

Perceptions of Coaching Education in Physical Education Curriculums

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Abstract

As the demand for quality coaching increases, the availability of coaching education courses in higher education curricula remains relatively low. This study developed and utilized a survey to assess the perceptions of PETE faculty, PETE teacher candidates/students, and K-12 teachers on dual roles of teaching and coaching. Responses from PETE faculty, PETE teacher candidates and K-12 Teachers were analyzed to reveal a difference in perception of PETE programs in their preparation of future coaches. These differences were discovered from the participants' survey answers relating to their perceptions of coaching education preparation, coaching minors, availability of coaching courses, the type of coaching education coaches offered and expectations for the knowledge to coach.

Keywords: Coaching Education, PETE Curriculum, PETE Faculty, Teacher Candidates

Introduction

The availability and requirement of coaching education courses in higher education curricula has been a source of discussion and contention in recent years (Schoenstedt, Carr & Vickers, 2011, under review). In their study of PETE faculty, K-12 teachers, and PETE students, 72% of PETE faculty believed that PETE students were not prepared to coach in K-12 schools. Despite strong recommendations from national organizations such as the NFHS, NCACE, USOC, and the National Coaching Report, little progress has been made to require a minimum coaching education requirement in order for individuals to coach. As this study will discuss, the opportunities for coaching education preparation are limited at best for most PETE students.

Methods

A survey was developed by the authors to assess the perceptions of PETE faculty, PETE teacher candidates/students, and K-12 teachers on dual roles of teaching and coaching. The survey tool was hosted by Survey Monkey, a popular online data collection website that is disseminated through email and provides for anonymous responses. Upon submission by the NASPE Sport Steering Committee and approval by the NASPE Board, the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (AAHPERD) distribution lists were used to direct the survey to the respondents. The survey included population demographics and several questions with the opportunity to make open-ended comments on each. The survey link was sent January 20, 2009 and closed March 1, 2009 with one reminder approximately two weeks after the first request in early February.

Participants

Three subsets of participants received the survey. PETE faculty comprised 230 responses; K-12 teachers comprised 129 responses; and PETE students comprised 110 responses. Each group was analyzed in terms of their respective responses as well as an aggregated set of responses from all three subsets and was combined for a total of 469 completed surveys.

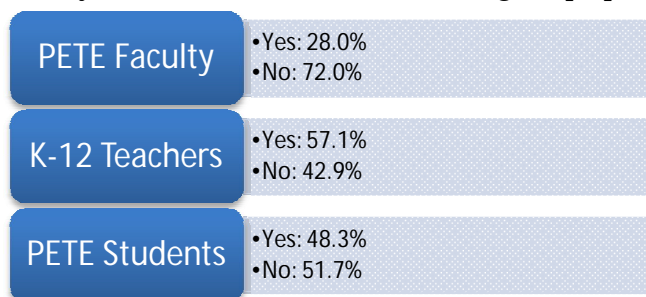
In terms of participant demographics, 272 were female, 196 were male and one declined to answer. The majority of respondents reported their ethnicity as Caucasian (90.3%) and the largest numbers of respondents were from the Eastern District (22.8%) followed closely by the Midwest District (19.4%). PETE faculty having 1-5 years of service was the largest group at 26% with those having 26 or more years at 23.3%. Twenty-nine percent of K-12 teachers reported 26 or more years of service and 18.8% reported 21-25 years teaching. Those working 1-5 years and 11-15 years comprised 14.1% of the respondents. Students answering the questionnaire included seniors at 39.4% and juniors at 18.3% while student non-members comprised 20.9% of the responses. A summary of the results for each of the three groups will be presented as they pertain to coaching education.

Results

While several questions were asked of all participants, this article will focus on the relevant questions pertaining to the perceptions of coaching education in teaching and coaching held between and among the three different populations responding to the survey (PETE Faculty, K-12 Faculty, PETE students). Additionally, the respondent's beliefs about coaching education preparation, coaching minors, availability of coaching courses, the type of coaching education coaches offered and expectations for the knowledge to coach will be discussed. There was a wide range of comments received from each of the three groups demonstrating a wide diversity of opinions. Comments were selected that related to the questions asked and answers given for each specific issue. In the interest of brevity, the comments chosen expressed a general and common attitude inherent in all of the participants who responded with an open-ended comment.

Table 1 shows the results to the question: Do you believe that the academic preparation of a PETE curriculum is enough to prepare a PETE student for coaching? Significantly, 72% of PETE Faculty did not believe that PETE curriculums adequately prepare individuals for coaching.

