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ARTICLE REVIEWED

"Disability Simulation Design and Implementation in Adapted Physical Activity Coursework — Reports From Faculty"

Ross, S. M., Fines, A., Brink, C., Simpson, A. C., & Matthews, H. (2023). Disability Simulation Design and Implementation in Adapted Physical Activity Coursework – Reports from Faculty. *Quest*, *0*(0), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2023.2207216

THE PROBLEM

Disability simulations are activities used regularly in adapted physical education (APE) undergraduate courses to help raise awareness of the experiences of people with disabilities. However, these types of activities have gained some criticism for their cultural appropriateness (Leo & Goodwin 2013) by perpetuating ableism. The problem with activities of this nature is the inability to provide an accurate demonstration of the daily challenges a disabled person may face but rather an example of initial "struggles" such as experiencing loss of mobility for the first time. This risks perpetuating a misconception that disability is a burden. Additionally, these activities are mostly run by able-bodied people, which raises concerns of how disabilities are portrayed.

Research Summary

Aiming to further understand how disability simulations are used in undergraduate APE courses, this study employed a pragmatist methodological approach. The research team used a critical reflexive paradigm to acknowledge their preconceived ideologies of APE methods based on their experiences as educators. Data analysis was completed in the form of a collaborative qualitative analysis following the guidelines of Richards and Hemphill (2018). Participants were a convenience sample of U.S. faculty who have used disability simulations in their undergraduate adapted physical education/activity courses. Data was collected in two phases. Phase one of data collection included a survey completed by email, and of the 14 surveys collected, 11 met the inclusion criteria for the study. Phase two of data collection included follow-up interviews with the 11 participants who had completed surveys, six of which were included in the study. Interviews were completed using a semi-structured guide and were piloted with the research team. Interviews were then transcribed and coded by at least two members of the research team.

Conclusion

Five types of simulations were identified in this study: accessibility, activities of daily living, sport, teaching practice, and hybrid. The hybrid title was given to activities that had elements from more than one of the other four types of simulations. The research team was hesitant to label sport as a type of simulation because it does not require students to "pretend" or envision themselves with having a disability. Rather, this type of simulation involved using specific equipment to give students experiences in various parasports. Ultimately, more research is needed to understand the implications of disability simulation as a teaching tool for meeting learning objectives relating to disability awareness and inclusive teaching strategies.

Key Takeaway

One critical component of disability simulations is guided reflections where students can articulate their experiences and the implications they may hold for their future as an adapted physical educator. The research team recognizes the potential benefits and risks of disability simulation use within APE courses and invite educators to engage in critical conversations around how we foster positive perceptions of individuals with disabilities through hands-on learning experiences.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Leo, J., & Goodwin, D. L. (2013). Pedagogical reflections on the use of disability simulations in higher education. Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 32(4), 460–472. https://doi.org/10.1123/jtpe. 32.4.460

Silverman, A. (2015). The perils of playing blind: Problems with blindness simulation and a better way to teach about blindness. Journal of Blindness Innovation and Research, 5(2). https://doi.org/ 10.5241/5-81