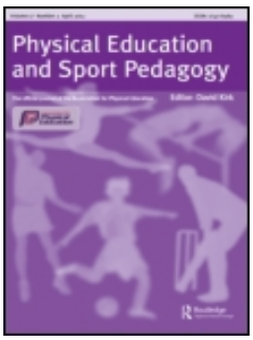

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy

ISSN: 1740-8989 (Print) 1742-5786 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cpes20

Physical education student teachers' perceptions of applying knowledge and skills about emotional understanding studied in PETE in a one-year teaching practicum

Ulla Klemola , Pilvikki Heikinaro-Johansson & Mary O'Sullivan

To cite this article: Ulla Klemola , Pilvikki Heikinaro-Johansson & Mary O'Sullivan (2013) Physical education student teachers' perceptions of applying knowledge and skills about emotional understanding studied in PETE in a one-year teaching practicum, Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 18:1, 28-41, DOI: 10.1080/17408989.2011.630999

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2011.630999

Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy
Vol. 18, No. 1, January 2013, 28–41

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Physical education student teachers' perceptions of applying knowledge and skills about emotional understanding studied in PETE in a one-year teaching practicum

Ulla Klemola[a]*, Pilvikki Heikinaro-Johansson[b] and Mary O'Sullivan[c]

[a]*Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland;* [b]*Department of Sport Sciences, University of Jyväskylä, Finland;* [c]*Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Limerick, Ireland*

(*Received 22 March 2010; final version received 8 February 2011*)

Background: Recently, there has been growing interest in the emotional aspects of teaching and learning in general education and in physical education (PE). Scholars have argued that high-quality teaching and learning depend on a teacher's knowledge of students' emotions (Hargreaves 1998, 2000, 2002; McCaughtry 2004; McCaughtry and Rovegno 2003; Owens and Ennis 2005; Poulou 2007; Sutton and Wheatley 2003). To this end, three course modules in social and emotional learning (SEL) were added to the degree programme for PE students in Finland.
Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine student teachers' retrospective perceptions of implementing social and emotional strategies to build emotional understanding with students during a one-year teaching practicum.
Participants and setting: The participants were 17 (eight women and nine men) PE student teachers at a university in central Finland in the fourth or fifth year of their PETE programme. The present study used a descriptive and interpretive case study methodology.
Data collection: The data were collected via an open-ended questionnaire and focus group interviews. The focus was to gather information on participants' self-reported perceptions of implementing SEL.
Data analysis: The unit of analysis was an expression or sentence which addressed a student's or a student teacher's emotions. The data were analysed inductively by individual case analysis and group level analysis.
Reliability: Three strategies were used to enhance the reliability of the interpretations: (1) data triangulation to ensure that findings were accurate; (2) scrutinizing the data for discriminate cases; and (3) member checks by two of the participating student teachers.
Findings: Physical education student teachers found using the SEL strategies for building emotional understanding was positive yet difficult. Positive experiences were reported aroused when the student teachers responded to students' emotions and when they expressed their own emotions to their students. Responding to students' emotions by using SEL strategies facilitated student teachers' communication with adolescents and helped students to accomplish assigned tasks. The student teachers' expression of their own emotions reportedly reduced students' off-task and inappropriate behaviour. In addition, the student teachers' emotional self-expression helped them to re-focus on teaching after a conflict with students.

The challenges using SEL related to difficulties remembering which strategies to use, reacting to the diversity of students' emotions while organising a lesson, incorporating

*Corresponding author. Email: ulla.klemola@jyu.fi

ISSN 1740-8989 print/ISSN 1742-5786 online

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2011.630999
http://www.tandfonline.com

SEL instinctively into their teaching and managing their own surges of emotion. As a whole, all student teachers pointed out the importance of practising strategies on emotional understanding and they wanted more SEL studies in their teacher education programme.
Conclusions: The findings provided some evidence for the value of SEL as a component of a teacher education programme. These student teachers found the strategies to enhance their emotional understanding helpful for themselves and their students. We recommend experiences on social and emotional learning to be included in teacher education programmes in helping newly qualified teachers to handle the emotional aspects of their work more effectively.

Keywords: emotional understanding; student teaching; social and emotional learning; physical education; teacher education

Teaching as an emotional practice (Denzin 1984; Hargreaves 1998, 2000) activates and colors teachers' own feelings as well as the feelings and actions of students. Teachers' emotional practice involves relationships with students, colleagues and parents – relationships that are not always easy to deal with. Research has shown that while teachers believe their knowledge of content and pedagogy to be good, their preparation for dealing with students' emotions and difficult social interactions in the classroom is insufficient (Kiviniemi 2000; Kontoniemi 2003). In studies about problematic episodes in physical education (PE) (Cothran, Kulinna, and Garrahy 2009; Kulinna, Cothran, and Regualos 2006) and student teachers' concerns with teaching (Bromfield 2006; Cakmak 2008; Capel 2001; Poulou 2007), participants pointed out difficulties with classroom management, dealing with conflict, and understanding students' behaviour. On the other hand, teachers found relationships with their students to be significant and valued the emotional bonds and understandings they established with them (Hargreaves 1998). In addition, growing concern about the personal problems of pupils has created a need for teachers to understand better both their own and students' emotions – issues which are lacking in many teacher education programmes (Hawkey 2006; Sutton and Wheatley 2003).

