existing study reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction for teaching autonomy when compared to the *stayers*, while *changers* expressed significantly lower satisfaction for teaching autonomy and a sense of efficacy in performance (competence) when compared to *stayers*. Although not appearing to be a significant influence on intention to leave for the majority of teachers in this study, when percieved, poor working conditions can affect teachers' instrinsic motivation and limit the educational experiences for pupils. In this study, PE teachers did not identify concerns for facilities or equipment as significantly as in previous studies (Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014; Shoval et al., 2010). Furthermore, teachers who perceive a lack of resources are potentially more inclined to simply *roll the ball out*, thus further minimising PE student outcomes (Henninger, 2007; Mäkelä, Hirvensalo, & Whipp 2014).

There were no differences between *movers* and *leavers* responses related to pupils. PE teachers have previously expressed concern for students' poor attitudes (Moreira et al.,

1995), lack of motivation and disrespect for teachers (Macdonald, 1999), which can lead to frustrating discipline problems without appropriate support from administration (Curtner-Smith, 1997). However, respondents in this study identified concerns for the non-use of expertise, workload, administration, and opportunities more frequently than student-related issues. Moreover, the data could not be used to explain why the older PE teachers (age 51years and older) identified pupils as a more significant reason to leave than younger teachers (50 years and younger). Whilst only speculative, older PE teachers may feel "discipline-weary" with repetitive student-based behavior problems; in particular, the need to discipline students where teachers' perceive a lack of parent support (Whipp et al., 2007). They may also lose some of their enthusiasm for sport/s, this being potentially concomitant with repetitiveness of work (Lynn & Woods, 2010; Macdonald et al., 1994) and therefore report pupils, and their attitude, lack of respect or relative amotivation, to be a more significant reason to leave.

Given that a significant proportion of PE teachers perceive school administration as a desirable promotion, future research that ascertains the potential opportunities for such a transition and the in-service learning that could support a successful career change appears warranted. Also, for those PE teachers who still want to stay in PE rather than pursue promotion, enhancing the opportunities for them to use their skills could potentially serve to retain PE teachers in the profession. It would also be valuable to determine the qualities that school principals display when they are considered by PE teachers to be supportive. Also, further exploration and understanding of the reasons that keep PE teachers productive in PE is worthy of consideration.

Conclusion

The number of PE teachers intending to leave the profession was the same as in Finland, but lower than that previously reported for Australian and English PE teachers. PE teachers faced the career frustration stage most significantly after the age of 40. School senior administrators should work to understand and elevate physical educators' needs satisfaction for autonomy, competence and relatedness through mediating personal and professional advancement in schools to help maintain all teachers, particularly the experienced ones. The capacity to endure the time and energy needed to teach PE is declining in experienced teachers. Therefore, it would appear advantageous for some teachers to undertake a redistributed work allocation, in particular with less extra-curricular commitments, potentially less PE teaching allocation, and enhanced access to their skills in other school-related work such as school senior administration. Facilitating personal and professional opportunities for PE teachers will also enhance collaboration with colleagues and thus reduce isolation, all serving to increase the quality of work-life for a significant number of PE teachers. Retaining qualified, experienced PE teachers is essential for children to promote lifelong physical activity and support every child to find their own way to move and promote their physical fitness.

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