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Factors Affecting Positive Professional Socialization of Physical Education Teachers

Lawson (1988) explains occupational socialization 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). The different phases of socialization impact teachers’ conceptions of physical education and the way they teach it. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe and analyze factors affecting positive professional socialization of PE teachers. The participants were one elementary and two middle school PE teachers (3 females; ages range 29-31). Data were collected from field notes during passive participant observations, two semi-structured formal interviews and informal interviews, and document analysis of self-reflective posters to gain an understanding of the factors that positively influenced PE teachers during their professional socialization. A thematic analysis was used when examining the data to identify common themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Trustworthiness was established through triangulation of the data, peer debriefing, and member checks. Results found that the three PE teachers strengthened their teaching perceptions positively during professional socialization. They indicated the support they received was valuable, and four themes emerged: (a) impact from physical education teacher education faculty, (b) positive experience in method courses, (c) positive experience in early field experiences and student teaching experiences, and (d) close supervision from classroom teachers and university supervisors. Understanding the significance of professional socialization may serve to guide teacher educators to improve the effectiveness of PETE programs.