

ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Professors' Use and Perceptions of an Adapted Physical Education Podcast

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Abstract

Educational podcasts may be a powerful tool to disseminate information to preservice adapted physical education (APE) teachers. To date, there is a lack of research that focuses on how college instructors are employing podcasts to impact college students' perceptions and knowledge. The purpose of this study was to examine how the What's New in Adapted Physical Education (APE) podcast is being used within APE college courses and to understand college professors' perceptions of the use of this podcast as a pedagogical tool. Two APE professors were interviewed on their uses and perceptions of the What's New in APE podcast. The interviews were analyzed via a general inductive approach. Three interrelated themes from the interviews were constructed: (1) podcasts are rewarding, (2) using podcasts as a supplemental tool, and (3) where's the validity? The findings demonstrate that the APE professors have generally favorable views toward the perceived effectiveness of the podcast as a learning tool and that professors use the podcasts to supplement course materials within their courses.

Educational podcast embody several of the unique characteristics that make online so appealing (Drew, 2017; Kennedy et al., 2016; McNamara & Shaw, 2020). Podcasts have a capacity to reach and engage students through novel means (Drew, 2017; Fronek et al.,

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2016; Hew, 2008). Research consistently shows that educational podcasts provide students a greater degree of accessibility and autonomy, as they can control their learning by pausing, rewinding, and listening to content as often as needed to learn the content properly (Drew, 2017; McNamara & Haegele, 2021; McNamara & Shaw, 2020). Podcasts also cater to a diverse range of learning styles and skills, allowing students to more easily access and understand content (Fernandez et al., 2009; McNamara & Haegele, 2021).

Although there is a dearth of research examining the influence of podcasts on kinesiology college students' learning experience (McNamara, Shaw et al., 2021), numerous studies reveal that college students in general find podcasts to be useful, relevant, and helpful with the overall learning process (Kay, 2012; McNamara & Haegele, 2021; McNamara & Shaw, 2020). For example, a content acquisition podcast (CAP), a theory-based podcast that utilizes audio and visual mediums, is significantly more impactful than a practitioner-friendly article on pre-service special educators' knowledge related to phonetic awareness (Carlisle et al., 2016). Further, preliminary research suggests that college students prefer podcasts as a learning tool over reading and note taking (Luttenberger et al., 2018; McNamara et al., in press). Although textbooks often have an important place within college courses, providing college instructors with a sort of scope and sequence for their curriculum, these preliminary results demonstrate the potential for podcasts to be more valuable than traditional tools, depending on the context of the course and students.

Open-Access Podcasts

Open-access podcasts are one type of podcasting medium that may benefit college students (Fronek et al., 2016; Hargett, 2018). These podcasts are freely available to the public, disseminate profession-specific knowledge, and may be a foundational tool to bridge the gap between research and practice (Chartier & Helman, 2016; Fronek et al., 2016). Open-ended podcasts tend to be longer and involve more guests than do podcasts produced specifically for college courses (Drew, 2017). Utilizing open-access podcasts may be an especially useful tool that increases relationships and deepens learners' communities of practice, as these allow learners to engage across geographical locations and professions (Chartier & Helman, 2016; Fronek et al., 2016; McNamara, Shaw et al., 2021). McNamara and

Haegele's (2021) exploration shows how listening to an open-access podcast influences 19 undergraduate physical educators in their understanding of inclusion and integration within a physical education setting through focus groups and written reflections. Their analysis reveals this tool is perceived as an effective means to learn new content by college students. These findings also suggest that open-access podcasts can provide information that is nuanced and contextual, again demonstrating the value that appears to be associated with the use of podcasts, more specifically open-access podcasts.

Adapted Physical Education

Physical education is supported within the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (2004) and has numerous well-documented benefits associated with it for students with disabilities, such as increased muscular strength, better self-esteem, and decreased obesity levels (Li et al., 2016; Pan & McNamara, 2022; Rimmer et al., 2007). Adapted physical education (APE) is the art and science of providing individualized physical education services to students with disabilities (Dunn & Leitschuh, 2014). APE teachers must possess expertise in the physical education curriculum, including areas such as sport skills, locomotor skills, and fundamental motor skills. Additionally, they need the skillset to adapt lessons and navigate individualized education programs.

