

# Developing Educational Leaders in Physical Education and Health Education

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*Change is a journey, not a blueprint. (Fullan, 1993)*

## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to validate a professional development model for physical education and health education (PEHE) teachers (K-12) in California. The Costa Del Sur California Physical Education–Health Project (CPE-HP) has a primary mission of uniting selected participants from PEHE for examination of pedagogical practices, content inquiry, and effective leadership skills. An instrument was developed to assess the participant’s perceptions of the program’s effectiveness in relation to specific goals and tenets of the subject matter projects. Participants (N = 31) completed the 68 item survey. The overall results indicated the Costa Del Sur CPE-HE was an effective professional development program for establishing professional network, leadership skills, and reflective teaching skills in adult learners. In addition to the aforementioned outcomes, the findings further suggest that this project provides a valuable model in structure and function for other professional development programs designed to enhance the professional skills of adult learners.*

Change in our schools is not due to a lack of commitment but from an inadequate understanding of the process (Sagor, 1991). In recent years educators have come to recognize that effective educational change and professional development is an unpredictable journey traveled over time. Engaging teachers in change requires many opportunities for them to visit and revisit their professional concepts and practices. As stated by Fullan (1993), “change is non linear, loaded

with uncertainty and excitement and sometimes perverse” (p. 24).

What is the source and direction of professional development? Often teachers have looked to conferences, workshops, and faculty in colleges of education for answers. In many of these situations professional development was seen as attendance by an individual(s) at a particular event neither created, requested, or designed by teachers. This practice of hit and run does not appear to produce effective and/or systematic change (Willis, Donhoff, & Posnick-Goodwin, 1997). In a study of 48 schools in Illinois it was determined that educational institutions which demonstrated successful and effective change were found to be users of a variety of external support and sources. According to Baker et al. (1991) and Fullan (1993) there was no evidence of school improvement in those schools that did not access external support (Baker et.al. 1991; Fullan, 1993). It appears that effective change and professional development is a result of collaboration between many parties, including teachers at all levels of education. In support Rosenholtz (1989) indicated, “. . . Improvement in teaching is a collective rather than an individual enterprise and that analysis evaluation and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve” (p. 73). This collaborative process can facilitate teachers sharing their effective classroom strategies, build trust, and engage teachers in professional development as they teach one-another. Historically, collaboration between

public schools and colleges of education has not been a critical issue in teacher education. The body of research by John Goodlad documents a change in this process. As stated, "the sharp break with the past that occurred in the early 1990's was the growing realization of the need for connectedness" (Goodlad, 1994, p. 1). Further, the research by Goodlad indicated that collaboration between these two groups appeared critical, "There must be a continuous process of educational renewal in which college and universities . . . join schools as equal partners in the simultaneous renewal of . . . educators" (p. 2).

Further conditions that appear to be inherent in effective professional development programming is the actual openness of the teacher. Those willing to work with colleagues, interested in growth and a personalized reconstruction of pedagogical practices, and who are involved in creating their own research questions in terms of action research (Tinning, 1991) appear to make significant strides toward educational renewal. This type of change is enhanced when teachers are treated as professionals (Sagor, 1991). When the quality of their environment is enhanced and the services provided them are adequate, success can be achieved. Each factor plays a critical role in the design and development of the California Subject Matter Projects (CSMP's), a unique professional development program for educators K-16. In 1992, the California Legislature authorized an augmentation in funding to the CSMP's. This legislation allowed for the creation of the California Physical Education and Health Projects (CPE-HP) with the first leadership institute meeting in the summer of 1995. This institute drew program participants across California from the fields of Physical Education and Health Education. Resulting from this inaugural two-week gathering a leadership core was established which facilitated the expansion of four distinct sites. These sites presently serving over a hundred

PEHE personnel across the State on an annual basis.