Recently, there has been growing interest in the emotional aspects of teaching and learning in general education and in physical education. Scholars have argued that high-quality teaching and learning depend on a teacher's knowledge of students' emotions (Hargreaves 1998, 2000, 2002; McCaughtry 2004; McCaughtry and Rovegno 2003; Owens and Ennis 2005; Poulou 2007; Sutton and Wheatley 2003). The manner in which a teacher interprets and understands a student's emotions is reflected in the teacher's thoughts and decisions about content, curriculum, and pedagogy (Hargreaves 1998; McCaughtry 2004). Teachers' knowledge affects teaching and student learning (O'Sullivan 2003; Tsangaridou 2006). In physical education knowing how students learn entails understanding cognitive and motor skill development patterns, but there has been less attention paid to the emotional aspects of learning (McCaughtry 2004). There is a need to expand current conceptions of teachers' knowledge to include emotionality and understand how emotions are interwoven with teaching and student learning. More attention should be paid to enhancing teachers' emotional understanding during teacher education.

Teachers' emotional understanding and emotional intelligence

Emotional understanding, as employed in this study, was influenced by Denzin's and Hargreaves' ideas on emotions and mutual understanding. In his classic book, *On understanding emotion*, Denzin (1984, 137) argued that emotional understanding

> is an inter-subjective process requiring that one person enter into the field of experience of another and experience for herself the same or similar experience experienced by another. The subjective interpretation of another's emotional experience from one's own standpoint is central in emotional understanding. Shared and sharable emotionality lie at the core of what it means to understand and meaningfully enter into the emotional experiences of others.

Emotional understanding occurs when we share feelings in common between us; when we become emotionally attuned to one another from longstanding relationships; or when we feel for someone else vicariously either by reaching back into our own emotional memories or by reaching out to emotional responses as they are expressed in the arts (Denzin 1984; Hargreaves 1998). Emotional understanding is important in the helping professions such as counselling, psychiatry and education (McCaughtry 2004). However, interpreting and understanding other people's emotions is imprecise and emotional misunderstandings are common in teaching. For example, teachers can misconstrue their students' embarrassment for stubbornness or silent respect for sullen resistance (Hargreaves 1998).

Hargreaves (2000) defined emotional understanding as teachers instantaneously reading or scanning the emotional responses of their students. This scanning may, however, go awry, causing emotional misunderstandings and leading 'teachers to misread their students' learning, [which] seriously threatens learning standards (Hargreaves 2000, 815). These misunderstandings interfere with teachers' ability to help their students learn. According to Hargreaves (2000) the capacity to use emotions well is grounded not just in individual competence. Teachers' lives, identities and relationships influence emotional understanding in schools. In addition, the capacity for people to use their emotions well in the workplace depends on what professions expect them emotionally and how organization structures human interactions (Hargreaves 1998, 2000). Emotions reflect the culture of a society, and there are important cross-cultural variations in the ways in which people experience and express different emotions (Hargreaves 2002).

The concept of emotional intelligence presents a more individual view of emotionality (Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee 2000; Goleman 1998; Mayer and Salovey 1997). Even though there are several definitions of the concept, we found Mayer and Salovey's (1997) perspective on emotional intelligence useful. Emotional intelligence involves a person's ability to perceive and express emotions, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate the emotion of the self and others (Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey 2000; Mayer and Salovey 1997). Emotional intelligence has two dimensions: skills for getting in touch with a person's own emotions, expressing and regulating them, and skills for perceiving and regulating the emotions of others.

Emotional understanding is central to the educational process and the development of social relationships with others in schools. Use of emotions can be helpful or harmful (Hargreaves 2000) and greater understanding of the emotional aspects of the teaching-learning environment is needed.

Research on emotional aspects in teaching

Research on the emotional dimensions of teaching has focused on the range of emotions that teachers experience while teaching and their reflection on these emotions (Poulou 2007; Sutton and Wheatley 2004), as well as on how they self-regulate these emotional episodes (Hargreaves 2000; Sutton 2004; Templin 2007). Hargreaves (2000) interviewed 53 secondary school teachers about their responses to students' emotions and found that they treated students' emotions as intrusions on learning and classroom order, and

concentrated on managing students' emotions. There are a few physical education studies (McCaughtry 2004; McCaughtry and Rovegno 2003; Tsangaridou 2006) that integrated emotional aspects with concepts of teachers' knowledge and teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Shulman's (1987) concept of PCK refers to 'ways of representing and formulating the subject which make it comprehensible to others'. PCK includes the teacher's understanding of what makes learning easy or difficult for students. Students experience emotions during these learning experiences. One central finding in PCK studies has been that prospective teachers tend to ignore learners' emotions in teaching (Tsangaridou 2006). McCaughtry and Rovegno (2003) found that instead of noticing students' frustration and other emotions, the physical education student teachers tended to blame students for their learning difficulties without questioning their own professional knowledge. Ignoring the emotions of students can create problems for students' learning.

McCaughtry's (2004) case study examined how one PE teacher understood student emotion and whether that understanding affected the teacher's thinking and decision making in PE classes. The results showed that an understanding of students' emotions, gained from discussion with and listening to students, affected the teacher's curricula or her PCK, as well as her decision making to promote learning during lessons. Listening to students when they expressed their emotions helped the teacher to recognize learning problems and thereby promote student learning.