Many teachers delivering physical education to students with disabilities lack an adequate educational background and feel that their college programs failed to prepare them to teach students with disabilities (Lirgg et al., 2017). One factor leading preservice physical educators to feel unprepared to teach students with disabilities is that many physical education teacher education programs only dedicate one course to APE (Piletic & Davis, 2010). Furthermore, the instructors who teach these classes often cover topics with "broad strokes" because they only have one course to teach preservice physical educators how to teach *all* children with disabilities (McNamara, Lieberman et al., 2021). Indeed, APE college instructors may completely ignore covering specific disabilities altogether or only spend one class period to cover all the teaching strategies related to teaching a child with a specific disability (McNamara, Lieberman et al., 2021). Hence, alternative modes of learning, such as listening to educational podcasts, may be particularly useful for APE teacher

training, as they may allow these educators to further explore specific topics in the field than what can be attained in one college class period. In addition, educational podcasts can create a unique community of practice within a virtual setting (Wrather, 2016). Within a college course, these podcasts enable the sharing of knowledge and a common language among practitioners, college instructors, and students who share and discuss podcast content in the classroom and online. Thus, educational podcasts, especially ones specific to a particular discipline or field, can increase teacher-to-student relationships and deepen students' communities of practice (Chartier & Helman, 2016; Fronck et al., 2016; McNamara, Shaw et al. 2021; Wrather, 2016).

Purpose

There is a dearth of research that focuses on how college instructors are employing podcasts, especially open-access podcasts, to impact college students' perceptions and knowledge toward topics (Fronck et al., 2016; McNamara & Drew, 2019; McNamara, Shaw et al. 2021). Without this information, it is difficult to develop more refined pedagogical strategies and recommendations on the proper use of podcasts within an educational setting. Thus, this investigation seeks to understand the use of this APE podcast within higher education courses through a critical examination of the ways APE professors are using open-access podcasts. This study also explores professors' perceptions of the use of these podcasts as a pedagogical tool. These research questions guide this study:

1. How are APE college professors using an open-access podcast in their college courses?
2. What are APE college professors' perceptions of an APE-specific podcast as a pedagogical tool?

Method

Research Approach

This investigation was situated within a qualitative description approach. APE teachers must possess expertise in the physical education curriculum, including areas such as sport skills, locomotor skills, and fundamental motor skills. Additionally, they need the skillset to adapt lessons and navigate individualized education

programs (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). This approach was relatively nonrestrictive and allowed us to implement an interpretive product with hues of a hermeneutic inquiry (Sandelowski, 2010). This less interpretive approach, in comparison to many qualitative methodologies, allowed us to not stray far from the data and the participants' actual words and experiences (Sandelowski, 2000).

Participants

To be included within this study, participants had to currently teach an APE college course and had to use the *What's New in APE* podcast within these courses. McNamara (2019) explained that the only open-access podcast dedicated to the field of APE was the *What's New in APE* podcast platform, a podcast and an accompanying blog that was developed to provide insight into the field of APE. This podcast interviews an array of APE professionals, parents, and practitioners about a range of topics related to APE. Participants were recruited through social media recruitment posts via the personal social media of the lead investigator, as well as through emails to the first author's professional colleagues within the APE field. Participants were asked to complete a demographic survey pertaining to general personal demographics (e.g., gender, age). Two APE instructors from the same institution in the United States participated in this study. Both had a doctorate in APE and taught face-to-face APE courses. Table 1 displays demographic information about the interviewees. Prior to data collection, the Institutional Review Board approved all procedures conducted in this investigation.

Table 1
Interview Participants' Demographic Data

Pseudonym	Position	Race	Gender	Age	Years teaching APE course
John	Full Professor	White, non-Hispanic	Male	68	37
Leah	Assistant Professor	White, non-Hispanic	Female	38	14

Note. APE = adapted physical education. **Data Collection**

A semistructured interview guide was used as a checklist during the interview sessions, ensuring that each topic was covered but allowing conversations to drive the order and magnitude of topics. These categories of guiding questions included (1) their experiences with listening to podcasts for recreational or educational purposes, (2) how they discovered the *What's New in APE* podcast, (3) how they used the APE podcast in their classes, and (4) what their plans were for using this podcast in the future. The second author conducted the interviews and explained her positionality to the participants prior to conducting interviews.