Typically located on university campuses, projects select qualified teachers and other professionals through a competitive review process. Chosen participants are brought together to engage in the study and practice of their discipline while investigating the constructivist (Fosnot, 1996) approach to education. More specifically, the CPE-HP's are characterized by unifying principles that underlie the development, content, participant selection, and overall essence of the program. Each principle contributes to the philosophical framework that distinctively separates a subject matter project from other professional development programs. These principles include:

- (1) a teachers-teaching-teachers program;
- (2) teacher leadership that represents the diversity of teachers, students, and schools;
- (3) flexible teaching approaches, curriculum renovation and development that is sensitive to diverse student's populations for appropriate student learning;
- (4) identifying exemplary teachers (K-16) and providing an opportunity to critically examine their own practices and those of their colleagues;
- (5) creating multiple structures and processes for connecting the knowledge and understanding of exemplary teachers to the broader community of teachers statewide;
- (6) provide opportunities to develop the leadership potential of these exemplary educators; and
- (7) creating indistinct lines between the "practitioner," "researcher," and "content specialist" and allow CPE-HP participants to move easily among these rolls.

The CPE-HP's adhere to these principles as they expand conceptual and theoretical

frameworks of presented subject matter in PEHE. Rooted in a “teacher teaching teachers” model of professional development these sites help establish and sustain a vibrant culture of and for teachers to discuss and share their best pedagogical practices. This process provides teachers with ongoing support and opportunities to address the myriad of challenges facing PEHE teachers in California’s schools. Inherent in this process the sites seek to address the ongoing educational challenge of examining and bridging student levels of understanding with the delivery of content. In addition, program sites promote an environment that enables program participants to develop a positive interconnectiveness and working relationship, which can lead toward an effective professional networking. Active engagement and team building activities are designed to equip individuals with the skills and confidence required for initiating change within instructional programs. As educators of health, fitness, and movement oriented content, participants are encouraged to do the discipline. Opportunities to participate in a variety of physical activities offer a rewarding experience as indicated by participants’ responses. Doing the discipline in Health ranges from participant contacts with community programs such as Hospice and Hotline, along with other professionals from a variety of health oriented fields. Participants are encouraged to continuously evaluate their instructional effectiveness and personally reflect about the content they teach and the efficiency of their instructional style. New trends and innovative curricular content associated with PEHE are also introduced to participants as distinct and combined disciplines. Consequently, the CPE-HP’s continually provide opportunities for experiential activities to expand content knowledge, theoretical concepts, innovative movement concepts and skills, and health oriented movement experiences essential for any professional.

Creating opportunities for professional advancement and leadership within any discipline is a challenging endeavor. Maintaining focus and direction becomes paramount when instituting any professional development program. This is especially true when bringing together professionals from two distinct disciplines that share similar goals. This was the challenge of Costa Del Sur, one of the four CPE-HP’s.

### *Professional Development Setting*

The Costa Del Sur CPE-HP was located on a rural university campus in Central California. All participants resided together for a two-week 115 hours experience that included 60 hours of formal sessions and 55 hours of informal discussions, meals, and general wellness activities. Eight teacher leaders, 7 mentor facilitators, and 4 content specialists led the formal and informal sessions. Three individuals with terminal degrees in either PE or HE directed the program.

## **Methodology**

### *Subjects*

Thirty-one educators representing all academic levels from Central and Southern California volunteered to participate in the study. Subject diversity reflected both ethnicity (10% African American, 3% Asian American, 57% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic, 20% Non-specified), gender (71% female and 29% male) and instructional responsibility (25% classroom teachers, 29% physical education specialist, 10% health specialist, 26% combination of physical education and health specialist, 6% health professionals, 3% non-specified). Professional experience viewed by years ranged from 1 to 32 with a mean of 14.5.

### *Instrument and Data Collection*

This informal descriptive study utilized a survey instrument consisting of 68 items. The survey was based on an instruments utilized by other Projects across the state

(Pisano, 1995). The principle investigator adapted and added to this instrument to measure subject perception of Costa Del Sur's effectiveness. Items added were a reflection of the project's guiding tenets. The final instrument included identifiable responses based on a modified Likert Scale of 1-4 (4 represented strongly agree, followed by agree, disagree, and strongly disagree), and 1 open-ended question. Content areas patterned after cross-disciplinary sites included participants opportunity to develop subject specific knowledge and skills, the encouragement of leadership skills, expanded resources, and practice of a conceptual-teaching and active learning models assessable to all students (Pisano, 1995).