Given teachers' problems dealing with student emotion, teachers would benefit from greater awareness of the theory of emotional understanding and practice in enhancing their own emotional intelligence. Researchers (Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee 2000; Payton et al. 2000) agree emotional intelligence (as skills and abilities) can be taught and learned, with teachers needing social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies to enhance their emotional understandings of themselves and students. Social and emotional learning strategies as used in this study include social interaction strategies with strategies of I-Messaging, Active Listening and No-Lose Conflict Resolution introduced by Gordon (1974, 2003) and emotional skills by Mayer and Salovey (1997). Together, these strategies were used to develop emotional understanding between student teachers and students.

Strategies to establish emotional understanding

There is a lot of research evidence about the benefits of learning social and emotional strategies for children and youth (Beelman, Pfingsten, and Lösel 1994; Graczyk et al. 2000; Niles, Raynolds, and Roe-Sepowitz 2008; Ulutas and Ömerogly 2007). Physical education research has shown that programmes of social and emotional learning have positively affected students' social behaviour and sense of personal responsibility (Hastie and Buchanan 2000; Hellison 2003; Rantala and Heikinaro-Johansson 2007), problem solving skills (Hastie and Buchanan 2000; Sharpe, Brown, and Crider 1995) and academic learning (Martinek, McLoughlin, and Schilling 1999).

There is a paucity of research related to the socio-emotional learning of adults or the impact of social and emotional learning on student teachers and school administration (Klemola 2009; McNaughton et al. 2007; Rasku-Puttonen 1997; Smith and Montello 1992) and other professionals (Brown and Bylund 2008; Kennedy 2001; Schofield, Green, and Creed 2008). Findings suggest that programmes can be effective in the development of competences around SEL; for example, programmes can improve participants' interpersonal relationships with students, parents and clients. For example, McNaughton et al. (2007) found that teaching active listening strategies to student teachers was effective.

In the same study, parents found the strategies student teachers used in teacher-parent discussions assisted their interactions and understandings.

In this study, we added three modules in social and emotional learning strategies to the degree programme for all PE students in Finland. The contents of the modules involved strategies of Gordon's (1974, 2003) model of interaction that values cooperation rather than power and punishment when working with young people (Charles 1999). I-Messaging, the development of a means for articulating self thoughts, opinions and emotions, is one strategy (Gordon 2003). PE students in our study practised delivering I-messages when a problem arose with students by telling them, without blaming them, about their inappropriate behaviour, the impact of this behaviour on the teacher and the emotions it aroused for the teacher. This strategy is called a Confrontive I-Message and was used to influence another person stop an unacceptable behaviour (Gordon 2003).

The listening skills that were developed included both non-verbal and verbal signalling of listening and open questioning techniques. Active Listening, in which the listener perceives and reflects back a student's feelings and needs, was also considered important (Gordon 2003). While listening actively the listener is encouraged to avoid seeking resolutions or being prescriptive. The listener reflects the emotions of the person speaking, which helps the speaker to deal with the issue at hand – his/her feelings about it – and, consequently, to move on. The goal of Active Listening is to improve mutual understanding between teacher and student (Gordon 2003). In the present research, we found Gordon's concept of Active Listening aligned with Denzin's (1984) and Hargreaves' (2000) concept of emotional understanding. For example, in order to avoid misunderstanding, a teacher can use active listening skills to check whether he/she has understood a student's emotion correctly.

The student teachers studied also a 'No-Lose Conflict Resolution Method' (Gordon 1974, 229–34) in which the problem is defined in terms of conflicting needs and debaters collaboratively search for a solution. In situations where there were conflicts between values, the student teachers practiced giving advice and negotiation.

In addition, emotional skills, based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) definition of emotional intelligence, were taught to the PE student teachers. Emotional skills included perceiving, identifying and naming the teacher's own and the other persons' emotions. The student teachers expressed their emotions in verbal and non-verbal ways. Cognitive regulation of emotions was part of the module content.

Because emotional understanding seems to be crucial in teaching and learning, it is important to study how individuals learn to use strategies for building that understanding with others. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine student teachers' retrospective perceptions of implementing social and emotional strategies to build emotional understanding with students during a one-year teaching practicum.

Method

Setting and participants

The present study used a descriptive and interpretive case study methodology (Stake 2000). The study was part of a bigger action research (Ladkin 2007) project related to SEL in PETE and examined student teachers' experiences in learning and using these strategies in classroom settings. The participants were 17 (eight women and nine men) PE student teachers at a university in central Finland in the fourth or fifth year of their PETE programme, and a lecturer-researcher (primary author). The primary author designed and taught two of the three SEL modules for the participants. She also served as a supervisor to the PE student teachers during the one-year teaching practicum.

Finnish teacher education: the social and emotional learning components of the PETE programme

In Finland, teacher education is carried out at the universities and the basic qualification for primary and secondary school teachers is a master's degree (Jakku-Sihvonen and Niemi 2006). In PETE there is a unique education model; the main subject studies and pedagogical studies are offered concurrently and in co-operation with two departments of the university, namely the Department of Sport Sciences and the Department of Teacher Education (Heikinaro-Johansson, Palomäki, and Vinci 2009). Pedagogical studies include studies in educational science with an emphasis on didactics and several guided teaching practices, which are completed mainly in university teacher training schools (Jakku-Sihvonen and Niemi 2006).

