



Reconstructing a supervisory identity: The case of an experienced physical education cooperating teacher

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Abstract

Cooperating teachers' teaching perspectives and participation in initial teacher education have been frequently considered as ways to understand teachers' learning trajectories and professional identity at workplace settings (Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Clarke et al. 2014; Lave and Wenger, 1991). A case study approach was employed to examine the challenging supervisory experiences of a highly experienced physical education cooperating teacher that led to the reconstruction of her professional identity. Data were collected throughout a one-year school placement and included three semi-structured interviews with the cooperating teacher and the cooperating teacher's daily journals entries. Analysis was informed by grounded theory coding procedures. Themes included: (i) the challenge of changing entrenched teaching and mentoring practices to connect with pre-service teachers; (ii) reconfiguring mentorship to expand pre-service teachers' limited teaching ideas and range of teaching tools; and (iii) the possibility of practicing different mentoring strategies for different 'types' of pre-service teachers. We infer that contextual factors and teaching perspectives play a role in the cooperating teacher's legitimate

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peripheral participation in teacher education and constitutes elements of her professional identity development.

Keywords

Legitimate peripheral participation, professional identity, school placement, teaching perspectives, workplace learning

Introduction

The higher education reform enacted by the Bologna Process resulted in the reconfiguration of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programmes in Portugal (Batista and Pereira, 2014). The former five-year undergraduate programmes were replaced with a three-year undergraduate degree, followed by a two-year Master's degree scheme where students have no specific exposure to teacher education in the first three years of the programme, but have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a teacher preparation curriculum for the final two years. While the reconfiguration promotes the intended Bologna Process outcomes of mobility, comparability and compatibility, it has resulted in the scientific domains of teacher education (e.g. pedagogy of sport, motor development, sports physiology and anatomy) residing in the first three years and the pedagogical and specific didactic elements of teaching physical education (e.g. sport didactics, educational psychology and educational research methods) in the final two years. The reconfiguration of the curriculum has resulted in a wider spectrum of candidates entering undergraduate programmes (Graça, 2013).

The school placement setting and cooperating teachers (CTs) have been considered by pre-service teachers (PSTs) as the two most important contributors to success in their professional programmes (Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Clarke et al., 2014). It is therefore expected that CTs' perspectives on teaching and pedagogical supervision, as well as their work conditions, give meaning to the ways in which they participate in teacher education and construct pedagogical relationships with PSTs (Clarke et al., 2014). Additionally, the changes in the structure of teacher education courses, and the corresponding impact on PSTs' recruitment and preparation, are likely to affect the CTs' views, practices and professional development as CTs (Bechtel and O'Sullivan, 2006; Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Webster-Wright, 2009). This can result in CTs' teaching and advisory perspectives being challenged and a subsequent change in their conditions for professional learning. This supports the assumption that teachers' significant learning occurs from their participatory practices in the workplace (Hagger, 2004; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Recent research (Leeferink et al., 2015; Webster-Wright, 2009) has focused on continuing professional learning in the workplace setting. Within the context of physical education, this has included studies on university and school partnerships (Chambers and Armour, 2012) and school placement (Standal et al., 2014). There has also been interest in exploring the triadic relationship between PSTs, CTs and university tutors (Meegan et al., 2013), with a specific focus on CTs' contribution to effective PETE programmes (Young and MacPhail, 2015). Learning in and from workplace situations is understood as a complex social process during which teachers engage with authentic work experiences (i.e. real and lived) situated in their teaching practice, giving meaning to their role and the tasks they participate in (Illeris, 2011). By providing meaning to these experiences, new knowledge integrates with existing knowledge into the teachers' conceptual

framework. As a result, their professional identities are reconfigured (Boud et al., 1985; Fletcher, 2012; Wenger, 1998).

While CTs have been the subject of a great deal of study (e.g. supervisory approaches and practices, training programmes, the nature of feedback given to PSTs, and the power relations between the CT and PST), little consideration has been given to the CTs' work context and the influence that their teaching perspectives and supervisory practices have on the construction of their own professional identities (Leshem, 2014). This study addresses this lack of consideration by examining the challenging supervisory experiences of a CT related to professional identity construction. To this end, Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and CTs' teaching perspectives and ways of participation in initial teacher education (Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Clarke et al., 2014) are the chosen analytical lenses.