The instrument for this study was organized into 7 distinct sections which included: (1) demographic questions, (2) relationships, networking, and professional validation, (3) leadership development, (4) perceptions of doing the discipline, (5) teacher reflection, (6) content development and awareness, and (7) management of the institute. The final item was an open-ended question asking participants, "based on my two week experience I have the following comments." Specific quotes revealed in the result section of this paper were all obtained from this one question. In addition, due to lack of research in PEHE subject matter projects, this study is determined to be seminal in nature, and all accepted limitations apply.

The instrument was subjected through a panel review process. The five individuals serving on the panel included two university professors and three PEHE consultants. The panel reviewed the instrument for content validity in relation to other previously used instruments and item clarity, all appropriate changes were made. Each participant completed the instrument on the final day of the morning session. Upon completion the surveys were collected by the principle investigator and analyzed.

## Results

### *Networking*

Perceptual responses related to networking revealed that participants as a result of the subject matter project felt very connected to others in the discipline ( $x=3.9$   $SD=.30$ ), willing to contact persons from the CPE-HP ( $x=3.9$   $SD=.30$ ), and committed to instigate change with colleagues ( $x=3.67$   $SD=.48$ ). The mean scores of the group reflected several individual statements such as one from a health educator,

"At first I felt that there was little we could do to bring physical education to its rightful place in the educational scheme. I now feel that with this group this is possible, if the group as individuals is given time throughout the school year to plan, to meet and confer, and encouraged by administration and colleagues, growth is possible."

In support, one classroom teacher of 13 years declared, "I've made friends, learned a lot and truthfully say that I am going home a better person and teacher." Another physical education health education teacher insisted, "I plan to continue these friendships and network throughout the years to come."

### *Professional Validation*

Concerning professional validation, respondents indicated that as a result of the project they feel validated as a professional ( $x=3.9$   $SD=.30$ ), supported in what they do as a teacher ( $x=3.7$   $SD=.48$ ), and more connected with the discipline ( $x=3.9$   $SD=.30$ ). Further evidence comes from numerous statements made by participants. One classroom teacher with 20 years experience professed, "I feel validated, motivated, renewed and refreshed . . . I feel O.K. to being and becoming a PE/Health advocate for myself, as well as, others." A physical education teacher maintained, "knowing that you are not alone in your struggle to physically educate students, parents, community, and ad-

Figure 1

### Sample Questions from Survey Instrument

Please respond to the following statements by circling either (SA) strongly agree, (A) agree, (D) disagree, or (SD) strongly disagree.

With regards to networking, professional validation, and leadership development

After attending this subject matter project I feel:

1. connected to others in my discipline.
2. Willing to contact persons from CPE-HP.
3. Committed to instigate change with colleagues.
4. Feel validated as a professional.
5. Supported in what I do as a teacher.
6. More connected with the discipline.
7. Motivated to promote physical education and health education within the community.
8. Confident in leading discussions in physical education.
9. Confident in leading discussions in health education.
10. Willing to take a leadership role.
11. Comfortable in leading a decision making process.
12. Open to helping others design and reach their own goals.
13. Motivated to get more involved with professional organizations.

With regards to doing the discipline, reflective teaching, and content development

I was provided the opportunity at this subject matter project to:

1. Learn about the status of my own health.
2. Experience movement in a variety of ways.
3. Actively engage in creative movement experiences.

As a result of my involvement with this project I see a need to:

1. Be reflective about how I conduct class.
2. Write out my thoughts after class.
3. Ask myself, "is how I teach promoting learning."

As a result of this project I am more familiar with:

1. Cooperative games.
2. Problem solving experiences.
3. Trust building activities.
4. The comprehensive school health system.
5. Health literacy.
6. The use of health information product and services.

ministration is very uplifting. These two weeks have shown me that there are people on the 'same page' and ready to multiply that." Another physical education teacher of 22 years summarizes the concept of networking by asserting, "the contacts I have made, the web/connection, have such a deep root that I can say as a teacher/person I have been blessed beyond my expectations."