The five-year PETE programme addressed social and emotional learning through three course modules. In their first year, PE students completed a module entitled 'Social and Emotional Skills in Teaching' taught by the primary author. The module aimed to provide PE students with knowledge, skills and a positive attitude for successfully managing their interactions with students, colleagues and parents at schools. The course participants met once a week for 90 minutes, 24 contact hours in total. The purpose was to introduce PE students to social interaction as a phenomenon in teachers' work and offer strategies for enhancing this interaction and emotional understanding. The module included I-Messaging, Active Listening and No-Lose Conflict Resolution strategies (Gordon 2003). Teaching of these strategies progressed in a cumulative way (cf. Payton et al. 2000). At the beginning of the course module lessons concentrated on individual strategies such as self-expression by I-messaging or listening skills. Later on, these skills were combined to address more demanding social interaction situations. For example, in conflict resolution students applied the strategies of I-Messaging, the emotional skill of naming another person's emotion and Active Listening. The learning-by-doing instructional strategy (Kolb 1984) with an emphasis on active learning, practising and conversations was also used.

In the second year of the programme, the PE students' reflective readiness was fostered in a module called "Teacher as a Researcher". The thinking behind this approach is that teachers should be able to develop their professional knowledge through their own professional experiences. The course module included lectures, seminars on curriculum planning and microteaching lessons, theories of teaching-learning processes and different methods of observation. The benefit of this course module in the area of social and emotional learning was to offer students possibilities to apply SEL-strategies learned in former studies. During this module, the students studied and reflected on their SEL as a part of their teaching behaviour. Their microteaching sessions were videotaped and later analysed. This module was integrated with a teaching practicum in primary schools (Heikinaro-Johansson, Palomäki, and Vinci 2009). Teacher educators encouraged the student teachers' application of SEL during this teaching practice.

In their fourth or fifth year, PE students had their third module in SEL with 12 contact hours. The focus of the module was in the repetition and deeper understanding of SEL strategies as well as the application of social and emotional skills as a part of their personal teaching behaviour. The primary author used problem-based teaching (Nummenmaa and Virtanen 2003) to connect the student teachers' teaching experiences to theory about and strategies of emotional understanding. The themes of the lessons discussed social interaction conflicts and group dynamics as well as bullying and collaboration with parents. During that academic year PE students completed a year of teaching practice. Classroom observations with group discussions were linked to this practicum. During the programme

participants observed a fellow student's PE lessons and gave feedback regarding his/her communication, classroom climate and use of SEL while teaching.

Data collection

The data were collected via an open-ended questionnaire, distributed during the autumn semester and by group interviews conducted at the end of the academic year. The questionnaire included questions related to the student teachers' experiences of social interaction situations in school, the use and meaning of SEL in teaching and hopes for their education of these strategies. Altogether, there were 26.5 pages of written data (Times New Roman 12, spacing 1.5).

The primary author conducted group interviews in two to four person groups with all members of the cohort. These focus groups were videotaped. The focus group interviews concentrated on student teachers' experiences of positive and negative social interactions while teaching (for example, 'Can you describe a difficult or negative episode – what happened?'). Furthermore, they discussed ways they had used, if at all, what they had learned about emotional understanding and about their own social and emotional learning in their teaching (for example, 'How would you describe your personal learning of these strategies?'). The interviews lasted between 1 hour 27 minutes and 2 hours for a total of 13 hours 53 minutes, and were later transcribed. We may garner an understanding of learning social and emotional strategies through student teachers' retrospective perceptions of implementing SEL.

As the primary author conducted the interviews, there was a risk the student teachers provided answers they thought their teacher wanted to hear – they may have wanted to please her. However, Alasuutari (1995) argued that acquaintance and trust between the researcher and the participants elicits honest answers. Student teachers' descriptions of their difficulties support this view. After many years of studying together, the student teachers were also familiar with each other, which is something that has been found to help participants express their thoughts more openly (Johnson and Johnson 2003). In addition, the primary author's dual role might have had an ethical impact on the study. Awareness of her role, potential power issues and her own bias necessitated a continuous process of self-reflection. The student teachers also had the option to have their interview answers omitted from the study and their willingness to participate in the study was checked both at the beginning and end of the interview.

Data analysis and trustworthiness

The unit of analysis used in the study was an expression or sentence, from the questionnaire and the interviews, which addressed either the student's or student teacher's emotions. The data were analysed inductively, firstly via individual cases and secondly by a cross-case analysis of the transcripts (Charmaz 2005; Patton 2002). In the interviews all participants answered individually to the questions dealing with their experiences of positive and negative social interactions. This part of the data as well as PE student teachers' answers in the questionnaire were analysed individually for each participant and then compared between each individual. Group level analysis was used with the rest of the data. Excerpts from the data were coded into a series of themes, created from the inductive analysis of these excerpts. Student teachers' perceptions of using SEL strategies are reported in two themes: positive experiences and difficulties in using SEL. In this paper, the 'voice' of the participants has been brought to the fore through direct quotations from their responses

to the questionnaire or during the interview. The student teachers responded in Finnish and their responses were translated into English.