Learning, participation and discourse: Three central ingredients for professional identity examination

Workplace learning

Research in continuing professional learning (Illeris, 2011; Lave, 1993; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Leeferink et al., 2015) has explored how teachers learn in and from workplace life. The intention of this line of research is to offer an alternative understanding to the traditional conception of the process of acquiring knowledge, while changing the focus of discussion from content delivery to the examination of authentic practice experiences. Workplace learning involves interrelated personal and social aspects, including past and present experiences gained in multiple situations and contexts over time, and comes from active participation and meaningful engagement in the tasks and roles of the workplace setting (Boud et al., 1985; Leeferink et al., 2015; Wenger, 1998). Subsequently, shifting workplace contexts and lived experiences influence CTs' teaching perspectives and the ways they participate in teacher education and interact with PSTs, two elements that give shape and meaning to their supervisory practices (Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Clarke et al., 2014). Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger (2005) and Clarke et al. (2014) share what could be considered an 'inventory' of teaching perspectives and typologies of participation with differentiated foci. These range from modelling practices, content and subject matter expertise, activities and practicalities of the school classroom to emotional and relational components, learners' development, and political and ideological concerns. Subsequently, contexts and workplace situations play a role in the transformation of CTs' practical experiences into learning (Leeferink et al., 2015) and, as a consequence, help to develop their professional identity.

Professional identity and LPP

The development of professional identity is recognized as a central process of being a teacher and recent literature has drawn attention to the close connection between identity and learning, practice, and discourse (e.g. Izadinia, 2014; Trent, 2013). Specifically, the concept of LPP has been used as a theoretical framework to understand the nature, meaning and processes of learning trajectories at work, as well as the reconstruction of teachers' professional identities within educational settings (Fuller et al., 2005; Kelly et al., 2007; Wenger, 1998).

Learning derives from the individual's active and informal 'participation in a social practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 43) and considers the whole person, the activity, the relationships and

context as integral parts of the learning process. Lave and Wenger (1991) captured this complex notion in their concept of LPP. It is defined as the process by which ‘old-timers’, who participate in an activity or belong to a workplace, assist new entrants (referred to as ‘newcomers’), who initially assume limited responsibility, to move progressively towards full membership in the sociocultural practices of their community while interacting with the old-timers. Such interactions allow new entrants to gain skills, knowledge, norms, habits, discourses and the understanding necessary to perform central tasks relating to the activity or in their workplace. Although communities are described as generally stable, cohesive and welcoming entities, Lave and Wenger (1991: 36) acknowledge that engaging in ‘peripherality’ involves ‘relations of power’. Thus, the way power is exercised can make LPP either an ‘empowering’ or ‘disempowering’ experience (Fuller et al., 2005: 53) for both old-timers and newcomers.

Such tensions forged in the movement from marginal participation towards full participation in tasks of increasing accountability cause changes and transformations in teachers. Thus, learning implies becoming a different person (Lave and Wenger, 1991), with respect to the possibilities enabled by the LPP spectrum of participation. As a consequence, identities are (re)built (Kelly et al., 2007; Lave and Wenger, 1991). In addition, CTs adopt stances towards the tasks in which they engage. They position themselves differently and are positioned differently by others, resulting in a reconfiguration of their professional identities. For this reason, CTs’ professional identities are in a state of constant transformation (Lave, 1993), through a process which ‘consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities’ (Wenger, 1998: 145).

Professional identity and discourse

Learning and identity are not exclusively experiential and participative (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), with the suggestion that both elements are developed to a significant degree by discourse: ‘speech is equally a means of acting in the world’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 22). Although discourse is manifested through language, it goes beyond the words used; it consists of a system of beliefs, perspectives, intentions, attitudes, actions, values and meanings that exist within the prevailing social and cultural practices (Clarke, 2008; Danielewicz, 2001). According to Correia et al. (2014), discourse is the primary way in which identities are constructed and negotiated, given that it is always performed with other people and that those other people are the ones who are able to legitimize identity.

As such, discourse is directly associated with issues of recognition. Gee (2000: 99) defines identity as: ‘being recognized [by oneself and others] as a certain “kind of person”, in a given context’. He perceives discourse and dialogue as an ‘individual trait’ (Gee, 2000: 103), for teachers construct and sustain their ‘activities, perspective and identities’ (Gee, 1999: 4) through discourse, echoing Danielewicz’s (2001: 11) understanding that ‘engaging in language practices shapes an individual’s identity’.

