Urban Secondary Teachers' Value Orientations: Social Goals for Teaching

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Abstract:

The research examined the intended planning and teaching decisions of 11 secondary physical education teachers to determine their rationale and goals for a socially focused curriculum within social reconstruction or social responsibility value orientations. Transcript data from a stimulated recall protocol were analyzed using constant comparison. Results suggested teachers' goals for student learning were consistent with an emphasis on social responsibility within the categories of learning to work with others, and understanding, respect, and responsibility to others. Rationales were based on teachers' perceptions of student background, content relevance, and student motivation. Teachers' comments revealed a tension between the need to teach academic goals and the need to teach skills associated with social responsibility.

Article:

Value orientations represent teachers' educational beliefs regarding what is taught, how it is taught, and to what extent the content is learned (Atkins, 1986; Eisner, 1992; Eisner & Vallance, 1974). Because of limitations in time and other resources, teachers must make choices about what content to emphasize based on the needs of their students (Schubert, 1990). Although academic or subject matter goals often receive the greatest public attention, affective goals, such as those related to social skills, are often perceived by teachers as critical not only to students' academic achievement (Wentzel, 1991a), but also to valued outcomes of citizenship (Blumenfeld, Hamilton, Wessels, & Falkner, 1979), moral character development (Battistich, 1988), and work socialization (Wentzel, 1991b). Research by Prawat and colleagues (Prawat, 1980, 1985; Prawat & Nickerson, 1985) suggested affective goals play a prominent role in some elementary teachers' classrooms. Teachers may spend more than 50% of class time discussing students' individual or class problems (Prawat, 1980).

This research examined urban physical education teachers' selection and implementation of social goals within their curricula. The paper includes a section examining the literature on social goals followed by the presentation of the research study. The purpose of this research was the examination of intended planning and teaching decisions of urban secondary teachers who placed a high priority on social curriculum goals or value orientations. Social goals are often distinguished by an emphasis on either (a) social justice and reform goals within a social reconstruction perspective or (b) goals of responsible citizenship and respect for others congruent with the construct of social responsibility. The significance of this research lies in our ability to understand the role of social goals in urban educational programs. It is important both to distinguish between different social goals within the affective domain and to understand the consequences of social goals for student behavior and for learning academic content. The categorization of goals and rationales within the social reconstruction or social responsibility value orientation can assist in the clarification of teachers' perceptions of social curricula and facilitate the efforts of supervisors and staff developers to address issues critical to teachers in their daily working lives.

Social Goals for Curriculum

Educational goals associated with the broad and often nebulous affective domain, reflect diverse curricular value orientations. Ford, Wentzel, Wood, Stevens, and Siesfeld (1989) conceptualize intrapersonal and

interpersonal educational goals within a broad social competence construct. Intrapersonal goals focus on assisting the learner to develop a sense of personal agency or the belief that one is capable of performing successfully within a responsive environment. This perspective is consistent with the curricular value orientation of self-actualization proposed by Maslow (1979) and refined by Rogers (1983). Advocates of a self-actualization orientation design curriculum to promote student autonomy, personal growth, and enhanced self-esteem (McNeil, 1990).

Ford and colleagues (1989, p. 406) classify interpersonal goals within the subcategories of self-assertion (promotion of self within a social setting) and social responsibility (promotion of others within the social setting). Curriculum specialists articulate social perspectives either within a social reconstructive (e.g., Apple, 1982, Banks, 1993) or a social responsibility (e.g., Wentzel, 1991b) value orientation. Social reconstruction advocates seek to reform schools and society through curricula that teach students to question authority and identify inequities, such as those associated with race, class, gender, and cognitive or physical ability (Delpit, 1988). The student is encouraged to become a change agent in the redesign of programs or lessons to reflect these values (Bell, 1991). Although this orientation is influential in scholarly discourse, these goals appear to be less prominent in school-based programs (Eisner, 1992). The social reconstruction orientation is of particular importance to critical theorists and those who advocate social justice and reform in schools and society. Curricula are planned to assist students to become more aware of inequities, develop commitment to reform, and design strategies for change (Banks, 1993). Social, political, and economic factors are viewed as constraints or facilitators in the change process (Apple, 1982). Students are taught to recognize these factors and mediate avenues for change (Bell, 1991).