Three strategies were used to ensure the reliability of the interpretations. First, the data were triangulated by comparing the questionnaire and interview responses of each participant. Second, the data were scrutinized for cases conflicting with the interpretations and presented in relation to the thematic cluster. Finally, member checks of two student teachers, one female and one male, were conducted to ensure the interpretations.

Results

The majority of the PE student teachers (14 out of 17) reported that they drew on the social and emotional knowledge gained in PETE programme while teaching. They found using the SEL strategies for building emotional understanding was positive yet difficult.

Responding to students' emotions and the student teachers' self-expression – positive experiences from using strategies on emotional understanding

PE student teachers reported that strategies on emotional understanding helped them to *respond to students' emotions*. Many of the student teachers (10 out of 17) reported using emotional skills of perceiving and naming the emotions they detected in their students during PE classes. The student teachers labelled the students' emotions such as fear, anxiety, nervousness, insecurity, irritation, worry/concern, loneliness, embarrassment, boredom, annoyance, disagreement, and restlessness. For example, one male student teacher told about his experience as a substitute teacher for a class of first graders whose own teacher was female: *I got the impression that they were almost frightened* [of me] – *who is this geezer standing in front of the class* (Joona, group interview, negative episodes). Perceiving and labelling students' emotions often led student teachers to actively listen to their students.

Active Listening and other listening skills, which student teachers mentioned as the most frequently used strategies, were considered important to connect emotionally with students. The student teachers believed that listening to the student's emotions helped them to look at the situation from the student's point of view. Student teachers gave examples of actively listening to a student's feelings.

> [In a downhill skiing lesson] *one girl* [student] *said to me* 'Do we all have to go down the same track?' *and* 'How should I do this?' *And then I just replied to her: You seem to be afraid of going down … You are wondering which would be the safest way. And she said* 'Yes, it scares me' *and then I said: Is it ok if you ski down the slope behind me? She agreed and then we went down and there was no problem anymore. It was important to stop and listen to what was wrong*. (Reetta, group interview)

Another stated:

> *A girl* [student] *was irritated and she was just sulking and sitting on the gym floor. I went to her and asked 'What irritates you?' She told me her problem dealing with the outfit of a school's dance performance. I checked if I had understood her correctly. – – After that we had a quick powwow about the outfit. We found a solution and she was active the rest of the lesson.* (Joona, questionnaire)

Furthermore, when students complained about various problems before a PE lesson, some of the student teachers reported actively listening to their students and accepting their concerns: *You seem to be worried about today's class* (Liisa, questionnaire). As a

result, the student teachers perceived *the student as working more actively than before* (Liisa, questionnaire; Matti, questionnaire). Such responses came as a surprise to the student teachers. Understanding and listening to student expressions of emotion seemed to support working in PE lessons. *Often, listening to and verbalising a student's emotion frees up the situation. The student starts to search for positive aspects and a solution to the problem* (Matti, questionnaire).

Listening to and understanding students' emotions led some (7 out of 14) student teachers to make changes to what or who they were teaching which was reported as a positive experience. They did this by making the task easier, adding a game, changing their instructions or using discussion. For example, when faced with fearful school beginners, one student teacher (Joona) sought to establish a more relaxed atmosphere by starting the lesson with a game. During a downhill skiing lesson the student teacher's (Reetta) interventions (via active listening and task modification) helped reduce the student's anxiety which allowed her to perform the task. When students were restless and/or irritable, the student teachers used conversation and No-Lose Conflict Resolution strategies to address students' behaviour and their ideas and feelings about the task at hand. This happened, for example, when the task was to create a performance for a school party:

> *Nothing worked because everybody was so down. I stopped the class and asked them to sit down. I asked them to think about the worst and the best things that could happen* [in their performance]. *We just talked. – – But it helped.* (Julia, group interview)

Another positive experience of using SEL strategies found by the PE student teachers was the application of I-Messages when *expressing student teacher's own emotions* in classes. Many student teachers (12 out of 17) reported being aware of and expressing their feelings to their students such as: *I lose my temper* or *I became scared* [when the pupil left the gym without telling]. One male student teacher reported:

> *I had two options to let my frustration out. I didn't want to shout, but I wanted a change. – – And I explained how I felt ashamed because of us* [boys' behaviour at the swimming hall the week before]. *That lesson made me nervous because it was hard to pick the difficult issue up again. But we managed to settle the disagreement and go on. We succeeded in it!* (Aki, group interview)

When confronting undesirable student behaviour, student teachers reported using Confrontive I-Messages to positive effect. One student teacher explained how he used this strategy in a volleyball lesson:

> [And I told him] *When you bounce the ball, my instructions become confused, and no-one hears what I am trying to say. – – Suddenly, the negative behaviour stopped! The most positive affect is that I made contact with the pupil. He looked me in the eyes and I realized that he had understood.* (Aleksi, group interview)

The student teachers noted that expressing their emotions to their students was beneficial and it changed their off-task behaviour. *I used Confrontive I-Message when boys withdrew from the task in a basketball lesson. They became silent after my message and continued the task* (Jiri, group interview). Some students even apologised for their misbehaviour at the end of the lesson when a student teacher expressed his disappointment with two boys skipping the warm-up. *Just before the class was finishing, those two boys came to me and apologised. This made me feel good* (Mikael, group interview).