Discourse also takes place in the doing (Wenger, 1998). Learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Gee (1999: 11) clarifies that, ‘when we speak or write we craft what we have to say to fit the situation or context in which we are participating’. A teacher’s LPP and identity development are, therefore, built through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling and believing (Gee, 1999).

In sum, workplace learning, LPP and discourse in professional communities have been extremely useful in explaining empirical data on learning and identity reconstruction. However,

Fuller et al. (2005) have drawn attention to the fact that, in placing the emphasis on learning as a progression from newcomer to full participant, Lave and Wenger (1991) failed to investigate the ways in which the learning of experienced workers occurs. Of particular interest in this study is the challenging incidents experienced CTs face in guiding PSTs towards an effective teaching–learning process. Our study aimed to address this oversight by presenting case study evidence on the ways in which contextual and identity factors underpinned the means by which an experienced physical education CT negotiated her professional identity in interactions with PSTs throughout the duration of a one-year school placement.

The study

Research context

The study was conducted during a one-year school placement, the completion of which is a requirement of a Master's of PETE programme at a university in Portugal. This was the first group of PSTs to undertake the school placement as part of the reconfigured programme detailed at the beginning of the paper. The Master's is a two-year postgraduate programme that qualifies the prospective teachers to teach 10 to 18 year-old school pupils. In year one of the Master's programme, PSTs are exposed to sport sciences, general education, didactics, initial teacher education and educational research methods. In the second year of the programme, PSTs undertake a one-year school placement and, at the beginning of the year, every PST is assigned to a partner school (in which they will complete their year-long placement) and a CT of their choosing, after which university staff establish protocols. University staff ascribe particular importance to the role of the CT in the pedagogical supervision process. The CT is an experienced physical education teacher who supervises three to four PSTs, provides access to his/her classes in order that each PST can gain some teaching experience, is present in all of the PSTs' lessons and supervises their practices throughout the duration of the school placement. In addition to the CT, a university supervisor is assigned to each cohort of PSTs to coordinate the pedagogical supervision with the CT and supervise PSTs' final reports.

Research design

A longitudinal case study approach (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2009) was employed in this study. Case studies allow researchers to examine, explore and understand a complex issue in real-world contexts, while relying on in-depth data collection techniques (Creswell, 2007). In doing so, it is possible to better understand important features, as well as critical incidents related to a phenomenon being studied over a prolonged period of time (Newby, 2010). In this study, the case was a physical education CT who was responsible for supervising a group of PSTs during a school placement requirement of their PETE programme.

The case

The CT (referred to by the pseudonym Antónia) was a full-time physical education teacher with over 25 years of teaching experience in urban secondary schools in northern Portugal. Antónia was also an experienced CT with 22 years of involvement in supervising and mentoring PSTs. She had also successfully completed a postgraduate qualification in pedagogical supervision. The CT hosted a cohort of four PSTs at her school for the duration of the one-year school placement.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Antónia to explore how she experienced the process of supervision and negotiated her professional identity in the process. She agreed to be interviewed at the school three times throughout the placement (December, March and June). Each conversation lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and began with an icebreaker question to instigate dialogue and encourage Antónia to speak freely, openly and truthfully. Following on from this, a number of open-ended questions were posed in relation to Antónia's supervisory role and her opinions on the PSTs' development, as well as with regard to her views on school in general, and teaching and learning nowadays. Depending on Antónia's responses to the initial topic questions, follow-up was done by additional questions with a view to probing particular aspects in more detail. Demographic information was also elicited from Antónia in the initial interview to contextualize the case study, including: her academic qualifications, her teaching experience, the school's environment, her roles and responsibilities, and her supervisory experience. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Antónia was asked to complete a journal documenting the three academic terms of her mentoring process with the PSTs and data also included her journal entries as background and actual data, to enhance reliability and triangulation of the findings. The journal was prepared in a semi-structured format by the researcher (the first author of this article) and required the CT to reflect on the PSTs' daily lives and tasks undertaken in school, the type of support given to them, her perceptions of how they were learning to become teachers, dilemmas encountered, and thoughts on her mentoring practice and professional development. She decided to type her journal entries daily, resulting in a total of 198 pages. Data from the journal and interviews were imported to NVivo 12 for storage and further coding analysis.