Advocates of social responsibility goals design curriculum to nurture responsible citizenship, promote respect for the rights of others, and teach children to avoid violent and disruptive behavior (Wentzel, 1991b). Ford et al. (1989) report that both adults and adolescents believe social responsibility encompasses the most important social goals for adolescents. When the social responsibility orientation is conceptualized as the curricular focus, social interaction goals are implemented as salient components in the educational plan. Programs may teach social norms and patterns of behavior that describe what to do and how to act. Social responsibility goals go beyond management and control behaviors frequently utilized as classroom routines (LeCompte, 1978). Goals are explicitly stated as concrete behaviors and directly taught. Wentzel (1991b) explained that goals consistent with social responsibility have been "stated as explicit objectives for public schools in almost every educational policy statement since 1848, being promoted with the same frequency as the development of academic skills" (p. 2). When traced through the curriculum literature, they form the core for the democratic and civic objectives prominent in American curricula during the past century (Kliebard, 1987). In Europe as well as in the U.S.A., large numbers of immigrants are arriving with social and religious customs quite different from those of the current residents. Societies and schools are under tremendous pressures to acculturate these individuals in an effort to preserve and protect their current way of life. In educational settings around the world where large numbers of students come to school without traditional conceptualizations of social responsibility, teachers often perceive these skills to be critical to the future development of individuals within the norms and customs of the existing society.

Social goals as presented in the curriculum literature represent relatively pure perspectives on teaching and learning in education. In reality, teachers are probably influenced by a number of value perspectives that blend to form the curricular and instructional plan (Atkins, 1986). Although value orientations can be documented extensively in the theoretical curriculum literature, empirical identification of specific orientations within teacher goals and intact functioning classrooms is more difficult.

Ennis and Hooper (1988) developed the Value Orientation Inventory (VOI) to examine teachers' priorities for currricular goals and values. The VOI is a forced-choice paper and pencil inventory that allows teachers to select from teaching-related items representing educational value orientations. Items represent value perspectives as they are operationalized in classrooms. Ennis and Zhu (1991) examined physical educators' value orientation profiles in three midwestern U.S. school districts. Both the teachers and their students were

predomidnantly white and middle class. Results indicated 97% of teachers placed a consistent priority on one or more value orientations, while 25% placed the social orientation as a high priority in their curriculum planning and teaching. Their responses suggested that they thought reflectively about curricular and teaching decisions and knew consciously or intuitively how to select items reflecting a consistent social value orientation. Ennis, Chen, and Ross (1992) replicated this study with secondary physical education teachers in a large urban school district (enrollment > 115,000) in the eastern U.S.A. Teachers were predominantly white (80%), while their students were primarily African-American (86%). Results indicated 57% of teachers placed a high priority on the social orientation, while only 7% placed a high priority on academic content.

Ennis, Ross, and Chen (1992) conducted a follow-up study to examine goals that teachers' incorporated into their curriculum. The study used in-depth interviews of teachers and their students. Results revealed that teachers de-emphasized academic content in order to developed units and lessons to emphasize social responsibily goals such as cooperation, respect, and participation. The purpose of this study was to examine interpersonal goals that urban physical education teachers believed to be of greatest importance for their students and the rationales behind the teachers' selection of these goals. Specifically, the research used stimulated recall protocols to examine the goals of 11 urban middle and high school teachers within actual lesson situations.

Method
Teachers in the Study
Eleven physical education teachers representing five high schools (student ages 14-18) and four middle schools (ages 11-14) in a metropolitan school district in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area participated in the stimulated recall study. The teachers were selected from 117 physical educators in the school district who had completed the VOI. Each of the 11 teachers had placed a high priority on social goals on the VOI (scores < 51.25). The VOI data were used in the present study only to screen teachers for a social value perspective. The stimulate recall protocol was used to go beyond the quantitative VOI data to contextualize the social goals within concrete curriculum and teaching decisions.

