

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Understanding Career Changes: Physical Educators to Adapted Physical Educators

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand career changes of in-service teachers transitioning to the adapted physical education (APE) profession after completing online APE professional development graduate courses. This study was based on intentional change theory (Boyatzis, 2006). Participants were five in-service teachers who decided to change their careers from physical education to APE in their school districts. Data collection consisted of a career reasoning questionnaire, semistructured interviews, and e-mail communication. A constant comparative method (Boeije, 2010) was used in the interpretation of the data, which allowed themes to emerge. Three interrelated themes emerged from the in-service teachers' narratives: factors and influences of APE career choices, administrative and transition planning duties, and career motivations and expectations. The participants demonstrated strong leadership that built on opportunities for innovation and renewal through provision of APE professional culture. Through the online professional development courses, the teachers gained lifelong learning opportunities and increased satisfaction, motivation, and expectations for APE.

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In the United States, there is a shortage of teachers, including adapted physical education (APE) teachers (those who teach physical education for students with disabilities), expected over the coming years (Bullock, Gable, & Mohr, 2008; Healy, Block, & Judge, 2014; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). To be effective, APE teachers must possess a certain degree of competency (e.g., graduate degree or endorsement) to practice effective pedagogy with students with disabilities (Kelly, 1993). However, unfortunately, many physical education teacher education programs do not offer APE programs at the graduate or undergraduate level. Thus, pre-service teachers are left unaware of growing career opportunities in the field of APE (Zhang, Kelly, Berkey, Joseph, & Chen, 2000).

One way to address the shortage of APE teachers is the recruitment of physical education teachers who are motivated to teach children with disabilities (Sato, Haegele, & Foot, 2017b; Webb & Hodge, 2003) as a second career. A career as a physical education teacher can take a toll on a person physically and emotionally, and that differentiates them from teachers of different academic subjects (Bizet, Laurencelle, Lemoyne, Larouche, & Trudeau, 2010). Physical education teachers are frequently assigned to teach for an extended period, while having limited teaching time per class, a lack of lesson preparation time, and difficult organizational and administrative tasks. Additionally, they tend to receive little appreciation from parents, colleagues, and school administrators (Bizet et al., 2010). A career change to APE can be desirable because of opportunities for personal growth and development, the ability to apply previous experience to a new profession, and the ability to contribute to society and the development of children with disabilities (Williams, 2013).

Opportunities for professional development are important factors in terms of socialization into the APE profession (Sato & Haegele, 2017b; Webb & Hodge, 2003). Effective professional learning can help physical educators gain useful ideas from credible sources who understand real-world teaching and problem-solving techniques, as well as from thought-provoking materials (Sato & Haegele, 2017a). For example, Sato, Haegele, and Foot (2017a) studied in-service physical education teachers' professional development in Web-based APE graduate courses and found them to have positive learning experiences when teaching students with disabilities. Additionally, the

participants reported that the online courses helped them improve the quality of APE classes in their school districts (Sato & Haegele, 2017b). Experiences like these can help physical educators find meaning in teaching students with disabilities and attract them to pursue a career of APE (Hutchinson, 1993). Hodge and Stroot (1997) asserted that it is important to investigate factors that influence APE teachers' experiences and career choice. Yet little research has been conducted in the arena of career choice, particularly those who transition from being physical educators to being APE teachers. Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand career changes of in-service teachers transitioning to the APE profession after completing online APE professional development graduate courses.

This study was based on intentional change theory (ICT; Boyatzis, 2006). This theory describes the essential components and process of desirable, sustainable change in one's behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. The change may be in a person's actions, habits, or competencies. It may be in the way they feel in certain situations or around certain people. It is "desired" in that the person would like it to occur. ICT comprises five factors of change, which function as an interactive cycle in producing the sustainable change at the individual level. These are (a) the ideal self and personal vision; (b) the real self and its comparison to the ideal self, resulting in an assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses; (c) a learning agenda and plan; (d) experimentation and practice with the new behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions; and (e) trusting or resonant relationships that enable a person to experience and process each discovery (Boyatzis, 2006).