Table 1: Responses to the belief that PETE curriculums are enough to prepare PETE students to coach



Examples of comments from PETE Faculty believing that PETE programs also prepare PETE students to coach:

1. "Good teaching of skills produces a great coach of skills and if they are good communicators they will be excellent coaches and motivators of teams."
2. "In most institutions the games and sport courses allow for students to learn the rules enough to be an effective coach."
3. "Should be....."
4. "With professional development following graduation and mentoring, a sound and credentialed P.E. teacher will flourish."
5. "It can be, but it is up to the individual student."

Examples of comments from PETE Faculty believing that PETE programs do not prepare PETE students to coach:

1. "We prepare future educators and under the requirements of NASPE/NCATE must guarantee that that they leave our institution prepared to teach PE. NCACE has it's own requirements that would be difficult to incorporate in our existing PETE curriculum."

2. “The expectation of the athletes is very different from that of physical education students and training and psychology are different. Coaches also need to know about scheduling, travel, insurance, etc. “
3. “There is so much more to coaching than what is offered at many PETE programs. I truly believe that coaching preparation should be a separate degree program. Obviously this is a tough sell (e.g., budget woes, department consolidation, etc.)”
4. “Curricular models, which are often the anchor of PETE programs, do not give clear and specific information regarding skill development and organization and administration of an athletic program.”
5. “Absolutely NOT! Much more to coaching than we cover in the teacher prep program...While there is some overlap at a base level (i.e., technical skills), there are wide gaps between the two in many others areas (e.g., psychosocial dynamics, philosophy, tactics/strategies) that cannot be learned from a PE curriculum alone.”

Examples of comments from K-12 Teachers who believe that their PETE programs prepared them to coach:

1. “Mostly because I played on two intercollegiate teams.”
2. “For the most part yes because I understood students at all levels. However it was good that I had a JV coach with me that was there for 8 years to help me with all the paper work and meeting I had to attend.”
3. “I was prepared because I felt I had enough personal athletic experience with coaches that what academic preparation i did get was bonus material to help me.”

Examples of comments from K-12 Teachers who do not believe that their PETE programs prepared them to coach:

1. “It was not sport specific in best practices for my athletic domain. It also did not teach me the organizational skills with regards to cross conference scheduling, transportation, fund raising, etc.”
2. “It was too general in terms of the intricacies of the various sports. To be a good/great coach you need much more in-depth training.”
3. “Too little time spent on the vast subject.”

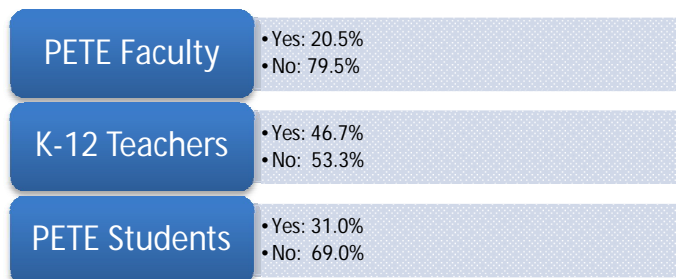
Examples of comments from PETE teacher candidates who believe that their PETE programs are preparing them to coach:

1. “For basic level coaching (skills). But many PETE majors play sports so they have skill and strategy knowledge from that.”
2. “For the most part, because coaching is very similar to teaching.”
3. “You need to know the sport on your own, you can't just learn it in school. Therefore school should just be an assist to what you already know.”
4. “I believe it is enough to get them started. I do, however, believe that some coaching classes and training should be taken to supplement the PE degree the student has received.”

Examples of comments from PETE teacher candidates who believe that their PETE programs are not preparing them to coach:

1. “I believe that you need to have a proficient past or proficiency/practice in one particular sport to be able to coach it to the best of your ability. Also, I believe that there are definite differences in pedagogy on how to teach phys. ed. and how to coach.
2. “I believe it is enough to get them started. I do, however, believe that some coaching classes and training should be taken to supplement the PE degree the student has received.”
3. “No, because teaching and coaching do not go hand-in-hand. They are similar but different all at once.”
4. “No, must have a coaching practicum.”

Table 2 shows the results to the question: Should a coaching minor be required for PETE students? It is interesting to note that almost 47% K-12 teachers believe that a coaching minor should be required. Given that K-12 teachers are in a unique position to see the potential dual role dichotomy in their positions, this could be an important observation.