Data Analyses

Data from the interviews were analyzed via a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). This approach began with constructing categories emergent in the data, followed by comparing categories with old categories and forming new categories, and finally this works into larger themes (Thomas, 2006). By employing this method, McNamara initially coded transcribed statements from the interviews into categories reflecting similar motifs. Each category was then given a working title or description of the category. Each statement was then read individually and coded either into an existing category with similar codes or into new categories. The categories were then reorganized into larger groups on the basis of similar themes (Thomas, 2006). Once all statements were categorized and put into themes, we worked together to reexamine codes, categories, and themes.

Several measures that helped ensure the quality or trustworthiness of the study were taken. Member checking ensured the participants' felt the interpretations accurately depicted their perceptions (Patton, 2002). We distributed copies of the analyzed themes from the interviews to the two interviewees. Both interviewees responded and agreed with the interpretations of the data. Finally, transparency and coherence were supported through a thorough description of critical elements of the research process, as well as a transparent accounting of research position and background throughout the research process (Yardley, 2000). Trustworthiness was strengthened when a distinguished university professor with expertise in qualitative research acted as a peer debriefer. The peer debriefer influenced reflexivity by challenging our construction of knowledge (Smith &

McGannon, 2018). We shared our interpretations and conferred with the peer debriefer, who had enough expertise to provide feedback on the themes to refine and, frequently, redirect the interpretation process (Erlandson et al., 1993). The debriefer viewed the authors' interpretations of the data to be representative and accurate.

We also acknowledged our positionality and how our backgrounds could influence our interpretations (Briscoe, 2005). This was crucial, as the various components of our positionality (e.g., race, ideology) could have influenced each step of the research process and thus we could not ignore this. Maher and Morley (2020) explained that “by exploring our positionality and engaging in reflexivity, we ensured transparency, honesty and criticality, which are hallmarks of quality in qualitative research” (p. 852). In regard to this study, both of us identified as White and abled-bodied and both of us were faculty members currently teaching preservice physical educators. The first author identified as male, and the second author identified as female. The first author was also the creator of the *What's New in APE* podcast, the APE podcast used by the participants in this study. To reduce a feeling of power imbalance from the participants, as well as the feeling of the need to provide positive remarks about the podcast, the second author conducted the interviews.

Results and Discussion

Three interrelated themes were constructed from the interviews. The first theme, podcasts are rewarding, demonstrated that the participants had generally favorable views toward the effectiveness of the podcast as a learning tool. The second theme, using podcasts as a supplemental tool, described participants' use of the podcasts to supplement readings and course materials within their courses. The third and final theme, where is the validity, revealed that participants felt there were many concerns related to the development of open-access podcasts, namely, there was little oversight in the information produced and disseminated.

Podcasts Are Rewarding

Both professors expressed that their students enjoyed this APE podcast as a learning tool and possibly found it “more rewarding” than other types of learning. Leah also suggested that exposing students to this resource that covered a plethora of topics possibly al-

lowed students to become more interested in specific areas within the APE field. For example, she stated, “They listen to it and maybe they liked it and they’re like ‘look at all the other topics.’ I’ve had other students say, ‘Oh, did you listen to the newest podcast,’ or ‘have you listened to the Test of Gross Motor Development podcast.” This finding aligns with research that shows podcasts in general can allow listeners to develop a community of learners (Wrather, 2016). Indeed, open-access podcasts may be a unique learning tool, as they allow undergraduate students to encounter a community of learners with those already practicing in their future profession, as well as often hard-to-reach experts (Wrather, 2016).

Both professors also expressed enjoying the podcasts themselves. Leah emphasized that she enjoyed the *What’s New in APE* podcast and inferred that this platform could offer a great service to the entire APE field:

I look forward to each episode and the added content to our profession. I think particularly for our profession because we are a new field really when you look at it in the grand scheme of things. We’ve only been around since 1975. We are still kind of in an infantile state right now. So just more podcasts and more knowledge that added to the field the better.

Although Leah voiced pleasure with listening to this particular podcast, she also explained that she picked this podcast because it was the only one with a focus on APE. In addition, she noted the need for additional episodes from this platform. The perception that more APE podcasts are needed, and that these podcasts may be of great importance to the field of APE, corroborates the general lack of APE-related professional development and content. This is likely in part due to the lack of APE experts, as well as the wide dispersion and scarcity of APE teachers and experts throughout the United States (Zhang, 2011).