First, the ideal self contains imagery of the desired future (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). This image is an evolving, motivational core within the self, focusing a person's desires, hopes, aspirations, and dreams. The ideal self serves as a mechanism linked to self-regulation. It helps to organize the will to change and direct it with positive affect from within the person. Second, a major determinant of ideal self is hope. Hope is conceptualized as a cognitive set that is built on the importance of goals. Snyder (2000) explains that personal self-efficacy and optimism affect a person's experience of hope by creating a belief in the feasibility or possibility that a desired future might occur. Teachers with high hope produce alternative

routes to their goals when they face goal impediments (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). The teachers who have gaps of emotional conditions and conceptual images of a desired future in a profession tend to seek openness to career change opportunities (Boyatzis, 2006). Third, the learning agenda and plan focus on the desired future of intentional change in the profession (Beaubien & Payne, 1999). While professional performance at the workplace or happiness in life may be the eventual consequence of teachers' efforts, a learning agenda focuses on development. The learning agenda and plan allow teachers to develop positive beliefs and confidence in their professional capability and the hope of improvement. Fourth, teachers experience and practice desired changes. Acting on the plan and toward the goals involves numerous activities through teachers' professional development. Teachers practice the new behaviors in APE settings similar to the setting in which they wish to use them in the workplace (Boyatzis, 2006). During this part of the process, teachers show continual improvement throughout their career. The fifth factor describes teachers' relationship and group orientation, which provide a sense of identity and guidance to what is appropriate and good behavior and feedback on their behaviors (Kram, 1996). These relationships create a context within which teachers interpret their progress on desired changes and the utility of new learning that contribute significant input to the formulation of the ideal self.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive, qualitative methodology using an explanatory case study design (Yin, 2003). Qualitative studies typically focus “in depth on relatively small samples, even a single case ($n=1$), selected purposefully” (Patton, 2002, p. 169). The main principle of the case study method is to better understand complex educational and/or social phenomena while retaining the holistic and meaningful particularities of real-life circumstances (Yin, 2003). Thus, an explanatory case study is appropriate for exploring in-service teachers' intentional career change from physical educators to APE teachers in their school districts. Two research questions that guided the study were (a) What factors influenced in-service teachers to choose to change their careers to APE teachers? and

(b) How did in-service teachers adapt themselves to learn new roles, master new tasks, and build new relationships in their new professional role?

Participants and Setting

Upon ethical approval from the first author’s university institutional review board, individuals who changed their careers from physical educators to APE teachers after completing a state-approved online graduate APE endorsement program (academic year of 2014 through 2015) at a Midwestern public university in the United States were recruited via e-mail to participate in this study (Table 1). The APE professional development courses consisted of two 15-week, 3-credit courses (i.e., introduction of online APE course and practicum of online APE course). All participants completed their practicum experience of at least 150 hr of teaching experiences in either APE classes or inclusive physical education as part of the program. Five teachers, who traveled and taught APE at six to eight public schools each, were identified for this study. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants to ensure anonymity. All participants provided permission to use interview data for this study.

Table 1
Teachers’ Background

Teacher	Age	Gender	Years of PE teaching experiences	Years of teaching APE	Location of school
Rosie	40	Female	17	1	Near Columbus, Ohio
Nicki	33	Female	10	1	Near Sandusky, Ohio
Matt	31	Male	8	1	Near Dayton, Ohio
Donna	28	Female	7	1	Near Columbus, Ohio
Christy	27	Female	4	1	Near Cleveland, Ohio