This study was approved by the lead author's university. An informed consent form seeking approval to use the data collected to inform the study was completed by the CT. A pseudonym was assigned to the CT to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Data analysis

Using grounded theory (open, axial and selective coding) (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), an inductive thematic analysis was employed by distilling the text of each interview transcript and journal entries into core themes that reflected the overall discursive context with regard to Antónia's supervision challenges and learning trajectories. First, the transcriptions and journal entries were read and reread thoroughly. Second, the transcriptions and journal entries were coded with regard to the challenging supervision experiences described by the CT (open coding). Third, those codes were compared, contrasted and aggregated (axial coding). In this phase, the researchers engaged in ongoing conversations to reconcile disparities. Fourth, similar patterns were revised, compared, contrasted, deleted and then clustered into broader categories (selective coding) using the constant comparison method to refine the codes until data saturation was reached. Final themes were developed and agreed: (i) the challenge of considering changing entrenched teaching and mentoring practices to connect with PSTs; (ii) reconfiguring mentoring to expand PSTs' limited teaching ideas and range of teaching tools; and (iii) the possibility of practising different mentoring strategies for different 'types' of PST. The themes are representative of the complexity of Antónia's discourses, reflecting her lived challenges and the (re)construction of her professional identity.

Results

The challenge of considering changing entrenched teaching and mentoring practices to connect with PSTs

This theme focuses on the contrasting personal qualities of the CT and the PSTs, and on the consequent challenges the CT faced while attempting to convey her ways of viewing the teaching profession to PSTs.

At the start of the study period, Antónia conveyed confidence in her mentoring abilities:

I think I'm fitted for this [being a CT]. I like it. I really do. (Interview 1).

However, the PSTs she encountered during the school placement posed a significant challenge to her mission of developing competent teachers. She reported that the cohort of PSTs not only had profiles substantially different from each other but also from previous PSTs she had worked with. Antónia disclosed that the behaviour of the PSTs and their performance revealed a lack of content knowledge and difficulties with oral and written communication. She also pinpointed the PSTs' limited initiative in designing instruction:

He [PST] modifies [his planning] according to my suggestions. I never saw him get here and say, 'Antónia, today I will work this way or that way. Look, what do you think if I present this activity to the class?' (...) A lesson that only meets the didactic goals is different from another [lesson] that has fun activities that motivates the kids, right? (Interview 2)

Antónia also perceived a lack of commitment, responsibility and decorum with regard to conduct on the part of the PSTs and even a certain level of disregard for their physical appearance. The following extract illustrates the former observations:

He prepares the lesson in a rush, without rigour. (...) He has multiple professional activities (...). I feel that he became increasingly disconnected from the practicum. (Journal – Lesson observation notes, 23 April)

This was further aggravated by Antónia's belief that some of the PSTs were not aware of their own weaknesses and were initially conceited and resistant to feedback:

She [PST] was a 'kid' full of convictions. She believed she knew and controlled everything. (Interview 2)

She does not understand or accept my criticisms. I was a bit harsh. I told her that she has to worry more about her performance as a teacher. (...) She cried. (Journal – Reflection after the lesson, 9 November)

Initially, Antónia tried to rationalize these observations with the change in expectations of PSTs that had arisen through the reconfigured teacher education programmes under the Bologna Process (mentioned earlier in this paper). She admitted that the behaviour and practices of the PSTs aroused feelings of anxiety and insecurity regarding what she could expect from them. Specifically, the context in which she found herself led to her revisiting, reflecting on and eventually rediscovering the qualities that she most valued in a teacher, and in herself as a CT.

Antónia first attempted to compromise her visions as a teacher to accommodate the PSTs' self-attributes and assist their needs:

I think I will try everything for her [a PST] to experience a good journey. (Interview 1)

However, her inner self surfaced when admitting that she attempted to change the PSTs by mentoring professionalism traits that mirrored her convictions and practices:

I want them [PSTs] to understand that we are much happier professionally if we always have a clean conscience and fulfil our duties (...). If they always prepare their lessons, even if it means just scribbling in a notebook. If they always plan their work and keep their records, it is much easier and brings so much more satisfaction. And, this is what I want them to internalize: that they should create habits of certain ways of being [in the profession]. (Interview 1).

Antónia shared her inability to surrender her embedded beliefs and practices of an effective teacher:

I had to make an effort because I'm not a very tolerant person. (...) to be patient and breathe deeply. Especially, when they [the PSTs] are very different from me. (...) that's a difficulty I have to [overcome]. (...) I have to work it out to be able to hear them (...) to accept (...). To accept that you can get to the same result in another way (...). I think we must develop that capacity but it's not easy. (Interview 1)

Thus, the CT recognized the importance of trying to put aside her own biases in an attempt to listen and remain open to alternative perspectives from the PSTs, although this was clearly a challenge.