The teachers ranged in age from 38 to 56 with teaching experience from 16 to 34 years. They taught in nine different schools in the same school district. Nine teachers were white, two were African-American, and six were female. Teachers at two schools taught as a team, planning and teaching all lessons together. Enrollments for individual classes ranged from 25 to 45 students, while team-taught classes averaged 85 students. All classes were taught in the gymnasium or outside on an athletic field. The majority of students were African-American (86%). Students represented primarily middle and lower socio-economic families. Each school included special programs to attract students to enroll in order to achieve federally required integration of African-American and white students. Each teacher was informed of the purpose of the study and the manner in which the data would be used.

Value Orientation Inventory
Value Orientation Inventory scores (Ennis, Chen, & Ross, 1992). were used to screen and selectively sample teachers for the current study. The inventory was developed by Ennis and Hooper (1988) to examine teachers' value orientation profiles. The VOI is a forced-choice, 75-item inventory consisting of 15 sets of 5 items. Items represent potential goals, teaching strategies, and tasks from the perspective of five value orientations. Alpha coefficients for each orientation ranged from .77 to .91. The alpha coefficient for the social orientation was .84. Items are unlabeled and place randomly in the sets. Teachers rank items in each set to reflect their preferences. Composite scores from each value orientation comprise the teacher's value profile. Scores for each value orientation are divided into high and low priority based on .6 standard deviation. Although the inventory is effective in identifying preferences for curriculum goals and objectives, it is at best a gross estimation of a teacher's value perspective. Additional research is required to understand how teachers implement their goals within their individual school setting. This research used the scores from the VOI as a starting point in the selection of teachers for the study. It employed stimulated recall protocols to detail how social goals were implemented within urban school settings.

Data Collection

A stimulated recall protocol was used to elicit data regarding teachers' goals and rationales. I videotaped two different classes for each teacher. Classes were videotaped at least one month apart and consisted of different content emphases. Classes lasted 56 minutes for the high schools and 84 minutes (double period) for the middle schools. Teachers wore a wireless microphone so their instructions and comments were recorded on the videotape. The audio portion of the tape was transcribed and used in the analysis. The videotapes were used to remind the teachers of class events and to encourage them to "relive" these experiences and discuss them with me. Videotape, however, presents only a partial picture of class events. In this research, teachers were encouraged to go beyond the tape to explain how these instances reflect the larger goals and expectations of their program.

Teachers met with me to discuss the videotape within 24 hours of filming. It was usually possible to schedule the meeting during the teacher's planning or lunch period immediately following the videotaped class. In team teaching situations, both teachers were interviewed together. Each interview began with a standard set of questions to acquire demographic data regarding the school and the teaching situation. The first sessions began by asking the teacher to describe general characteristics of their school and students. Teachers also supplied information regarding the length of time he or she had been teaching at that school and the extent to which the student population had changed over that period. The teacher was then asked to watch the videotape and instructed to stop the tape or rewind it to review segments when necessary. They were asked to explain the purpose of each activity and to provide their impressions of teacher-student or student-student interactions. Although the interviews produced rich descriptions of schools and class settings from the teachers' perspectives, the stimulated recall protocol probably reveals only a small part of the thinking process associated with planning and teaching. However, it does appear to be an appropriate method for eliciting major goals and rationales for curriculum decision making from teachers' perspectives. I asked follow-up questions to elicit information regarding the teacher's rationale for content, strategy, and task decisions. Each meeting was audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. At the conclusion of the second stimulated recall session, teachers re-sponded to additional structured questions regarding their major program goals and rationales for the selection of these goals.

Over the course of the videotaping, I developed rapport with each of the participants. Questions were asked informally and the teachers' indicated that they were eager to assist me in understanding their schools and classes. Several teachers indicated they were pleased to be asked to participate in the study. Sam, a middle school teacher said:

> You know, I have been teaching in this school for 28 years and I think I am doing a pretty good job with these kids. But you know this is the first time anyone has ever asked me what I thought or why the things I am doing seem to work with these kids.

Data Analysis

Transcript data from the 18 videotaped classes and the 18 stimulated recall sessions were analyzed using constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Constant comparison is a four-step process consisting of (a) scanning the data to locate common categories, (b) identifying properties or common themes, (c) positioning data within categories based on properties, and (d) developing explanatory theory. As teachers viewed the videotapes, they were encouraged to comment on relevant issues or events, resulting in a wide range of data categories. A standard set of questions was asked of all teachers at the conclusion of the second stimulated recall session. Questions focused on teacher goals for the lesson and their overall program, and the rationale behind goal and task selection. Data from each teacher interview were first scanned to identify categories and subcategories and then compared to determine critical properties. These two steps were repeated with the videotape transcriptions. In the third stage, data from the interviews and videotapes were compared by subcategory. In stage four, the data were compared with results from other research and elaborated within a context appropriate perspective.