Data Collection

Face-to-face open-ended interviews. The primary source of data for this study was face-to-face open-ended interviews. According to Yin (2003), the researcher has two jobs in conducting interviews: (a) to follow the interview case study protocol and (b) to ask the researcher's actual (conversational) questions. Each participant completed two face-to-face interview sessions with the lead researcher. The interview questions were modified based on those used by Bizet et al. (2010) and Gilbert (2011). The specific questions were carefully worded for relevancy (question style, language, conciseness, and frame) to the current study (Yin, 2003). Examples of questions in this study include (a) What were positive and negative elements you faced throughout physical education and APE teaching careers? (b) What expectations did you have toward your profession as an APE teacher at the beginning of your career? and (c) What reasons led you to change careers or disengage from previous teaching positions? Using a face-to-face interview approach, the interviewer asked participants factual questions as well as their opinions about career choices, roles and responsibilities in their new profession, professionalism, and personal and professional goals and objectives (Yin, 2003). Two face-to-face interviews (one-on-one) were audio recorded and conducted for approximately 60 to 90 min each with every participant. In the first interview, teachers were asked about their experiences of career change in their first semester teaching APE. Then in the second interviews, the lead researcher asked teachers about their administrative experiences such as individual educational plan (IEP) meeting attendance. Data were stored in the secured document files in the researcher's computer.

Career reasoning questionnaire. A career reasoning questionnaire was used to collect descriptive quantifiable data regarding the teachers' professional experiences. This questionnaire, established by Zounhia, Chatoupis, Amoutzas, and Hatziharistos (2006), was modified to include specific questions about career experiences of APE teachers. This questionnaire was designed to examine what influenced their decision to become APE teachers. It included two subsets of reasoning questions such as altruistic and intrinsic reasons. All participants completed the career reasoning questionnaire after the interviews. Table 2 shows how the five teachers rated each question.

Table 2
Career Reasoning Questionnaire

Question	Not important 1	Least important 2	Moderately important 3	Important 4	Most important 5
1. I help students with disabilities to learn useful things.				3	2
2. I like teaching students with disabilities in APE.					5
3. I like working with students with disabilities.					5
4. I want to be creative to improve learning of students with disabilities.		1	1	2	1
5. Being an APE teacher can help improve culture of my school district.					5
6. I would like to stay in touch with adapted sport and events.				3	2
7. I am interested in learning about coaching adapted sport.		3		1	1
8. I use my knowledge and skills from professional development workshops and/or courses.					5
9. I think APE teaching is a respectable career.				1	4
10. I had an ambition to become an APE teacher.	4		1		

Note. Modified from “Greek Physical Education Student Teachers’ Reasons for Choosing Teaching as Career,” by K. Zouhia, C. Chatoupis, K. Amoutzas, and D. Hatziharistos, 2006, *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism*, 13, pp. 99–108.

E-mail communication. The researchers used e-mail messages to ask professional development questions and/or to seek clarification of previous responses of interview questions (Meho, 2006). Participants permitted the researchers to use all e-mail communications as part of the data source in this study. When there was a need to clarify, explain, or elaborate the content of the interview transcription, the researcher asked each participant to respond by e-mail.

Data Analysis

A constant comparative method (Boeije, 2010) was used in the interpretation of the data, which allowed themes to emerge. Using this strategy, the first and second author independently coded each potentially meaningful piece of data in the transcripts from the first set of interviews and discussed differences until reaching agreement. The lead author coded the second set of interviews, as well as data from e-mail communication, and then the second author checked the data. The researchers conducted a second round of coding key terms in the transcripts of data sources. Some codes were combined during this process, whereas others were split into subcategories (subthemes). In addition, two peer debriefers reviewed the codes to avoid potential researcher bias. Coded data from each participant were compared and similarities and differences identified. Further, after peer debriefing, the researchers conducted a second round of coding key terms (e.g., intentional changes, ideal self, real self, and/or roles) in the transcripts of data sources. Some codes were combined during this process (e.g., similar terms, transitions, and/or change), whereas others were split into subcategories (subthemes). Finally, the researchers examined the final codes to organize them into a hierarchical structure using individual and group coding percentage. Then all data and definitions of key terms were sent back to all participants for a second round of member checking for final confirmation. The researchers grouped the codes into thematic categories, which were then refined into recurring themes (Boeije, 2010). Each response to the career reasoning questionnaire (Zounhia et al., 2006) was treated as a comprehensive case. In this case, the researchers sought to glean responses of least or not important categories to understand how each participant's reasons were presented.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in this study was established through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation involved the use of multiple perspectives, such as data from interviews and e-mail communication. The intention of triangulation was to evaluate the accuracy of the data, as opposed to seeking universal truth (Merriam, 1998). Member checking reduced the impact of subjective bias (Patton, 2002). The lead researcher distributed copies of the analyzed themes from the e-mail communication and the transcribed interview data to the participants. The participants' acknowledgment of the accuracy of the data and of the researchers' interpretations of the data ensured the establishment of trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998). Peer debriefing is a process of exposing oneself to a distinguished peer in a manner that parallels an analytic session, with the purpose of exploring aspects of inquiry that might remain only implicit in the inquirer's mind (Patton, 2002). For this study, the primary researcher shared his data analysis process with peer debriefers (graduate assistants) at his respective university and utilized their feedback when developing themes.