Reconfiguring mentoring to expand PSTs' limited teaching ideas and range of teaching tools

This theme introduces the challenge of PSTs' limited expert knowledge and skill, evident in the activities they engaged in daily during their school placement. This, in turn, reconfigured Antónia's supervisory strategy in order to empower the PSTs as teachers.

Antónia emphasized the uncharacteristic lack of specialized knowledge and teaching skills evident across the cohort of PSTs. In the light of this, she revealed that a primary challenge for her was to attempt to understand the origins of such a poor repertoire. She reported that, as the year progressed, she got to know the PSTs and realized that, in contrast with PSTs of previous years, this cohort had a limited background of life experiences in sport and rarely talked about prior secondary and higher education experiences. The CT suggested that the PSTs' limitations in knowledge and skill were amplified by the fact that, contrary to previous students, they came from different institutions of higher education and undergraduate programmes with varying standards, and that this was combined with dissonances in beliefs and conceptions of teaching. As a consequence, Antónia's reflection portrays a conflict of opinion between a PST and herself as a CT:

You should not do this or that because I think you should do it, but rather because YOU believe it is the best way. (Journal – Reflection after the lesson, 15 November)

[At the end of the lesson] he told me, ‘Ah! I was very aggressive to the students.’ I countered, ‘Oh Duarte [pseudonym], it’s not so. You weren’t aggressive. You were firm. They’re totally different things. It’s being firm. It’s being an organizer. It’s being a leader. It’s not aggressiveness. It’s not being harsh.’ And I think he confuses these concepts a lot since he elaborated on the motive, ‘It’s that I think I get emotionally attached to them and, then, I do not want to hurt them.’ This is the reason why he’s not being able to (...) [evolve]. (Interview 2)

Antónia admitted to reconfiguring her mentoring strategy in an attempt to deconstruct the PSTs’ entrenched and narrow ideas about teaching and learning in physical education, and at the same time enable them to expand their repertoire of teaching tools (i.e. content and pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills) to comply with their role as teachers. She explained that in order to accomplish the latter goal, she felt the need to review her long-time mentoring methods. Antónia realized that she had to alter her approach and this resulted in her lowering her expectations of, and changing her advice to, PSTs:

I planned and monitored the unit schemes, the lesson activities and the class management issues closely together with them, using a blackboard to lay out all the discussed aspects. (Interview 1)

Given the apparent recreational game and group dynamic activity foci that the PSTs favoured, Antónia reported that she struggled to convince the PSTs that they should focus on the learning of basic sports skills:

(...) it took an effort [on my part] to focus on the content and learning. To focus on what our task here is: what the effective teaching of physical education programmes and the development of the kids through sport is. (Interview 2)

The possibility of practising different mentoring strategies for different ‘types’ of PST

This theme focuses on the CT’s interrogation of her own identity, her mentoring ability to address all the PSTs’ needs and her subsequent and progressive feelings of demoralization with regard to the CT role.

The relationship with one particular PST led Antónia to an identity crisis. Antónia reported that at the beginning of the school placement she immediately identified that a particular PST had difficulties when it came to leading a class, reinforced by difficulties with instructional design, lesson planning and implementation. The CT’s incredulity at this PST’s stubbornness, and inability to listen and modify his behaviour in order to improve his performance in class was clearly evident, ultimately constraining the mentoring relationship:

At some point [of the lesson] I went to him and said, ‘For God’s sake! You must provide some information. Some technical corrections towards these [the students’] absolutely terrible moves.’ Right? (...) ‘You’re not a playground monitor. You’re a teacher!’ (...) He just looked up at me, narrowed his eyes like this [cat-eye like], pensive and in disbelief, and uttered that he didn’t agree. (Interview 3)

Antónia reported how she attempted to relate to this PST’s convictions, as well as his practices, throughout the course of the year. She planned the lessons with him, attended all his classes, provided feedback at the end of each lesson and had long informal talks with him. However, unlike

his peers, this PST appeared constrained by Antónia's constant presence in his class and continuous feedback. For these reasons, she disclosed that she tried to become as inconspicuous as possible to make him feel more comfortable:

(...) sometimes I choose to be in and out of the class to give him (...) [space]. So that he doesn't have me there, looking at him, all the time (...). (Interview 2)

However, whenever she assessed that this PSTs' actions were jeopardizing the pupils' safety and learning, she could not help herself from intervening:

I think I also have another role, which is, if they are making mistakes, I shouldn't let them. (Interview 1)

Antónia asked the PST's peers to attend his classes more regularly and help him in his teaching practice. Antónia also revealed that she encouraged them to share their views more often with the PST on his methods of instruction and approaches to planning, implementation of the teaching-learning progression and leadership. Antónia considered that this PST would be more disposed to listening to his peers than her, and the following extract exemplifies the CT's attempts to reduce her level of direct interaction with him:

Fortunately, [name of the PST's peer] was also present in his class and saw it all. He said to him, 'What was that? Didn't you see the students kicking the door?' (...) I have asked them to talk to him, even without me being present, but they're starting to lose their patience as well. (Interview 1)

As a result of the strategies outlined, Antónia admitted that she occasionally noted slight improvements in this PST's leadership skills. However, the constant setbacks in his development and the failure of the mentoring strategies employed led to her experiencing a whole variety of sentiments that ranged from deep concern, discomfort and disbelief to frustration, exasperation and impatience:

He was a little better than usual. (Journal – Lesson observation notes, 18 April)

Over all these years I had problems with two or three PSTs, but I honestly do not blame myself for it. Sometimes I have insecurities (...). (Interview 2)

(...) I lost my mind. (...) I snapped at him. (Interview 3)

Antónia admitted that she started to feel powerless and that her willingness to endure the situation was dwindling. She started not trusting this particular PST with her class and relying more on the help of his peers until her resolution as a mentor reached a breaking point. The PST's performance in his last class of the school placement raised doubts with regard to her own ability to be a successful mentor:

Did I really teach him nothing? (Interview 3)

Antónia considered the extent to which her mentoring abilities did not allow her to successfully help all the PSTs to become competent physical education teachers. She further reflected as to whether she should continue as a CT, thus finishing the school placement period on a very different note from the start:

This [the mentoring role] is a difficult thing for me because I'm in a very bad phase of my existence as a CT. (...) I have to rethink very well about how to deal with certain PSTs. (Interview 3)

Discussion

Antónia's discourse conveyed several challenges evoked by the workplace context of a particular year of pedagogical supervision. Talking about these challenges revealed her personal dispositions, her teaching perspectives and the way in which she viewed CTs' legitimate participation in teacher education. Such challenges and revelations disrupted the development of her advisory practices and forced her to question her professional identity, both as a physical education teacher and a CT.

First, she stated that she had a difficult time reconciling her understanding of a worthwhile teacher identity with the personal characteristics she found in her new cohort of PSTs (Leeferink et al., 2015). This state of affairs created a conflict with her supervisory identity. Acknowledging that CTs' personal attributes and beliefs affect their practice and are crucial to the mentoring process (Bechtel and O'Sullivan, 2006; Hudson, 2014), Antónia felt the need to affirm to the group of PSTs her professional identity and, in particular, what she valued in a teacher and how she perceived the teaching profession (Danielewicz, 2001; Gee, 1999; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This aligns somewhat with Bechtel and O'Sullivan's (2006) observation that some teachers believe they have to develop workplace practices that are aligned to their conception of how best to enact professionalism.

Antónia's view of a good teacher was someone who builds their profession on principles of responsibility, seriousness, decorum, humility, commitment, persistence and sacrifice, as well as someone who prepares their lessons in advance, implements motivating activities and keeps a record of what happens in class. The assumption that CTs can make a difference to PSTs' teacher education empowered Antónia's legitimate participation and her position and role, both in school and in the higher education community (Fuller et al., 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991). It also assured her of the necessity of her approach to mentoring centring on the development of the person through the dissemination of her notions of teacher professionalism and teaching (Clarke et al., 2014). This assertion influenced her mentoring practices and decision-making (Bechtel and O'Sullivan, 2006), and was evident in her efforts to encourage the PSTs to model their moral codes, behaviours and teaching perspectives on hers (Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger, 2005).