### *Leadership Development*

The responses from program participants suggest renewed feelings of confidence in a leadership role. One classroom teacher of 7 years stated, "I will spread the knowledge acquired through this institute to my students, staff members at my school, staff members at my district, and to the communities where I live and work." This statement is supported by the respondents who reported they are now motivated to promote physical education and health education within the community ( $x=3.7$   $SD=.45$ ). In addition, participants indicated they are now confident in leading discussions in either physical education ( $x=3.4$   $SD=.77$ ) or health education ( $x=3.4$   $SD=.56$ ), and are willing to take a leadership role ( $x=3.7$   $SD=.54$ ). As one physical education teacher of 26 years expressed, "I feel empowered to teach more completely for my students and to effect changes at my school to provide better education for all of our students."

Survey results further suggested that as an outcome of their involvement with the project they are now comfortable in leading a decision-making process ( $x=3.6$   $SD=.56$ ), and open to helping others design and reach their own goals ( $x=3.7$   $SD=.48$ ). One particular respondent indicated, "I am motivated to use some or most of the strategies . . . with my staff members and students." Another health educator of 5 years claimed, "I am more motivated to take a leadership role in my school and district." Participant involvement with the project also motivated participants to feel

a need to get more involved with professional organizations ( $x=3.6$   $SD=.50$ ) (See Table 1).

### *Doing the Discipline*

Results varied in relation to doing the discipline. As reflected by the survey results, participants were provided the opportunity to make healthy life choices ( $x=3.9$   $SD=.30$ ), and learn about the status of their own health ( $x=3.5$   $SD=.57$ ). One particular classroom teacher supported the concept of modeling healthy practices by insisting, "as we model healthy life choices, these behaviors will multiply to others."

Participants perceived they experienced movement in a variety of ways (e.g. traditional and non-traditional sports, various exercise routines, and kayaking) ( $x=3.9$   $SD=.25$ ), as well as actively engaged in creative movement experiences (e.g. group initiatives, project adventure challenges, ropes course experiences, and trust building activities) ( $x=3.6$   $SD=.50$ ). In addition, participants were encouraged to take risks throughout the project. Risk taking was associated with certain physical, mental, and emotional challenges. Participants were asked to critique pedagogical practices, explore new content, test physical limits, and interact socially. Each form of risk taking was designed to promote more didactic learning and thinking within the participants. The perceptions from respondents indicates that as a result of the project they actually became risk takers in professional endeavors ( $x=3.7$   $SD=.46$ ). This statement is supported by one classroom teacher of 20 years who stated, "personally, I haven't been a risk taker but I found myself taking risks on the ropes challenge course—what a revelation!! Thank you for everything."

### *Reflection*

In the area of reflection respondents perceptions indicated they had become reflective practitioners. Participants will ask themselves "is how I teach promoting learning" ( $x=3.8$   $SD=.40$ ) and see a need to be reflec-

Table 1

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**Participants Perception of Relationships, Networking, Professional Validation, & Leadership Development**


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Question: As a result of attending this subject matter project I feel:

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
<i>Relationships/Networking</i>		
1. connected to others in my discipline.	3.9	.30
2. willing to contact persons from the CPE-HP.	3.9	.30
3. committed to instigate change with colleagues.	3.7	.48
<i>Professional Validation</i>		
4. validated as a professional.	3.9	.30
5. supported in what I do as a teacher.	3.7	.48
6. more connected with the discipline.	3.9	.30
<i>Leadership Development</i>		
7. motivated to promote physical education and health education within the community.	3.7	.45
8. confident in leading discussions in physical education.	3.4	.77
9. confident in leading discussions in health education.	3.4	.56
10. willing to take a leadership role.	3.7	.54
11. comfortable in leading a decision-making process.	3.6	.56
12. open to helping others design and reach their own goals.	3.7	.48
13. motivated to get more involved with professional organizations.	3.6	.50

tive about how they conduct class ( $x=3.7$   $SD=.46$ ). In addition, respondents indicated they will write out their thoughts ( $x=3.4$   $SD=.56$ ), will take the time to think about their student needs ( $x=3.9$   $SD=.30$ ), and ask themselves, "what content is most important" ( $x=3.8$   $SD=.43$ ).