Results

Explainable in the logic of ICT (Boyatzis, 2006), three inter-related themes emerged from the participants' narratives. The first theme, *factors and influences of APE career choices*, exposes the self-images and career goals the participants perceived regarding their APE careers after the online APE graduate courses. The second theme, *administrative and transition planning duties*, described participants' perceptions of their learning experiences of new teaching duties and administrative tasks. The final theme, *career motivations and expectations*, described how the participants experienced increased intrinsic motivation and career goals when transitioning to teaching students with disabilities.

Factors and Influences of APE Career Choices

A range of social and personal factors influenced the participants' decision to change careers after completing their online professional development courses. They reported being unhappy in their former careers as physical education teachers and were dissatisfied with their

professional life. Based on results of the career reasoning questionnaire (Zounhia et al., 2006), all participants were in favor of teaching students with disabilities. They were unaware of the existence of APE as a career choice (APE teachers and/or adapted sport coaches) until they enrolled in the APE professional development courses. They wanted to find meaning in their career and found passion in teaching children with disabilities. For example, Rosie explained her reasons for changing careers:

I taught middle and high school physical education classes for more than 10 years. I had a large group of students and it was difficult to connect with students in the class. When I look back, I think I taught similar curricula and lessons for many years. I did not have any meaningful challenges. When I took the APE courses, I had to develop individual lessons, medical backgrounds, service backgrounds, and individual education plans. Everything is case by case and on an individual basis. Although I spent more time preparing lessons and plans, it was a professional challenge. I am pleased that I chose APE as a second career. I want to work hard to see good results for students with disabilities in my classes. (Interview)

Rosie also noted, “I was looking for lifelong learning opportunities in my career” (Interview). She explained that learning about her students’ medical conditions and limitations motivated her to become a better APE teacher. She had a chance to collaborate with special education teachers, nurses, physical therapists, and occupational therapists. Similarly, Nicki explained,

I think that physical education teachers are always isolated and marginalized, because our academic subject is different from classroom setting. I did not have a chance to collaborate with other teachers from different academic and professional experts, but after completing APE courses, I had an opportunity to collaborate with other teachers and staff. I learned knowledge skills from other experts. (Interview)

Another participant, Matt, explained that when he taught physical education at an elementary school, he felt that parents did not appreciate physical education. He shared,

When I was working as a physical education teacher at the elementary school, the parents cared about reading, mathematics, and science subjects but not physical education. I was disappointed that my career was not appreciated and I was emotionally hurt. Then while I was taking APE graduate courses, during my practicum in APE, I had to do an assessment project as part of the course assignments. Because of a school policy, I had to report the results to the student's parents. I was afraid of how the parents would respond to the assessment results. But I was pleased when the parents appreciated what I had done. I was pleased that I did something good for students with disabilities and parents. This is the part of reason that I chose to change my career. (Interview)

Matt stated that he felt that the professional development courses helped him to make the decision to change his career choice to APE. Simultaneously, he felt that it was important that the parents fully supported physical education for their child with a disability.