Table 2: Belief in the requirement of a coaching minor for PETE students

Examples of comments from PETE faculty regarding whether a coaching minor should be required:

1. “Require another 16-20 hours on top of a PETE degree - are you kidding??!! Plus, not all PE majors plan/desire to coach. Also, I believe this would perpetuate the stigma/practice of hiring coaches who are also qualified to teach PE rather than hiring teachers first.”
2. “In a sense, since many principals will not hire a PE teacher just to teach PE, it will be helpful to the student to acquire the knowledge and skills of the coach. But we must also realize that ability to teach health is also required and in some schools, ability to teach other academic subjects is even required to get a job. So where should the line be drawn? Students should be allowed to make that choice about making coaching a minor.”
3. “Not all PETE students want to coach.”
4. “Should not be required, but should be an option. Many states do not acknowledge as a valuable area, no incentive to attain a minor; Is NOT a teachable minor.”
5. “Yes, if the student is going into coaching, there should be some requirement. This requirement could be a minor or some coaching certification administered by the state or national federation.”
6. “This would dictate a degree requirement that may not fit into all university structures. Perhaps a coaching certificate for having completed "x" courses would be in order. Maybe that would come from NASPE or AAHPERD.”

Examples of comments from K-12 teachers regarding whether a coaching minor should be required:

1. “I think it would be good. IF YOU END UP COACHING it will make you better prepared.”
2. “Coaching is an extra opportunity to be added on to teaching. Teachers should focus on teaching.”
3. “Coaching positions are supplemental positions not required or mandated positions and thus I don't feel that there should be a required coaching course or minor. Also, our state doesn't even require any type of certification process--why should there be college requirements?”
4. “It is a personal choice. However, I am seeing many coaches with no training manipulating athletes and practicing dangerous behaviors that leads to psychological or physical injury to their athletes.”
5. “No -- college students should be required to obtain minors in classes that would make them more marketable or valuable to their school (math, science, language, special ed). There are many options.... should adapted minor be required? Should using technology in PE be required? It depends on your focus... electives provide more flexibility.”
6. “Often goes along with getting a PE job.”
7. “It should be an elective, not required.”

Examples of comments by PETE teacher candidates regarding whether a coaching minor should be required:

1. “It would be a nice additional attachment to my Bachelors Degree but it shouldn't be required. State doesn't require for certification or employment. ”
2. “Not required but an option for those who may want it.”
3. “I personally believe that a few coaching education courses should be required rather than requiring students to minor in coaching. Many of my classmates are currently coaching without having a coaching minor so I feel that it is almost not entirely beneficial from a job opportunity aspect.”
4. “I don't think it should be required because there are some students who want to teach but don't necessarily want to coach. I think it should be an option though for those who want both. I wish our program had the coaching minor, but we don't.”
5. “PETE is about teachers not coaches.”

6. “Physical education majors have so many other certifications and minors in which time would be much more wisely spent. With the state of our nation and the rise in obesity and chronic conditions occurring earlier focus on physical activity and health should be a major focus for our professional futures.”
7. “I don't think a minor should be required, but I do think one needs to be more readily available.”

Table 3 shows the results of the question: Are any coaching education courses required in your Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) program? Over half of PETE faculty and PETE students do indicate that some coaching classes were required but not to the extent that it satisfied a minor degree requirement or any national certification. All responding subsets indicated that the coaching class most required was kinesiology: PETE faculty (62.8%), K-12 teachers (83.5%), and PETE students (72.0%). Exercise physiology was the second most required class at 60.5%, 54.4%, and 46.0% respectively. CPR/AED certification was also indicated as a required coaching class but most states require this certification for a teaching license as well. Introduction to Coaching and Theory of Sports were reported at: PETE faculty (38.4% and 19.8% respectively for the aforementioned courses), K-12 teachers (43.0% and 44.3%), and PETE students (16.0% and 16.0%). Sport Psychology and Athletic Administration were also mentioned: PETE faculty (38.4% and 24.4% respectively for the aforementioned courses), K-12 teachers (48.1% and 24.1%), and PETE students (28.0% and 10%).