Another benefit was the student teachers' expression of their own emotions, which helped them to concentrate on their teaching. The SEL skills they used helped reduce their nervousness or frustration and contributed to their personal welfare while teaching. *These skills are ways to calm down and think reasonably* (Julia, group interview). Another noted:

> *It's important for me to realize my own emotional state. When I have analyzed it, it is easier to tell students about my feelings. Maybe it is also easier for students to understand the teacher better if he expresses himself.* (Jiri, group interview)

The challenge of lesson organising and strong emotions hindering the use of SEL – difficulties in applying emotional understanding strategies

In spite of the positive experiences, the application of SEL was not easy for the student teachers. The student teachers reported having *difficulties remembering the strategies* in fast-changing PE lessons. Student teachers often remarked that understanding a student's emotion occurred after the class: *she must have felt embarrassed about attention* (Jiri, group interview). Even though many student teachers developed sensitivities to students' emotions, they commented on their difficulties in knowing how to react to these emotions as it was difficult to be prepared beforehand to the variety of students' emotions. One noted:

> *Emotions are really equivocal. It is hard to think what the other person feels or what you yourself are feeling. It is hard to really stop* [and react to students' emotions]. (Tessa, group interview)

The student teachers found *difficulties reacting to the diversity of students' emotions while organising the lesson.* In teaching practice, they were engrossed in other 'more pressing' aspects of developing the lesson.

> *Everything goes around in my head; all security aspects, mattresses. – – It demands more experience before you are able to react to those things* [emotions]. (Reetta, group interview)

In addition, student teachers mentioned *difficulties incorporating SEL in a natural way into their teaching.* One student teacher stated: *My brains go a million – – I try to process my own behaviour all the time* (Aleksi, group interview). Student teachers wanted to act naturally with their students but applying strategies demanded more conscious efforts to change their teaching behaviours. This was the reason why a small number (3 out of 17) of participants reported not using social and emotional skills during their teaching practice year. They did not find it easy to incorporate strategies into their teachings and their interactions with students happened more *instinctively* (Mikko, group interview).

Some of the student teachers, especially the men, reported that SEL was not helpful in situations where their own negative emotions were aroused because of a pupil's behaviour. A s*urge of emotion* complicated interactions with students. This happened for one student teacher when his students went to smoke during the refreshment break. *[And] then I lost it. When I realized what they had done after not seeing them for quarter of an hour. I was so angry and I didn't know what to do* (Jiri, group interview).

In spite of the challenges the student teachers unanimously pointed out the importance of SEL and the application of strategies on emotional understanding in teachers' work. Studying social and emotional skills had made them aware of social interaction and gave them options on how to handle interactive situations with pupils. The PE student teachers

expressed their willingness to enhance their SEL strategies more during their PETE programme as well in postgraduate professional development sessions.

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine student teachers' retrospective perceptions of implementing SEL strategies during a one-year teaching practicum. Participants of the study found application of the strategies in teaching helpful yet challenging. They reported making a conscious effort to address students' emotions in PE lessons. This finding contradicts the results of the study by Hargreaves (2000), who found that school teachers reported that students' emotions were intrusive in lessons. On the contrary, these student teachers reported responding to students' emotions using SEL strategies which facilitated their communication with adolescents and helped students to accomplish assigned tasks, findings similar to McCaughtry's (2004) study.

Emotional understanding is therefore important for student-teacher relationships and subject learning. An essential part of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1987) is representing the subject in a comprehensible way to students. The data suggest it is possible for a teacher to remove emotional obstacles to learning by employing Active Listening and other SEL strategies. When the teacher perceives and understands the emotions that hinder activity and acts on this knowledge it frees the student to practise and learn. Teachers' use of SEL may help to create positive experiences and memories about physical education.

The student teachers' expression of their own emotions reportedly reduced students' off-task and inappropriate behaviour. In addition, the student teachers' emotional self-expression helped them to re-focus on teaching after a conflict with students. This finding contradicts Sutton's (2004) study, in which teachers believed that the expression of negative emotions was counterproductive. In this study, student teachers' efforts to express emotions via I-Messages avoided them attributing blame to students, unlike the participants in McCaughtry and Rovegno's (2003) study who tended to blame their students for their learning difficulties.

However, application of SEL was not easy. Participants reported difficulties when reacting to students' emotions while organising the lesson, remembering what SEL strategies to use, incorporating SEL naturally into teaching and managing their own surges of emotion when dealing with students. As has been shown in previous studies (Palomäki and Heikinaro-Johansson 2005; Rovegno 2003), it is hard for student teachers to observe students, as their attention is often more focused on their own teaching behaviour rather than on the students' reactions to what and how they are learning. Learning strategies that enhance emotional understanding need time and student teachers should have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and skills in this area during their PETE programme. Attention to SEL should be included in continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for in-service teachers, too (Justice and Espinoza 2007; Sutton and Wheatley 2003).

The findings provided some evidence for the value of SEL as a component of a teacher education programme. These student teachers found the strategies to enhance their emotional understanding helpful for themselves and their students (Kontoniemi 2003; Sutton and Wheatley 2003). We recommend experiences on social and emotional learning be included in teacher education programmes in helping newly qualified teachers to handle the emotional aspects of their work more effectively (Justice and Espinoza 2007).