Administrative and Transition Planning Duties

The participants noted that they felt that they transitioned into more of an administrative role than a teaching role after their career change to APE. They spent more time studying their students' academic, social, and family histories including assessments, medical conditions, and nutrition history. They also served as resource teachers of leisure and recreation physical activity and/or vocational programs that helped students' in the transition process. The participants felt that their administrative duties were eye-opening for them. For example, participants reported that learning about and documenting students' IEPs became a major role in their new careers. Because they taught about 40 to 60 students per year, they spent more time engaging in administrative activities (e.g., IEP writing) than they had as physical educators. They felt that they were responsible to facilitate and improve students' motor competency as well as recommend transition services and community resources (e.g., Special Olympic or summer camp programs). Donna explained,

I have more than 60 IEP meetings with school administrators, special education teachers, classroom teachers, and parents annually. I did not know anything about IEPs when I was a physical education teacher at elementary schools, but it helped me to reflect on my teaching and begin to think about what and how to teach my students with disabilities now. I think that documenting IEP forms helped my lifelong learning and I really love my career because it is helping me grow professionally. I checked my students' IEP forms from previous years and I found that these were not properly documented, because special education teachers wrote their physical education goals. I am pleased that IEP committee members listen and pay attention to my opinions. (Interview)

Donna also mentioned that finding available community activities and developing transition plans were difficult tasks to complete, because each student had unique needs related to their type of disability and level of severity. Christy also mentioned that planning students' transition plan created challenges in understanding and exploring new service availability for her students. She said,

One challenge of teaching APE is to plan for smooth transitions for students with disabilities after graduation. For example, I have a student with a neurological disorder who will be graduating from this school soon, but there are not many community services for him to choose from after graduation. I did not know anything about these types of opportunities before. Transitioning from an education to a recreational, vocational, or physical activity setting can be difficult because there are budget issues, transportation, and lack of partnerships with community services. But I enjoyed this lifelong learning experience. I am planning to seek out professional development courses focusing on students' transition services in special education. I think this is important content to learn. (Interview)

She believed that transition plans were an important component of education that helped facilitate students' lifelong activities. Rosie

also mentioned, “I need to seek service options for individuals and/or group. My student’s parents want him to participate in Special Olympics, I found practice and game schedule. I had to include activities he would be participating in. I had to cover in my APE class.” Rosie and Christy felt that this was the first time they investigated in-service opportunities outside of traditional educational opportunities. She realized that there are external professional and personal opportunities of growth in APE careers.

Career Motivations and Expectation

This theme captures that participants were motivated to recruit other physical education teachers who they believed would be interested in changing careers to APE. They felt obligated to help increase the number of APE teachers, because their school districts had a shortage of APE teachers as well as inability to retain effective ones. All participants strongly desired to develop a mentoring system to help enhance the quality of APE programs in their school districts. They believed that acting as or having role models was important for professional success and for retention of APE teachers. Nicki explained,

I am only one of two APE teachers in the school district. I know that there were some physical education teachers who were interested in changing their careers to APE. So one of my new career goals is to recruit a good number of applicants [for the online APE program] and develop effective mentoring programs among the APE teachers. When I was hired in this school district, my APE colleague helped me adjust to the process [of being an APE teacher], but we were traveling teachers and did not have a chance to meet during the school year. I think we should develop a mentoring program with professional development workshops or classes that help to increase APE teachers in this district. This position has not been filled for a few years, and I know this school district wants to hire APE teachers, but it is difficult. (E-mail communication)

Nicki felt that the shortage of APE teachers was compounded by physical education teachers having limited knowledge (e.g., disability

awareness, assessment, and pedagogy) and teaching experiences working with students with various disabilities. Matt felt that school districts should require all physical education teachers to complete the APE graduate professional development courses as a part of professional development requirements. He believed that it was important to advocate these APE professional development opportunities for all physical education teachers. He said,

My future career goal is to advocate for the importance of APE professional development courses to physical education teachers and school administrators. I think that physical education teachers have a lack of disability knowledge and low self-confidence. They have a hard time picturing what APE teachers do and how we teach. I did not have any ideas about teaching students with disabilities before taking the APE professional development courses. I should have found this opportunity many years ago. I am happy with becoming an APE teacher. (Interview)

