

ARTICLE REVIEWED

First-Year Physical Education Teachers' Major Source of Efficacy: Transition From Preservice to In-Service Teaching

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THE PROBLEM

In many countries, teacher attrition has become a major concern in the education field, with 3.8-11.7% attrition rates. Qualified teachers leaving the profession can negatively impact the quality of education that K-12 students are receiving. Teacher efficacy (beliefs about one's own teaching ability) is an important factor in teacher retention; however, there is limited evidence surrounding the development of physical education teachers' efficacy.

Understanding what influences physical education teachers' efficacy is especially important at the early career stage, as teachers often leave the profession within their first five years.



Research Summary

This study examined what shapes teacher efficacy among first-year physical education teachers, including factors that transfer over from preservice preparation into in-service teaching. Following the Social Cognitive Theory, this study focused on four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional states. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 first-year physical education teachers across 11 states. They identified five major sources of efficacy: student teaching, cooperating teachers, principals, current students, and content knowledge. Student teaching and cooperating teachers were the main sources of efficacy which transferred from preservice to in-service teaching.

Conclusion

The study's findings highlight that student teaching, cooperating teachers, principals, and content knowledge were key sources of efficacy for first-year physical education teachers. It is important to provide authentic and progressively structured field experiences in preservice preparation programs so teacher candidates can apply the teaching skills they are learning in real-life school settings. Additionally, preservice programs should provide opportunities for candidates to develop a deep content knowledge prior to entering the profession.

Key Takeaway

The most influential aspect of this study is that student teaching gave participants their strongest mastery experiences, meaning participants developed confidence by successfully completing authentic teaching responsibilities. Unlike shorter practicums, student teaching required them to plan, instruct, manage students, assess learning, and operate as full-time teachers over an extended period and fostered the development of first-year physical education teachers' efficacy.