The accessibility of the *What’s New in APE* podcast as a learning tool was also reinforced throughout the interviews. John explained,

This generation loves to multitask. You know, like myself, I work out and listen to podcasts and maybe others appreciate that fact as well. You know you can cook dinner for your family and get your homework done by listening to that

assigned reading assignment. I think there are advantages to that as well.

Leah emphasized that this flexibility in use was most beneficial for her graduate students, as they

are teachers during the day and will come back and take a couple night classes. They can listen to podcasts as they drive to school and I think that's a really unique positive aspect to APE teaching that maybe other professionals don't have the opportunity to do. Because we're driving from school to school, so that's a great opportunity to learn about your profession, listen to some podcasts on the way to your next school site.

These findings align with an accumulation of literature citing that college students perceive podcasts in general to have an array of favorable features, including ease of access (Hew, 2008; Kay, 2012; Kennedy et al., 2016; McNamara & Shaw, 2020). The literature indicates that this heightened flexibility and accessibility empower students to take greater control of their learning. Podcasts enable students to pause, rewind, and revisit content as needed, facilitating a more thorough understanding of the material (Drew, 2017; Kennedy et al., 2016; McNamara & Shaw, 2020).

Using Podcasts as a Supplemental Tool

Both professors indicated that they were avid podcast listeners and listened to them for personal and professional purposes. They also expressed they used this podcast within their APE courses, using two primary methods: (1) listening to clips in class and (2) replacing readings. Both professors also indicated they sometimes used clips of this podcast to reiterate key points within their lectures. John explained, "The first time I used the podcast I listened to, I took clips of the one I did on behavior management because I was real familiar with it and I intertwined it into my lecture." Both interviewees detailed listening to short clips of specific episodes from this podcast in class. For example, Leah stated, "I have also done it in class where we will listen to a section of it. Then I will have a few questions the class can answer as a group." John also articulated that he does quick reflection activities after listening to the *What's New in APE* in class:

I'll have them write down a couple things, what did you get out of that . . . They'll be in their groups and I'll say, "Let's react to this. Like, what did you take away?" And I usually have in a PowerPoint slide . . . a few lines of the podcast in there and the link so they can click it very easily.

Both also cited they often used the *What's New in APE* podcast as a replacement for reading assignments. For example, Leah expressed that she usually used them about once a semester and assigned "a podcast for my students to listen to in lieu of a structured reading." She continued by explaining that the way she assigned podcast listening was similar to the way she assigned readings:

Students are assigned the reading and next class period they are put together into discussion groups and they have some preset question that I have proposed, and they discuss the reading, or in this case, the podcast with their group.

Although John also reiterated the use of podcasts in general in lieu of readings, he had some reservations about this direct replacement:

It just seems like they're more apt to listen to a podcast than they are if they have to read a chapter in a book. That's what they said to me they find that more rewarding. Now I'll be honest with you, I'll read a little bit about that I don't think podcasts are a cure-all. I think they should be used as a supplement.

Leah provided her future plans to continue to use this podcast in her APE courses and an increase in the amount of use:

I absolutely plan to continue at minimum use at least one podcast and since I teach APE, podcasts have always come from the *What's New in APE* since that is the most relevant material to what I am teaching. And I am absolutely open to assigning more podcasts as reading assignments.

Although both professors saw value in using the podcasts as a learning tool, neither assigned any points or grades to listening to the *What's New in APE* podcast. For instance, Leah stated, "I never do these for points. It's just for their reading and the reading is expected."

Again, this falls into the notion that these two professors were using these podcasts as simply a supplemental tool to reinforce content, rather than as a direct replacement of content. This is important to note, as scholars often advocate against the use of podcasts as a direct replacement for lecture or readings; rather, they encourage podcasts to supplement coursework (Kennedy et al., 2016).

Where's the Validity?