Matt explained that professional development courses can motivate physical education teachers to improve the quality of education for students with disabilities. He also explained that physical education teachers need to know about inclusive and self-contained teaching settings. He said,

APE professional development gives opportunities for physical education teachers to learn about inclusive and individual instruction for students with disabilities in physical education. It is important that physical education teachers reflect on themselves in regard to how their teaching philosophy and teacher identity fit into the specific setting. (Interview)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand career changes of in-service teachers transitioning to the APE profession after completing online APE professional development graduate courses. The results demonstrate that the participants decided on a career change from physical education to APE because their APE professional

development courses stimulated their personal and professional growth and development and made them want to contribute to their students' academic learning and personal lifelong learning experiences. Their learning orientation aroused a positive belief in their capability, including sense of ideal images of APE teachers and career pathway (Snyder, 2000). In ICT, teachers' pathway thinking affects their experience of hope by creating a belief in the feasibility or possibility that a desired future may occur (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006).

Prior to making career decisions about becoming an APE teacher, teachers felt overwhelmed and isolated because of a lack of administrative support, parental support, and behavioral management (Banville, 2015). They had difficulties and challenges working with students and a wide disparity and personal issues and concerns that caused dilemmas for the teachers (Banville, 2015). The decision to make a career change for personal reasons was a gradual process for all participants after realizing that they were dissatisfied with their former career in physical education (Bauer, Thomas, & Sim, 2017). In ICT, two emotional attractors (positive and negative) determine the contexts of the self-organizing process and whether it is an adaptation to existing conditions or adaptation to new, emergent conditions (Boyatzis, 2006). These teachers often had negative emotions such as a general dimension of subjective distress and unpleasing engagement that subsumed a variety of aversive mood states that led to the decision to change careers (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). McCaughtry, Kulinna, Cothran, Martin, and Faust (2005) explain that professional development courses can serve a critical and important role in shaping the attitudes of teachers about career development. Because of the professional development course, the teachers were motivated to become APE teachers because they believed they would serve as important gatekeepers of students' medical conditions, academic placement decision (inclusion or individualized educational setting), and school and community services for students with disabilities (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). Haegele and Hodge (2016) suggest that APE teachers should arrange social and constructive solutions that emphasize political action and social change and remove environmental barriers for students with disabilities.

The APE teachers were concerned that they were unaware of how to collaborate with parents (Samalot-Rivera & Porretta, 2009),

because they had a hard time finding strategies that promote open and ongoing collaborations based on their previous career experiences (Columna, Cook, Foley, & Bailey, 2014). However, since they became APE teachers, they communicated with students' parents better and found collaborative efforts essential for enhancing the quality of the instruction (An & Goodwin, 2007). They used the parents as resource teachers, because the parents served a role of the child's first teachers who know their child's skill, habits, and abilities (from birth) better than anybody else. In ICT, two types of phenomena (honeymoon and sleep effects) exist during career changes. For example, some teachers develop immediate improvement of collaborative partnership with students' parents (honeymoon effect) (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970). In contrast, others experience a sleep effect in which sustainable changes of collaborative partnership (behaviors, interactions, and emotional reactions) between teachers and parents do not appear until several months into their new careers (McClelland, 1965). This depends on the teachers' personality and social factors. The APE teachers echoed that teachers should care and respect the family's needs and expectations for enhancing quality of education for their child with a disability (Columna et al., 2014).