Results and Discussion

Teachers' goals for student learning were consistent with an emphasis on interpersonal skills such as those suggested by Wentzel (1991b). Social responsibility and interaction were articulated by teachers within the explicit curricular goals of learning to work with others, understanding and respect for others, and responsibility to others. Rationales for the selection of social responsibility and interaction content were based on teachers' perceptions of their students' backgrounds, their perceived need to make content relevant to students, and their efforts to motivate students to become involved as an active participant in the program.

Goals for Student Learning

Social responsibility and interaction represented explicit goals for student learning in these nine programs. Teachers indicated students could learn information from the physical education knowledge base through a variety of outside activities such as fitness clubs and league sports programs. School was the only place where adults worked conscientiously to teach students how to "work with others." Teachers pointed out that peer pressure on adolescent decision making was especially powerful for middle and high school students. They reported that learning to interact positively assisted students in academic tasks and enhanced "the quality of their lives." Constant comparison analysis identified social responsibility properties associated with (a) working well with others, (b) understanding and respect for others, and (c) responsibility to others.

Working well with others. Teachers reported that their students appeared unable to attend to the subject matter until "they could get along." They reported that students frequently argued about seemingly trivial things, such as clothes, and were often distracted from the academic goals of the class. They anticipated problems when young adolescents worked together. Teachers described the central role of teaching as intervening with students to encourage positive interaction. Tasks requiring cooperation, teamwork, and involvement were the major components of these curricula. Paul and Sarah, team teachers in a sport-based middle school program, reported their program was structured so students interacted under stressful class situations:

> Paul: In our program we plan things where they interact with each other and with us. But we know that when students are working together, they are going to have some problems.
> Sarah: We do a lot of stopping and sitting down when we see negative behavior. Explaining to them how this hurts them and how this hurts the class. But it does sometimes stop us from reaching our [academic] goals.

Angela pointed out that social interaction in middle school included more than student interactions. She explained that her curriculum was based on a "theory of working well with others." She described a process where students in sixth grade were encouraged to cooperate to score group or team points. Points could be used to claim a preferred activity or piece of equipment. Eighth grade students were placed under more stressful conditions where they competed in team sports. The focus was placed on working with both teammates and opponents to play successfully and fairly. Although some bonus points were awarded based on skill, more significant point totals were acquired through positive social interaction, such as helping less-skilled students, including all team members in game strategies, and assisting to setup and bring in equipment. Angela perceived herself as part of the social interaction process:

> You and the students are a group that have to get along. When I am reinforcing positive social behavior, I am nurturing a kind of feeling. If they are doing something wrong. I don't overlook it. You have to make them responsible to you and the group.

The "working with others" theme was pervasive in these programs. The audio analysis indicated teachers reinforced this theme in several ways. For example, students were told they could assist their team captain by accepting their assigned team position and were encouraged to settle their own disputes regarding rules or strategies. They were awarded bonus points as a team at the end of class for cooperative behavior described by the teachers as "working well with others."

Delpit (1988) argues that students need to understand the basic survival skills necessary to be successful within the dominant culture. In this study, teachers reported that some of the urban African-American students in these classes had not been taught the cooperative, helping behaviors necessary to work interactively. Teachers appeared to be struggling between the perceived focus of the school on academic goals and their own compelling need to remedy social behavior. Delpit insists that:

> Schools must provide these children the content that other families from different cultural orientations provide at home. This is the school's job ... If the parents were members of the culture of power and lived by its rules and codes, then they would transmit those codes to their children. (p. 286)

Teachers in these programs appeared well aware of how important it was for students to use appropriate social skills when working with others. They reinforced these goals as the primary focus of their curricula.