While Leah planned on continuing to use this specific podcast, she also raised concerns regarding research; however, she was apprehensive with the lack of research on how to best use podcasts as a learning tool within her courses, explaining, “Where is the research behind the podcasting [or] is it just a novelty? Do the students retain more, less, [or] equal to . . . reading a chapter?” The affordability, simplicity of creation, and swift dissemination linked with educational podcasts are leading to their growing prominence as instructional tools (Kay, 2012; McNamara, Shaw et al., 2021). However, research within the area of educational podcasting in the field of kinesiology appears to be in its infancy. For example, a recent scoping review of the past two decades only identifies five data-driven articles that examine educational podcasts’ impact on college students within the field kinesiology (McNamara, Shaw et al., 2021). Furthermore, only one of these studies (Abt & Barry, 2007) uses podcasts as a typical intervention within their study, with the other studies simply embedding the podcasts within their classes and examining their impact on students. In addition, all these studies examine instructor-developed podcasts, rather than the increasingly popular form of open-access podcasts. Thus, Leah’s concerns about the lack of research on the use of podcasts within an education setting are well founded. It is critical that future researchers examine the impact and perceived usefulness of educational podcasts with kinesiology college students. Researchers also need to focus on how college instructors are employing podcasts, especially open-access podcasts, and how these different methods impact kinesiology college students’ perceptions and knowledge toward topics.

Both participants also communicated some concern with using the *What’s New in APE* podcast as a teaching tool. For example, Leah gave reservations with using podcasts, stating that more podcast

content was needed to cover the array of content covered within her course:

I think if there were a broader range of content and more options within the podcasts I may open that up to two or more reading assignments. It's just at this point, there's not enough podcasts that fit the content to necessarily do that, and I just don't know that the literature is there yet. [Someone should] tell us whether listening to podcasts in lieu of reading is equal to, better than, not as retentive as reading the chapter. At this point I'm comfortable with one. I always get good feedback that they like the podcast so I am certainly open to doing more of our readings in that manner.

John pointed to the need for more podcasts from the *What's New in APE* platform to focus specifically on research being conducted within the field of APE. He rationalized this:

I worry a little bit because in some ways podcasts are like the Wild West. Where if there is an article or book it's gone for review; in a podcast there's no checks and balance. I think that's something that should be mentioned or cautioned . . . Is somebody saying things, [or] are the things that are being said on the podcast evidence based? Because in an article they would have to be or they would get rebuked.

This suggests that professors, even ones using podcasts as a learning tool, have reservations about this tool and may be more apt to use podcasts based within peer-reviewed research, as this would make the content to be more trustworthy. A significant issue surrounding multimedia produced by independent entities is the potential for these content creators to transition from factual reporting to manipulating information in order to present opinions as if they were factual” (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). As such, with the idea that with the rapid rise of platforms that allow anyone to create content and distribute through online mediums (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), there is a question about the validity of open-access multimedia (Hajli, 2016). External agencies want to capitalize on the education of health and physical education professionals, likely due to the intersection of the fields of education, health, and sport sciences

(Sperka et al., 2018). Researchers need to continue to explore professors' reservations on using podcasts within their courses, to decipher patterns among these concerns and to develop recommendations on how to combat these concerns.

Limitations

This study has two major limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small. Despite several attempts at ensuring trustworthiness of the data, this may not accomplish data saturation and perhaps limits our ability to fully understand the participants' perspective and experiences. Researchers can examine college professors' use of more than one discipline-specific open-access podcast to examine a larger sample. Second, the first author's role in developing the podcast as well as the recruitment of a sample of participants likely to have a professional relationship with the investigator may influence the participants' responses. Despite the second author conducting the interviews, this limitation may elicit more positive remarks concerning the podcast, as the participants may have felt compelled to provide responses that they believe the lead investigator views favorably. Investigators can explore professors' use and perceptions of other open-access podcasts.

Conclusion

This investigation focuses on the use of an APE podcast within college courses and examines APE professors' use of this podcast and their perceptions of it. There are multiple studies examining the impact of podcasts on college students (e.g., Kay, 2012; Luttenberger et al., 2018; McNamara & Shaw, 2020); however, little research examines the use of open-access podcasts within college courses (Fronck et al., 2016; Hargett, 2018; McNamara, & Haegele, 2021; McNamara et al., in press) or examines college professors' perceptions of these tools. Indeed, open-access podcasts may present a unique teaching tool for college professors; these can allow undergraduate students to encounter a community of learners with practitioners in their future field. In addition, open-access podcasts may be an ideal teaching tool within the current era, where information is readily available to students. During this new age of increased access to information, college professors may act as knowledge brokers through curating open-access podcasts to enhance students' learning experience.

Indeed, one of college professors' primary roles is a knowledge-broker who carefully reviews multimedia content, such as podcasts, as well as provides an outline of the purpose and authority of these resources prior to assigning them to students (Macdonald, 2015).

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