Table 3

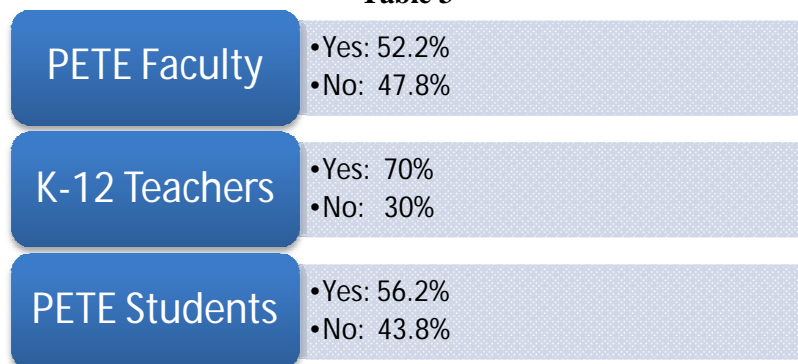


Table 4 shows the results to the question: Are coaching education courses available to take in the undergraduate PETE curriculum at your institution? Approximately 48% of PETE faculty indicated that there were no *coaching* electives available to take. Of other available electives, the most common were: Kinesiology, Exercise Physiology, Athletic Training, Strength Training and Wellness, and Sport Psychology none of which are specific to actual coaching education.

Table 4: Availability of coaching education courses in the undergraduate PETE curriculum

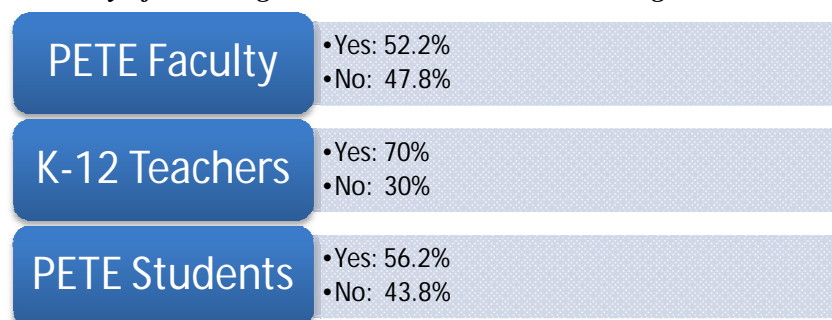
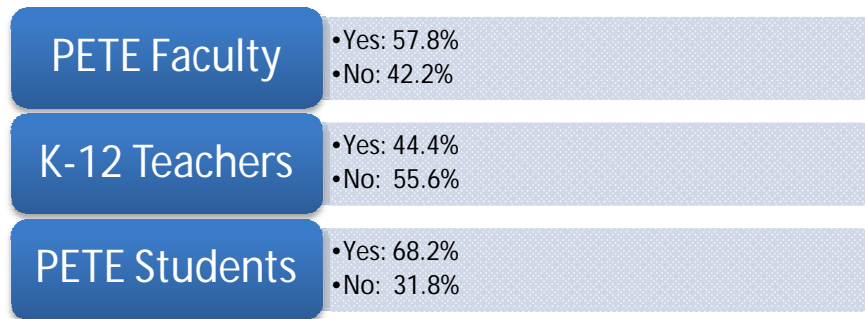


Table 5 shows the results to the question: Should physical education students be expected to know how to coach youth, interscholastic and/or intercollegiate athletics at the conclusion of their undergraduate PETE program?

Table 5: Expectation or beliefs that PETE graduates should have the knowledge to coach

Discussion

The results of this study clearly demonstrated a difference in perceptions of coaching education among PETE faculty, K-12 teachers, and PETE students. These differences in perception can be found in the tables, but become even more evident in the comments made by the different subsets. While data demonstrated that a difference in perception of coaching education existed, the comments detailed the vast differences in those perceptions. The comments also provided a glimpse into the reasoning behind the perceptions and demonstrated additional differences and opinions in the subsets even on areas in which they generally agreed. The following discussion will be based on the responses of the three subsets to selected survey questions and include comments on dual role conflict, preparation for coaching within PETE curriculums, and opportunities for coaching minors and/or electives for PETE students.

PETE Curriculums are Adequate Preparation for Coaching

While it appears that PETE students and K-12 teachers are relatively split on the concept of whether or not PETE curriculums are adequate preparation for coaching, PETE faculty in this study strongly believed they are not (72%). A recurring theme among some of the comments from PETE faculty was that there is so much more to coaching than what is offered at many PETE programs and that they should be separate degree programs. PETE faculty indicated that they have a primary responsibility to teach students in a way that will prepare them to leave their institution prepared to teach Physical Education. For this PETE faculty, coaching involves different skill sets than is covered in the teacher preparation program. This clearly creates a conflict regarding the emphasis on preparation for teaching and/or coaching. As well, PETE faculty believed teacher candidates should know how to coach but were clear that a minor should not be offered and/or required.