This case study reported the perceptions of 17 student teachers as they tried to implement emotional understanding strategies during their teaching. Further research is clearly needed and the use of classroom observations would provide more knowledge about these specific issues. We hope this research will serve as a catalyst for more research on pedagogies to support the enhancement of teachers' emotional understanding in teaching (Brown and Bylund 2008; McNaughton et al. 2007). In addition, it would be interesting to examine the ways in which perceiving and reflecting on a student's emotion would affect her/his learning of a specific skill in PE.

References

Alasuutari, P. 1995. *Laadullinen tutkimus* [Qualitative research]. 3rd ed. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Beelman, A., U. Pfingsten, and F. Lösel. 1994. Effects of training social competence in children: A meta-analysis of recent evaluation studies. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology* 23, no. 3: 260–71.

Boyatzis, R., D. Goleman, and K. Rhee. 2000. Clustering competence in emotional intelligence: Insights from the emotional competence inventory. In *The handbook of emotional intelligence. Theory, development, assessment and application at home, school and in the workplace*, ed. R. Bar-On and J. Parker, 343–62. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bromfield, C. 2006. PGCE secondary trainee teachers and effective behaviour management: An evaluation and commentary. *Support for Learning* 21, no. 4: 188–93.

Brown, R., and C. Bylund. 2008. Communication skills training: Describing a new conceptual model. *Academic Medicine* 83, no. 1: 37–44.

Cakmak, M. 2008. Concerns about teaching process: Student teachers' perspective. *Educational Research Quarterly* 31, no. 3: 57–77.

Capel, S. 2001. Secondary students' development as teachers over the course of a PGCE year. *Educational research* 43, no. 3: 247–61.

Charles, C.M. 1999. *Building classroom discipline*. 6th ed. New York, NY: Longman.

Charmaz, K. 2005. Grounded theory in the 21st century. In *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd ed, ed. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, 507–35. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cothran, D., P. Kulinna, and D. Garrahy. 2009. Attributions for and consequences of student misbehaviour. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 14, no. 2: 155–67.

Denzin, N. 1984. *On understanding emotion*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Goleman, D. 1998. *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

Gordon, T. 1974. *Teachers' effectiveness training*. New York, NY: David McKay.

Gordon, T. 2003. *Teachers' effectiveness training. The program proven to help teachers bring out the best in students of all ages*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Graczyk, P., J. Weissberg, J. Payton, M. Elias, M. Greenberg, and J. Zins. 2000. Criteria for evaluating the quality of school-based social and emotional learning programs. In *The handbook of emotional intelligence. Theory, development, assessment and application at home, school and in the workplace*, ed. R. Bar-On and J. Parker, 391–410. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hargreaves, A. 1998. The emotional practice in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 14, no. 8: 835–54.

Hargreaves, A. 2000. Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interaction with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 16: 811–26.

Hargreaves, A. 2002. Teaching in a box. Emotional geographies of teaching. In *Developing teachers and teaching practice – International research perspectives*, ed. C. Sugrue and C. Day, 3–25. London: Routledge Falmer.

Hastie, P., and A. Buchanan. 2000. Teaching responsibility through sport education: Prospects of a coalition. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 71: 25–35.

Hawkey, K. 2006. Emotional intelligence and mentoring in pre-service education: A literature review. *Mentoring and Tutoring* 14, no. 2: 137–47.

Heikinaro-Johansson, P., S. Palomäki, and D.M. Vinci. 2009. , Becoming a reflective physical education teacher by structured research experience. Paper presented at the AIESEP Conference, May 27–29, in Besancon, France.

Hellison, D. 2003. *Teaching responsibility through physical activity.* 2nd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Jakku-Sihvonen, R., and H. Niemi. 2006. Research-based teacher education. In *Research-based teacher education in Finland – reflections by Finnish teacher educators*, ed. R. Jakku-Sihvonen and H. Niemi, 31–50. Research in Educational Studies 25. Turku: Finnish Educational Research Association.

Johnson, D., and F. Johnson. 2003. *Joining together. Group theory and group skills*. 8th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Justice, M., and S. Espinoza. 2007. Emotional intelligence and beginning teacher candidates. *Education* 127, no. 4: 456–61.

Kennedy, M. 2001. Teaching communication skills to medical students: Unexpected attitudes and outcomes. *Teaching in Higher Education* 6, no. 1: 119–23.

Kiviniemi, K. 2000. *Opettajan työtodellisuus haasteena opettajankoulutukselle. Opettajien ja opettajankouluttajien käsityksiä opettajan työstä, opettajuuden muuttumisesta ja opettajankoulutuksen kehittämishaasteista* [Teachers' working reality as a challenge for teacher education. The conceptions of teachers and teacher educators about teacher's work, the change of teaching and developing challenges of teacher education] Opettajien perus- ja täydennyskoulutuksen ennakointihanke (OPEPRO) selvitys 14. Helsinki: Opetushallitus.

Klemola, U. 2009. *Opettajaksi opiskelevien vuorovaikutustaitojen kehittäminen liikunnan aineenopettajakoulutuksessa*. [Developing student teachers' social interaction skills in physical education teacher education]. PhD diss., University of Jyväskylä.

Kolb, D. 1984. *Experiential learning. Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kontoniemi, M. 2003. *'Milloin sinä otat itseäsi niskasta kiinni?' Opettajien kokemuksia alisuoriutujista* ['When will you pull your socks up?' Teachers' experiences of underachievers]. PhD diss., University of Jyväskylä.