Since the teachers changed their careers to APE, their expertise was highly respected by school administrators and other teachers who were involved in the students' education. The APE teachers provided input into IEP meetings about students' strength, needs, and interests in physical education and sport (Mareoiu, Abercrombie, & Murray, 2016). They believed that this was a part of administrative learning processes, that they were charged to improve and update professional knowledge, increase practical experiences, collaborate with other colleagues and professionals, and seek diverse learning opportunities in an educational group (Dabija, Abrudan, & Postelnicu, 2016). In their previous careers, these teachers were countered by competing concerns about inadequate resources, isolating work, and subordinate status (Banville, 2015; Kane & Mallon, 2006). However, their administrative duties made them feel more like a valued member of the school district team. In ICT (Kolb & Boyatzis, 1970), the teachers' professional expectancy influences administrative performance, because they engage in professional duties and obtain desirable results. Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton

(2006) explain that career changers feel confident and valued when they can bring valuable and beneficial skills and competencies to the teaching and learning settings. These teachers' expectations, prior experiences, and skills were integrated and valued in their new career phase (Anthony & Ord, 2008).

The participants believed that as part of lifelong learning, APE teachers must seek opportunities for students' transition service needs and options including postsecondary education, adult services, independent living, development of employment objectives, and community participation (Krueger, DiRocco, & Felix, 2000). They found that a lack of partnerships between school districts and community-oriented leisure education programs and/or community-based programs caused some issues (Krueger et al., 2000). They felt that the students with disabilities needed teachers who encouraged them to want, learn, achieve, and treat community as a land of limitless horizon (Day, 1998). The teachers believed they helped their students with disabilities to make and contributed to these students' smooth transition from school to adult life in a community setting (Krueger et al., 2000).

The APE teachers portrayed teaching students with disabilities as an intellectually challenging career that offers professional opportunities to strengthen their roles and responsibilities and interest-related abilities alongside opportunities to develop new skills that served them well in teaching (Anthony & Ord, 2008). They believed that the APE professional development courses helped them make life-changing and new meaning of their professional roles and responsibilities, and felt that their learning experiences were eye-opening (Sato & Haegele, 2017b). This study found that physical education teachers face challenges meeting needs of students with disabilities in inclusive settings. This is a critical area of need, given the increasingly broad array of students with disabilities whom physical education teachers serve (Voltz, 2001). To recruit physical education teachers for career changes or dual roles with APE, professional development course instructors must target multiple factors that impact their decision to enter teaching APE as a career. Smethem (2007) explains that teachers who choose second careers modify their initial projected longevity in the career (of physical education) in light of the energy to maintain and/or enhance levels of

satisfaction and performance in a new career (of APE). Professional development and community contribute to teachers' motivation, expectations, and demands for meeting students' diverse learning needs.

Limitations

This study has three major limitations. First, the participants were targeted and selected from APE teachers who proceeded with career changes and whom the authors received approval and permission to observe and interview. Statistically speaking, therefore, the findings are not generalizable to all PE and APE teachers who complete online APE professional development courses. Second, the number of participants was small. Qualitative inquiries, including case studies, typically use small samples, and in the logic of criterion sampling, the intent is to capture and describe the central themes that represent the phenomena under study for a particular cohort of interest (Patton, 2002). Our intent in using this sampling approach was to uncover common themes in APE teachers' career transition experiences and professional goals and objectives through working with students with disabilities, other professionals (e.g., special education teachers), school administrators, and parents in their school districts. Third, this study did not focus on how social factors such as needing a career change due to economy, unplanned life change, or job security resulted in teachers' career change decision (Bauer et al., 2017). Future research can extend this study to investigate professional and life balance of APE teachers through career change.

Conclusion

This study explored APE teachers' experiences with career change on a small scale and provided insight into the complex factors that influenced their decisions to leave their previous careers after completing APE online professional development courses. They explained their perception toward physical education teaching and a vision of future possibilities that drove their decision making while they negotiated their career transition and lifelong learning (Gilbert, 2011). Although APE professions have new challenges, the APE teachers believed that the professional development courses helped prepare them for the job (Sato et al., 2017b). Many school districts are in the position to recruit candidates and offer APE

teaching positions as the second career choice. The APE teachers demonstrated strong leadership that built on opportunities for innovation and renewal through provision of APE professional culture (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). Through the online professional development courses, the teachers gained lifelong learning opportunities and increased satisfaction, motivation, and expectations for APE.

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