Understanding and respect for others. Teachers closely associated the theme of understanding with the development of respect for others. Jennifer, a high school teacher, emphasized repeatedly the importance of patients and understanding with other people's limitations. She indicated that in her school students performed classroom activities independently. They were rarely involved in positive teachers sanctioned student–student interactions. Jennifer wanted her class:

> to provide a bridge between the independent desk work in academic classes and social interactions that are a large part of high school kids' lives. Students need to learn that everybody has strengths and weaknesses. Some people are good at one thing while others are better at something else. The most important thing is for high school students to begin to learn to be sensitive, patient, and creative about the way they see things without jumping to conclusions.

Sam emphasized that as middle school students began to understand each other they gradually developed respect for others. Like Jennifer he reported that respect included acceptance and understanding for people "who are different from you." But he extended the concept to include "showing respect as a leader and a follower." In his classes students participated in a number of group and team activities. They changed groups frequently and were required:

> to get to know a lot of different people. Because our talented and gifted (TAG) program (for high achieving students) is completely separate from the comprehensive program, some of the TAG kids never get to meet the kids in the comprehensive program except in physical education. The bright students have to learn that the regular kids can be good leaders and can help their team be successful. It also helps the regular kids to know that they can be leaders and that the TAG students can help the team through their physical skill as well as with their brains.

Both middle and high school teachers felt the most difficult test for understanding and respecting others came during stressful game situations. Middle school teachers emphasized intragroup understanding and respect. Students were encouraged "to remain cool and think about other team members' interests as well as their own." Teachers believe students who were able to show understanding and respect for their opponents in stressful conditions would be more successful in later life.

Brantlinger (1985, p. 19) reported that low-income parents believed that a major purpose of schools was to promote social skills. In her study, "Michelle, a 21-year-old mother of two who dropped out of school in ninth grade, wanted her daughters to 'get along with other people—not be snobby toward others, learn that they're no better or worse than anyone else'." Brantlinger suggests that these parents had "observed snobbishness in others and wanted to emphasize that social skill was 'more important' than intellectual prowess." Teachers in the current study appeared to agree with those parents. They reported a number of rules and teaching routines specifically designed to guide and monitor students' interactions to encourage greater student understanding and respect for others.

Responsibility to others. Each teacher mentioned the necessity of encouraging adolescents to become more responsible to others. This included responsibility to both teammates and the teacher. Teachers reported they constantly reminded individual team members of their obligations to work toward group goals. For middle school students, this included remembering to dress appropriately for participation and involvement in activity to help their teams. In the individual sport unit emphasized at one high school, Marsha reported she expected students to be responsible to others when they assisted or spotted each other on the gymnastics apparatus:

> Because my classes are large, I have students take turns helping each other on the apparatus so that we can get more accomplished. But, I tell them they *must* pay attention to the person working on the beam or the uneven bars. One slip and their classmate could easily get hurt. I say to them "If the spotter doesn't catch you, turn around and ask her why did she let you down." You learn to be responsible to each other.

Ted reported social responsibility was the central focus of his 9th and 10th grade weight training classes. Students were expected to assist or spot each other when lifting weights. Ted's focus on safety emphasized each class member's responsibility to his or her partner and to the class. Students were responsible for paying attention to the weight lifter to assist, if needed, in returning the weight to the rack and to ensure all safety precautions had been taken. Responsibility to others in this instance involved an awareness and alertness to anticipate and prevent accidents. Responsibility to classmates was described as care and assistance when handling the weights. Ted perceived the element of danger in the weight room as beneficial to his goal of social responsibility. He reported students could see a direct relationship between their actions and results. When mistakes occurred, they saw immediately the negative results of noncompliance.

One of the negative effects of focusing on social skills as the central focus of the curriculum was the development of programs in which students were often not required to learn academic skills. Success was based on positive social interactions, not effective performance of skillful movement. Because these students were perceived as not having basic social interaction skills they were in essence "tracked" into a curriculum that did not provide access to academic knowledge in skill and sport. Oakes (1992) argues that students in "lower" curriculum tracks often receive a differentiated curriculum taught by teachers who may not have mastered the skills of class control within an academic setting. Page (1990) provides a graphic example of how students in a lower-track curriculum are often bored and confused with the requirements of the program. In the current study, students were rewarded for dressing and participating in class.