The K-12 faculty and PETE students were split in their perceptions of PETE curriculums being adequate for coaching preparation. Both groups had similar responses to the PETE faculty in this regard. According to some of the K-12 respondents, the broadness of PETE curriculums did not give clear and specific information regarding skill development and organization and administration of athletic programs. Many felt that PETE academic curriculums were too general in terms of the intricacies of the various sports and did not teach best practices for coaching. PETE students indicated that there were definite differences in pedagogy on how to teach physical education and how to coach. These comments reaffirmed the perception by some of a dual role conflict and the vast differences of opinion as to the place of coaching education in PETE curriculums.

The portions of subsets that perceived PETE curriculums as adequately preparing coaches contained a common thread that teaching and coaching are the same. The adage reported by several respondents that “a good teacher of skills produces a good coach of skills” adds to this opinion. Some PETE faculty indicated that continued professional development following graduation could be attained to address the lack of specific coaching knowledge. PETE students reported that many PETE majors play sports so they would have the techniques, tactics, and skills essential for coaching in combination with learning how to teach physical education. The comments “coaching is very similar to teaching” and “you need to know the sport on your own, you can’t just learn it in school” reported by PETE students, gives rise to their belief that PETE curriculums do teach students how to coach in general terms without being labeled coaching courses. However, expert coaches would argue that it takes experience in the coaching profession to learn the specifics of a particular sport and create an expert coaching identity (Vickers & Schoenstedt, (2010).

Required Coaching Minor for PETE Students

A majority of all three subsets (PETE faculty, K-12 faculty, PETE students) do not believe a coaching minor should be required for PETE students. This perception reinforces the previously discussed comments of those who believe there is no dual role conflict and those that believe that coaching basically is teaching. However, these factors do not appear to be the impetus behind a lack of desire to require a coaching minor. The consensus remains that a coaching minor should be an elective, not required.

While the additional hours added to the PETE curriculum had one PETE faculty comment “require another 16-20 hours on top of a PETE degree-are you kidding?!!”; the main reason behind not requiring a coaching minor is backed by the belief that not all PETE students want to coach and most states do not require a coaching certification for employment. All subsets included respondents who agreed that a coaching minor is a personal choice and many agreed that it should be an option. If no coaching certifications are required by the state, then requiring a coaching minor could take the place of a state-mandated coaching certificate. This may be of particular significance because some K-12 teachers commented that coaching often goes along with getting a Physical Education teaching job. Not having a structured coaching education program may lead to many coaches manipulating athletes and practicing dangerous behaviors causing psychological or physical injury to their athletes.

When considering the responses to the question of electives in the PETE curriculums, it is apparent that while courses are offered as coaching electives, few are specific to actual coaching. Most PETE curriculums will include Kinesiology and/or Exercise Physiology and the opportunity to take Strength Training and Wellness, Sport Psychology, and athletic training classes are fairly common. That being said, less than 50% of the respondents indicated that an Introduction to Coaching class was available as an elective.

Conclusion

The concept of dual roles in teaching and coaching is important to explore on multiple levels. Certainly, physical education curriculums must focus on the students their teacher candidates will eventually teach. But similarly, with the well-documented obesity epidemic among our nation’s youth, there would seem to be some accountability on the part of these programs to provide opportunities to learn the proper strategies, motivational techniques, and developmentally appropriate practices to keep youth active either within the K-12 PETE curriculum or through minors and/or electives for a variety of sports addressing different levels of interest demonstrated by today’s participating youth. As well, many K-12 teachers who are “in the trenches” were clear in their responses that many physical education jobs are tied to a need for coaches in the interscholastic setting.

In addition, given the growth of youth sports in the United States and the alarming attrition of youth under the age of 13 quitting organized sport altogether (Martens, 2004), standardization of coaching education appears to be an exceedingly important issue. This is especially true as coaches are one of the top reasons that young players quit playing in sport activities. The fact that many of the coaches are K-12 teachers also feeds the argument that more should be done in PETE curriculums to help educate PETE students to become better coaches if they so choose. Contemporary curriculum development should at the least consider including specific education courses for coaching that in lieu of state mandates, gives future teachers more coaching education. PETE programs could also consider integrating coaching protocols in classes such as K-12 teaching methods, motor behavior and skill acquisition, psychology and motivation and/or youth development courses.

Certainly, this is an area of debate that resonates loudly between and among many stakeholders in physical education curriculums and coaching education development programs. While the diversity in opinions is wide, the discussion should remain front and center as higher education PETE curriculums evaluate and address the needs of PETE students who will be the future of K-12 physical education.

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