Another challenge posed by the workplace setting in which Antónia found herself was the PSTs' limited specialized knowledge and skills. This, together with the unexpected personal traits of the PSTs described earlier, did not bode well for an exciting learning trajectory for Antónia. Antónia believed that specialized practical knowledge on a subject influences a teacher's ability to teach and, ultimately, is what legitimates a teacher's identity (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Her remarks on poor teacher socialization skills also emphasized her belief that prior sport and academic experiences, as well as role models, are relevant to aspiring teachers' views and practices, and thus to the construction and recognition of their professional identities as physical education teachers (Gomes et al., 2014). In addition, Antónia felt teacher education was changing as a consequence of contextual events such as education reforms (e.g. the Bologna Process), which in turn affected the type of graduate and the preferred mentoring process (Leeferink et al., 2015).

The discomfort caused by the workplace scenario was visible when Antónia highlighted the fact that she had to revert to a 'teaching role' in an attempt to overcome the PSTs' limited subject knowledge and skills. This modification to Antónia's responsibility as a CT resulted in her

reflecting on her professional identity as a mentor. Nevertheless, she felt she had to assume such a level of control over this particular group of PSTs and, consequently, she adopted a more active, but directive participatory style, and allowed herself to invest in the PSTs' professional development. This resulted in a legitimization of her hierarchical positioning in the supervision process as an 'old-timer' and 'master' and, moreover, in support for her inclination to convey strongly her ways of being a teacher and how to most effectively mentor 'apprentices' and 'newcomers' (i.e. the PSTs) (Fuller et al., 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991). This is implicit in Antónia's attempt to reconfigure her mentoring in order to try and expand the PSTs' limited teaching ideas and range of teaching tools, resonating with her preference for an 'apprenticeship model' (Clarke et al., 2014: 177) and a 'transmission perspective' (Clarke and Jarvis-Selinger, 2005: 67).

A final workplace challenge was the evident clash between the beliefs of the CT and a particular PST, with Antónia's description of this case amounting to a perception that the PST did not appreciate her mentoring experience. Antónia disclosed that she valued PSTs who were receptive to her advice throughout the placement, which in turn legitimized her position in the supervisory process. This expectation is shared by Bechtel and O'Sullivan (2006), who observe that teachers in general share the conviction that PSTs have to be willing to listen and learn new ideas.

Hudson (2014) notes the considerable power that CTs can exercise over the progression of PSTs, particularly as the latter are invited into the CTs' classrooms and CTs are in positions that can influence the direction of PSTs' professional development. Similar to Antónia's attempt to work effectively with the PST, Jaspers et al. (2014: 107) describe the constant tensions of 'dual loyalty' between the roles of being a mentor and a teacher. According to Antónia, this realization threatened the mentoring relationship and, as a consequence, her supervisory participation started to wane and her professional identity began to weaken (Fuller et al., 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991). This fuelled her feelings of powerlessness in connecting effectively with the cohort of PSTs (Fuller et al., 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991) and led to her questioning her own professional identity, and thinking carefully about whether she should remain in a mentoring role, also considering the fact that she was suffering from emotional exhaustion and a poor professional trajectory.

Conclusions

Antónia's discourse, in particular her claims with regard to teaching perspectives and types of mentoring practices, were significantly challenged by a cohort of PSTs. Such challenges stemmed from changes both in the teacher education process and the PSTs' themselves – their concerns and identity traits, and their preparation, expectations and motivations with respect to learning within the teaching profession in general and workplace learning in particular. Antónia's inability to guide the PSTs towards an effective teaching–learning process conveyed that her learning trajectory was not based on her interactions with PSTs in workplace situations. Rather, it appeared to be triggered by: (i) personal conceptions of learning, teaching and supervision; (ii) knowledge and perceptions about herself, both as a person and as a mentor; and (iii) a sense of disconnection between her discourse and the PSTs' practices. This appeared to result in her feeling somewhat 'removed' from her supervisory practice, the outcome of which was a decrease in confidence and a de-legitimization of her professional identity as a CT.

By examining the ways in which the learning of experienced physical education CTs occurs, this study sheds light on supervisory dilemmas and on the PSTs' process of learning how to teach. Future investigations should encourage and support CTs to share their experiences in a bid to allow

them to analyse their supervisory practices and reconstruct their professional identities. Engaging fully with PSTs as they undertake supervised school placements, and following them as they enter the teaching profession, will allow us to map their learning patterns and development. Studies that support PSTs' development through effective mentoring practices will hopefully instil in them an appreciation for the powerful role of mentorship that they could consider emulating as practising school teachers.

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