In this version of lower track curriculum in physical education, students were expected to be on time and to be pleasant to one another. Unlike other educational subjects, academic goals were not emphasized. Academic skills in physical education include an understanding and ability to play several sports at an intermediate level of ability. Students may be expected to understand the role of exercise in the development of physical fitness and to use effective fitness principles to develop and modify a fitness program to the demands of their lives. In these programs, the lack of focus on learning skills and knowledges necessary for participation may have limited students' opportunities for future sport participation and the development of skills necessary to participate in active, healthy lifestyles.

Rationale for Teachers' Emphasis on Goals
Rationales for urban teachers' content choices provided the basis for their conceptualizations of curriculum. Their rationales appeared to represent a driving force in the selection of social goals. Rationales reported by every teacher focused on the lived context of their students' lives both in and out of school. Teacher rationales were based on their perceptions of their (a) students' background, (b) the need to make content relevant and meaningful to students, and (c) efforts to motivate students to become involved in class activities.

Student background. Most teachers reported that earlier in their careers they had placed a strong emphasis on the traditional knowledge base represented in physical education as movement fundamentals and skills. They reported that students came to school already knowing the importance of listening, following directions, and

paying attention. With these essential components in place, they could focus on conveying the subject matter. However, over the years, the population of this school district had changed dramatically. Most teachers (both white and African-American) had begun teaching in a segregated school district where they taught all white middle income students. The African-American teachers pointed out that they were hired "to help integrate the teaching staff" to balance the ratios of white and African-American students and staff. They reported that, at times, they did not understand how to work with the lower class African-American students any better than their white colleagues. Several teachers emphasized the role of student background as a key factor in their decisions to emphasize social responsibility curriculum goals. Marsha expressed concern that many students in her classes did not understand their responsibilities to class members and the society as a whole:

> I'm not sure what our generation has done to their kids. It seems like accepting responsibility has not always been reinforced at home and maybe it is because of the kind of kids that we see, the community, and income level and class level and that sort of thing. [They are] quick to blame somebody else. We try to get them past that.

Bill echoed some of these concerns as he described the students in his middle school classes:

> I think it is because of the type of student that we have ... They are not totally homeless ... they are just not supervised well at home and are left on their own to make decisions without guidance. And here we are trying to give them a little guidance with certain guidelines.

Skip also was attuned to the social circumstances in which his students were living. He explained that many of his middle school students were at risk to fail as early as seventh grade:

> The biggest problem I see is drugs. I see kids that are not involved in our program in seventh and eighth grade (ages 12-14). We suspect that drugs have something to do with the way their mood switches back and forth, to happy and sad. They are not involved in what we are doing. We have also been cautioned to wear gloves for injuries because of AIDS. This is always at the back of our minds. You know, the kids seem to grow up so much faster. By the time they are in eighth grade, they are talking about their children. They are forced to maybe take care of the family at home, get a job and this is something you have to deal with. It is a metropolitan area and the kids just grow up very fast.

The rationale of student background seemed to be influential in the selection of socially oriented educational goals. Teachers justified an emphasis on interpersonal skills as absolutely essential to students' well being. Gwen explained:

> When you know students are involved in fights with knifes and guns ... when you know that a student walked into a chemistry lab last month and shot at another student because of an out-of-school problem, then you see how important getting along with others is. Teaching them to dribble a basketball or kick a football doesn't matter as much. Helping them learn [social] skills to keep them alive for one more day or one more month is the most important thing that I do.

Content relevance. Four teachers in this study indicated they were trying to assist students to see the "connections" between the content taught in class and their everyday lives. Teachers made four different types of connections, although all were not observed at a single school. Two teachers emphasized that content taught early in the unit or at the beginning of class related to success later. Marsha explained to students in one videotaped class that the reason they were practicing push-ups was to gain arm strength to perform gymnastics routines. Later as students were practicing routines, Marsha commented, "This is why you do pushups to hold your body weight up." Ted wanted his weight training students to connect their work sheets to their increases in muscular strength from lifting weights. He commented, "Grades are not important, what is important is that what you are doing is a benefit to you right now."

