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Adapted Physical Educators' Views Toward Educational Research



Friday, April 24, 2020



2:00 PM - 2:15 PM

*Salt Palace Convention Center - Convention Room 254 A*

Abstract

Background/Purpose: Montgomery and Smith (2015) stated “University researchers often wonder why so few research findings seem to make their way into classroom practice, while K–12 teachers express frustration with how out of touch academic articles seem to be with the day-to-day realities of K-12 classrooms”. This sentiment extends to the general and adapted physical education setting. Yet, the use of evidence-based practices in practical settings is lauded as improving outcomes for those impacted by those practices. Using evidenced practices is even more important, when considering our students with the greatest needs such as those with disabilities. However, too often, adapted physical education (APE) teachers rely on trial-and-error than the academic literature to find educational practices (Colombo-Dougovito, 2015). Disputes the amount of research about the practices of teachers, little is known about how APE teachers perceive research.

Method: Therefore, the current study sought to examine APE teachers’ perceptions towards research. Sixty state and national general and adapted physical education associations were emailed a survey adapted from the National Center for Research Policy and Practice (NCRPP; Penuel et al., 2016).

This survey was developed to better understand school and district leaders' perceptions towards the usefulness of research. This survey was revised and refined by the research team—comprised of higher-ed faculty and APE practitioners—to better relate to practitioners. The final version of the survey had 43 questions total. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency between questions ($\alpha = .89$). Spearman's correlations were used to analyze the correlations between each Likert style question and key demographic variables.

Analysis/Results: A total of 124 APE teachers completed at least 80% of the survey and were included in the present study. The participants comprised of 59.7% female ($n = 74$) and had APE teaching experience that ranged from 1 to 41 years ($M = 13.65$, $SD = 9.7$). In total, 36 states and one US territory (Guam) were represented in this survey. Overall, findings indicated that a majority of participants indicated that they had conducted research ($n = 76$, 61.3%), with most participants mentioning it helped them learned more about a particular issue they were facing. Further, APE teachers had high perceptions of the relevance, credibility, and value of research. Though, the educational level of practitioners had a significant positive correlation with beliefs that research is “too impractical to be useful”, that researchers segregate themselves from practitioners and daily practice, and that research could be used to support any opinion.

Conclusions: Overall, APE teachers reported a high rate of engagement with research—including many whom conducted research—and that research has a positive impact on issues that may be most pertinent for their situation. Findings also demonstrate that a disconnect between researchers and APE teachers exist; especially when considering higher levels of education and experience. This study highlights the important role research plays in the practice of APE teachers; however, researchers need to provide research findings in a more practical way for teachers to translate to their own situations.

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