#### *Content Development and Awareness*

Concerning content development and awareness respondents indicated that as a result of the project they are more familiar with cooperative games ( $x=3.7$   $SD=.45$ ), problem

solving experiences ( $x=3.6$   $SD=.59$ ), movement skills and movement knowledge ( $x=3.5$   $SD=.68$ ), fitness oriented activities ( $x=3.5$   $SD=.63$ ), and trust building activities ( $x=3.8$   $SD=.37$ ). In support of the recorded scores one classroom teacher of 14 years declared, "... the team building activities are things that I can take back with me to my classroom and colleagues. Thank you for the opportunity to grow."

The investigation of content related to health literacy and multiple intelligence's was viewed as essential by program directors. Un-

derstanding health literacy was critical as the concepts applied equally well to students learning either health or physical education. In addition, providing insights into how students learn (multiple intelligence's) is impor-

tant for all educators. In relation to the value of these educational theories one classroom teacher of 25 years indicated, "... I was deeply moved and motivated with the multiple intelligence's." Another classroom

Table 2

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**Participants Perception of Doing the Discipline, Reflective Teaching, Content Development**

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*Doing the Discipline*

Question: I was provided the opportunity at this subject matter project to:

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
1. make healthy life choices.	3.9	.30
2. learn about the status of our own health.	3.5	.57
3. experience movement in a variety of ways.	3.9	.25
4. actively engaged in creative movement experiences	3.6	.50
5. become a risk taker in professional endeavors.	3.7	.46

*Reflective Teaching*

Question: As a result of my involvement with this project I see a need to:

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
6. ask myself, "is how I teach promoting learning."	3.8	.40
7. be reflective about how I conduct class.	3.7	.46
8. write out my thoughts after class.	3.4	.56
9. think about my students needs.	3.9	.30
10. ask myself, "what content is most important."	3.8	.43

*Content Development*

Question: As a result of this project I am more familiar with:

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
11. cooperative games.	3.7	.45
12. problem solving experiences.	3.6	.59
13. movement skills and movement knowledge.	3.5	.68
14. fitness oriented activities.	3.5	.63
15. trust building activities.	3.8	.37
16. the comprehensive school health system.	3.6	.55
17. health literacy.	3.8	.37
18. the use of health information product and services.	3.6	.61
19. general health issues.	3.6	.51

teacher of 20 years stated, "I have a better understanding of a health literate person and multiple intelligences."

Responses on the items within the instrument indicated that as a result of the project participants are more familiar with the comprehensive school health system ( $x=3.6$   $SD=.55$ ), health literacy ( $x=3.8$   $SD=3.8$   $SD=.37$ ), the use of health information product and services ( $x=3.6$   $SD=.61$ ), and general health issues ( $x=3.6$   $SD=.51$ )

### *Implications for Education*

The Costa Del Sur Physical Education and Health project continues to shape a positive perspective of professional development for educational professionals. The affirmation gained from participants is a direct result of the structure and function of this program. The fact that these participants perceived that they have expanded their knowledge base and are deeper committed toward educational change indicates positive results. In addition, the results further suggest that participants of this program are motivated to take a leadership role, have developed a strong interconnectiveness between colleagues, and will become a more reflective practitioner.

Based on the result of this study it is the authors perception that the probability of direct impact is foreseeable with many third party contacts. Colleagues, sight administrators, and most obviously the students can all benefit. The potential for indirect impact with parents, school board members, and the community as a whole is also highly feasible. Indications are that not only will program participants gain from the experience, but many others as well.

Of the many things that contribute to the success of any professional development program, the organizational design was clearly a contributing factor. When educational professionals are provided the opportunity to deepen a discussion, explore alternative ways of educating students, critique curricula, and build networks, professional growth is inevi-

table. The roots of success were also found within teachers-teaching-teacher's model of professional development. The Costa Del Sur project reinforced this model throughout its leadership structure. Utilizing teachers as facilitators, discussion leaders, and program directors all contributed to a break down of educational hierarchies, which created a collaborative and cohesive environment. All involved were equal partners in the challenged of educating California's youth. This partnership enabled the Costa Del Sur Project to be so successful.

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