Other teachers who focused on making content relevant emphasized the relationships between the content students were learning in class and content they were learning in other subjects, such as language arts. Angela described an example of cross-curricular connections with her sixth grade students:

> As they explain their routines to me, I encourage them to emphasize the role of prepositions when describing the movements. It is so appropriate in physical movement to move over, "under," around,' and `through.' They associate body shapes with different ways of moving. You must remember that some of my sixth grade students (ages 11-12) are still struggling to learn to read .... It reinforces the academic concept as a concrete idea. It connects school work with activities they enjoy.

Paul emphasized connections between the content and everyday life for his middle school students. He emphasized:

> everything we do is related to everyday life. You have to be competitive; you have to stay on task. If you are going to compete, you have to learn to win and lose and be good at both. It goes beyond this class.

Ted connected skills and attitudes exhibited in class with those needed for a career or job. In a discussion with students recorded on the videotape he said:

> Everything has a direct benefit. It adds to the quality of your life. Things that you are learning, attitudes that you are developing will help you later in your job. Making sure you are directing yourself, working well with others, doing what you are supposed to do. This is what will keep your job when you get it. School leads you somewhere ...

The emphasis on content relevance was incorporated into the classes of 8 of 11 teachers. All high school teachers used this as a rationale for working on interpersonal skills. The social content was a means to getting a job, working with coworkers, and accepting and respecting the supervisor's directions. Students appeared most attentive when they could see direct connections between what they were asked to learn and the opportunity to earn a living.

Making connections between the content taught in class and critical factors in students' lives is important in involving students in the learning process. These teachers appeared especially sensitive to the importance of the linkages for their students. Page (1990) reminds us that students "listen when listening makes sense" (p. 259). Teachers in this school district attempted to make links between content within their own programs, other school subjects, and the role of social responsibility in acquiring and maintaining a job. This latter conceptualization serves to reinforce the egalitarian role of school in the U.S.A. as an avenue to a vocation. Teachers argued that students who were unfocused and irresponsible were unlikely to be successful in any future personal, social, or professional endeavor. Many of the low-income parents in Brantlinger's (1985) research indicated they believed preparation for work was the primary role of schools.

Motivation. Teachers in these urban school settings appeared to be preoccupied with motivating their students. They perceived motivation to be related to opportunities for social involvement, enjoyment, and success. Involvement with the subject matter was a topic they discussed frequently. Their efforts to encourage student involvement included creating opportunities for girls to be involved on co-educational sport teams. Seven teachers mentioned their continuing difficulty in motivating the boys to include girls as respected team members. They pointed out that, although it was relatively easy to require boys to select girls for their teams, it was more difficult to entice the boys to pass the ball to girls in competitive game situations or allow girls to play key positions. They reported addressing this problem by creating rules increasing the likelihood that girls would be perceived by the boys as a viable team member. Bill explained:

> A lot of times, in flag football guys say that girls can't play, so we reward the girls with what we call bonus points. We give them more credit than we do the guys for successfully performing certain skills.

The guys are just supposed to be able to do certain things. Like if girls catch passes, they get 10 bonus points, but the guys don't get anything. When girls complete passes, then they become part of the team. We are trying to work everybody in as a team by making the team accomplish certain things. It also works in softball. A girl who can't catch and is afraid of the ball, will at least put her hands up and try.

Team teachers, Sarah and Paul, also reported using special situations to encourage boys to include girls as viable team members. Sarah explained their procedure:

If we got complaints from the girls on the team that the boys had not included them, the next day we would have all the girls on the team sit out and let the remaining four boys on that team take on an opposing team with its full compliment of both girls and boys. The boys find very quickly that they can't get first downs because in our game you can only get first downs by throwing it to a girl.

Griffin (1985) argues that teachers should be especially sensitive to the procedures and rules used to provide access to opportunities for women and minorities. She is critical of strategies that increase involvement by pointing out girls or minorities' weaknesses. When teachers' strategies to involve girls were based on rewarding boys for including them, they indirectly acknowledged that boys controlled the playing of these games. Because all football captains were boys, they effectively controlled the position assignments and the selection of game strategies. Further, the bonus point strategy assumed *all* girls (and only girls) possessed weak football skills. Review of the videotapes suggested this was not true in all cases. There were some skilled girls who passed and caught the ball effectively. There were also several boys who were not skilled. Because the rules did not require the low skilled boys to participate in skilled positions, the team captains effectively positioned them on the offensive line to hide these weaknesses.