Kulinna, P., D. Cothran, and R. Regualos. 2006. Teachers' reports of student misbehavior in physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 77, no. 1: 32–40.

Ladkin, D. 2007. Action research. In *Qualitative research practice*, ed. C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium and D. Silverman, 478–90. London: Sage.

Martinek, T., D. McLaughlin, and T. Schilling. 1999. Project effort: Teaching responsibility beyond the gym. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 70, no. 6: 59–65.

Mayer, J.D., and P. Salovey. 1997. What is emotional intelligence? In *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications*, ed. P. Salovey and D.J. Sluyter, 3–31. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Mayer, J.D., D.R. Caruso, and P. Salovey. 2000. Models of emotional intelligence. In *Handbook of intelligence*, ed. R.J. Sternberg, 396–420. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCaughtry, N. 2004. The emotional dimension of a teacher's pedagogical content knowledge: Influences in content, curriculum and pedagogy. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education* 23, no. 1: 30–47.

McCaughtry, N., and I. Rovegno. 2003. Development of pedagogical content knowledge: Moving from blaming students to predicting skilfulness, recognizing motor development and understanding emotion. *Journal of Teaching Physical Education* 22, no. 4: 355–68.

McNaughton, D., J. McCarthy, D. Head-Reeves, and M. Schreiner. 2007. Learning to listen. Teaching active listening strategy to pre-service education professionals. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 27, no. 4: 223–31.

Niles, M., A. Raynolds, and D. Roe-Sepowitz. 2008. Early childhood intervention and early adolescent social and emotional competence: Second-generation evaluation evidence from Chicago Longitudinal Study. *Educational research* 50, no. 1: 55–73.

Nummenmaa, A.R., and J. Virtanen. 2003. *Ongelmasta oivallukseen. Ongelmaperustainen opetussuunnitelma* [From problem to insight. Problem-based curriculum]. Tampereen yliopisto: Tampere University Press.

O'Sullivan, M. 2003. Learning to teach physical education. In *Student learning in physical education. Applying research to enhance instruction*. 2nd ed, ed. S. Silverman and C. Ennis, 275–94. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Owens, L.M., and C.D. Ennis. 2005. The ethic of care in teaching. An overview of supportive literature. *Quest* 57, no. 4: 392–425.

Palomäki, S., and P. Heikinaro-Johansson. 2005. 'Teacher as Reseacher' – approach in the Finnish physical education teacher education. *International Journal of Physical Education. A Review Publication* 42, no. 1: 19–26.

Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.
Payton, J., D. Wardlaw, P. Graczyk, M. Bloodworth, C. Tompsett, and R. Weissberg. 2000. Social and emotional learning: A framework for promoting mental health and reducing risk behavior in children and youth. *Journal of School Health* 70, no. 5: 179–85.
Poulou, M. 2007. Student-teachers' concerns about teaching practice. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 30, no. 1: 91–110.
Rantala, T., and P. Heikinaro-Johansson. 2007. Hellisonin vastuuntuntoisuuden malli osana seitsemännen luokan poikien liikuntatunteja [The personal and social responsibility model as part of physical education lessons for seventh-grade boys]. *Liikunta and Tiede* 44, no. 1: 36–44.
Rasku-Puttonen, H. 1997. 'Ymmärrän myös itseäni paremmin'. Vuorovaikutus opettajan ammatissa – opintojakson kehittäminen ['I understand myself better' – Developing a course entitled 'Social interaction at teachers' work']. In *Opettajankoulutuksen laatua kehittämässä*, Jyväskylän yliopisto, ed. M-L. Nikki, 69–75. Opettajankoulutuslaitos: Opetuksen perusteita ja käytänteitä 31.
Rovegno, I. 2003. Teachers' knowledge construction. In *Student learning in physical education. Applying research to enhance instruction*, ed. S. Silverman and C. Ennis, 295–310. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
Schofield, N., C. Green, and F. Creed. 2008. Communication skills of health-care professionals working in oncology – can they be improved? *European Journal of Oncology Nursing* 12, no. 1: 4–13.
Sharpe, T., M. Brown, and K. Crider. 1995. The effect of a sportsmanship curriculum intervention on generalized positive social behavioral of urban elementary school students. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* 28: 401–16.
Shulman, L.S. 1987. Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review* 57, no. 1: 1–22.
Smith, R., and P. Montello. 1992. Investigation of interpersonal management training for educational administrators. *Journal of Educational Research* 85, no. 4: 242–5.
Stake, R. 2000. Case studies. In *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed, ed. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, 435–54. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Sutton, R. 2004. Emotional regulation and strategies of teachers. *Social Psychology of Education* 7: 379–98.
Sutton, R., and K. Wheatley. 2003. Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review* 15, no. 4: 327–54.
Templin, T. 2007. Understanding teacher emotions: Implications for teacher and pupil learning. Paper presented at AIESEP Specialist Seminar on Teachers' Career-long Professional Development, September 1–3, in Loughborough, England.
Tsangaridou, N. 2006. Teachers' knowledge. In *The handbook of physical education*, ed. D. Kirk, D. McDonald and M. O'Sullivan, 502–15. London: Sage.
Ulutas, I., and E. Ömeroglu. 2007. The effects of an emotional intelligence education program on emotional intelligence of children. *Social Behavior and Personality* 35, no. 10: 1365–72.