

# PE TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES: WHICH ONES ARE CONSIDERED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND WHERE ARE THEY ACQUIRED?



M. CLOES



N. LARAKI



M. PIERON



Sport and Physical Activities Dpt  
University of Liège (Belgium)

## Introduction

- It is well accepted that teacher preparation is a long term process during which a large array of competencies should be progressively developed (Calderhead, 2000; O'Sullivan, 1998).
- Nevertheless, these competencies are very often not clearly defined. Since 2001, in the French Community of Belgium, a decree lists the competencies that teachers should develop to achieve their role within the educational system (Ministère de la Communauté française, 2001).
- This study aimed to identify competencies that PE teachers consider as important and to determine, from their point of view, in which context these competencies are developed. These competencies should be related to teachers' expertise (Piéron & Carreiro da Costa, 1996).

## Method

- That study was a part of a larger research project focusing on the PE graduates' preparation in the French speaking part of Belgium.
- A specific questionnaire was mailed to all the primary and secondary level schools during February and April 2002. It had to be distributed to all in-service PE teachers.
- 2,525 individual answers coming from 1,091 different schools were received by the research team. The rate of return amounted to 40.9 %, which was regarded as pretty high.
- Among these questionnaires, it was decided to compare answers of two groups of teachers according to their graduation year: (1) 188 teachers graduated in 1984, 1985 and 1986 (group A); (2) 156 teachers graduated in 1992, 1993 and 1994 (group B).
- Both groups had sufficient teaching experience to judge events concerning their preparation. They were clearly graduated prior or later than the enforcement of new school organization principles at the end of the 1980s.
- Teachers indicated on a six-point Likert scale the importance that they gave to 21 competencies ("Very important" to "Not important at all").
- Moreover, for each competency, teachers had to determine in which context (pre-service preparation, in-service training, professional activity and other) they acquired it. They had to assess the proportional role of each context (%).
- The comparison between two proportions was used to analyse the statistical significance of the differences between groups.

## Results

### What teaching competencies were considered as important?

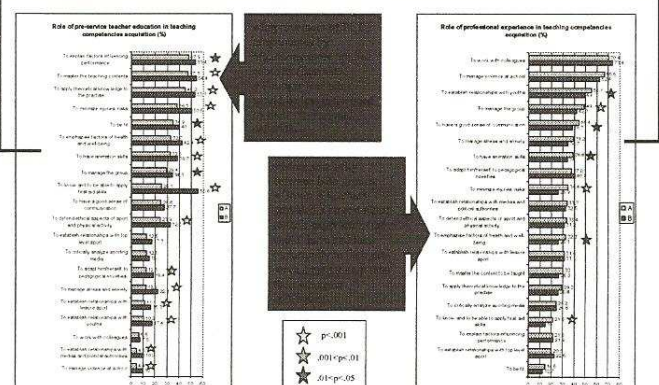
- The competencies' ranking and the average importance given to the items did not differ in both groups (Table 1). The subjects' gender or graduation level did not influence the results.
- "To manage the group" was the item receiving the highest average degree of importance (5.8 Vs 5.9/6 for group A and B).
- Relational aspects had a main place in the top 10 ("To have a good sense of communication"; "To have animation skills"; "To establish relationships with youths"; "To work with colleagues").
- Aspects linked to the knowledge and mastery of teaching content were relatively less underscored.

Table 1 – Importance given to the competencies

	Group A	Group B
To manage the group	5,8	5,9
To have a good sense of communication	5,5	5,6
To be healthy	5,5	5,5
To have animation skills	5,5	5,5
To minimize injuries' risks	5,5	5,5
To master the content to be taught	5,4	5,4
To establish relationships with youths	5,4	5,4
To manage violence at school	5,3	5,4
To know and to be able to apply first aid skills	5,2	5,2
To work with colleagues	5,1	5,2
To apply theoretical knowledge to the practise	4,9	5
To emphasize factors of health and well-being	4,9	4,8
To adapt him/herself to pedagogical novelties	4,9	4,8
To be fit	4,8	4,7
To defend ethical aspects of sport and physical activity	4,6	4,5
To establish relationships with leisure sport	4,4	4,6
To manage stress and anxiety	4,4	4,3
To explain factors influencing performance	4,1	4,3
To critically analyze sporting media	3,4	3,2
To establish relationships with top level sport	3,2	3,3
To establish relationships with medias and political authorities	2,8	2,8

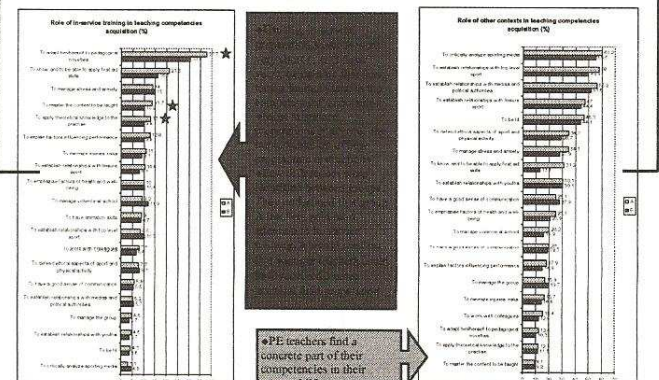
### When were acquired the teaching competencies?

- Pre-service preparation was considered as fundamental for the acquisition of the contents to teach and to develop theoretical knowledge (Graber, 1995; Rovigno, 1995).
- Group B teachers gave greater credence to that period than their oldest colleagues as pointed out by significant higher ratios.
- Professional experience was seen as a determining factor for the acquisition of relational competencies.



- Except for the adaptation to teaching innovations, in-service training took a limited place.

- "Others contents" (personal practice, for example) was mainly identified as contributing to the citizenship action of the teacher and its involvement in the society.



## Discussion - Conclusion

- Data confirmed that teacher preparation needs to be considered as a complex process comprising several phases. They are in agreement with Carreiro da Costa et al. (1996) study. Teaching is mainly considered as based on human relationships and needs to be grounded on field experiences.
- Teachers graduated between 1992 and 1994 tended to consider that their pre-service preparation played a more important role in the acquisition of their teaching competencies than their colleagues graduated between 1984 and 1986 (Doolittle et al., 1993).
- It would be interesting to identify the reasons explaining that modification and to verify how the last changes in the organisation the PE studies could be perceived.
- Moreover, these findings underline that PE teachers educators should verify if their programmes pay attention to the development of human qualities and class control/management in their students.