Feminists (Dewar, 1987; Griffin, 1985) do not support these strategies as effective in increasing opportunities for low skilled boys and girls to participate. They are critical of the assumption that all girls are unskilled. They argue that permitting skilled girls to benefit from these rules does not allow them to earn respect legitimately based on their physical ability. Furthermore, low-skilled boys were ignored by teachers and "tracked" by classmates into less skillful positions. The bonus point strategy did not contribute to equity reform and may have been detrimental to the development of skill, social interaction, and self-esteem for some students. However, these teachers' reported their rationale for these rules was motivation and involvement in social activities, not social change, equity, or reform. Teachers also reported their goal was to assist students to understand student differences and to utilize each team member effectively. Although the bonus point strategy was not productive in addressing social justice and reform issues, it probably was effective in increasing social interactions between the skilled boys and the low skilled girls.

Other teachers in this study emphasized that variety and success were the keys to motivation. Gwen pointed out that variety was related to student interest. Sam said his units were never longer than 3 weeks "because students lost interest and developed behavior problems." Several teachers said they depended on grades and student enjoyment to motivate students. Skip commented, "We try to make it fun for them so they enjoy what they're doing. You can't make it totally 'You must ...' But make it something enjoyable for them and they will want to be there." Student success was linked both to academic performance and student recognition. Although teachers encouraged students to attempt skills and to be successful, there were few instances recorded on the videotapes where teachers instructed students in skills needed to perform the task. Rules and procedures for participating in group or team activities were clearly stated. In fact one entire videotaped lesson consisted of an explanation of rules and strategies for playing softball. Skills for effective performance were not included in the discussion. There was little effort by teachers to relate academic success to motivation. They reported students were far more likely to be motivated by success on social responsibility tasks, such as working with others and managing equipment. Angela said, "If their grade is based on skill, there are always those who feel threatened their skill isn't on level. But when the grade is based on cooperation and responsibility, everybody is more equal." Teachers chose to recognize students for being involved in the activity rather than accomplishing a skill-related goal. Ted mentioned that he felt justified in taking class time to recognize students who attended and dressed

appropriately for class. Marsha said, "I feel good about rewarding kids for working together and doing what they are supposed to. It is concrete. They can see the direct relationship between their behavior and their reward."

When teachers focus their efforts on making curricula entertaining rather than educational, expectations of both the teachers and students decline markedly. Page (1990) described the trivialization of a high school English class for lower track students as a game of chance. Students were as likely to be successful by guessing the answer as they were from studying. There was little resemblance between knowledge necessary for academic advancement in school and society and the trivia that had become the content in the English program. Likewise, in these physical education classes, the focus on shortened units, making the activity fun, and allowing teams to score only when they include girls in the play trivialized the content of physical education. Efforts to rationalize the deletion of skills in order to keep "everybody ... more equal" limits the opportunities of all students to find success in these activities.

Conclusion

Cummins (1986) asserts that bureaucratic constraints within schools reflect the extent to which educators accept or challenge the limiting school structures for minority students (p. 19). In this instance teachers believed strongly that their students must be provided with basic survival skills (Delpit, 1988) necessary to function effectively in the dominant culture. Simultaneously they may have been depriving these students of essential academic skills critical to that same success. The dilemma is a difficult one. It reflects a tension that seems to be inherent in many teachers' curricular decision making (e.g., Brant-linger, 1985; Delpit, 1988; Page, 1990). Value orientations consistent with those of social responsibility appear to be gaining greater acceptance in some school districts in the U.S.A. because of the perception of the immediate need to ameliorate societal discord. The voices of social reconstructionists who encourage empowerment through greater student involvement and decision making (in academic content) are often silenced by an insistence on accommodating perceived limitations in student background and intellectual ability. Page (1990, p. 253) describes this as the "critical, but delicate balance between order and education." Educators in this study emphasized the importance of teaching students the skills necessary to work with and respect others. They admitted that they often placed less emphasis on academics in order to teach and reinforce skills associated with social responsibility. Although we want to be strong advocates of academic curriculum goals, still we are reminded of Gwen's words, "Helping them learn skills to keep them alive for one more day or one more month is the most important thing that I do."

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