

Needs and teacher training assessment for active school coordinators

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Introduction

Schools are considered the most suitable places for promoting physical activity and sport (PAS) (Sallis et al. 2006; WHO, 2021). In some Spanish regions, as in the Valencian Community, the schools that want to implement health and activity programs apply for grants in an annual call and become recognised educational centres for promoting PAS or, in other words, active schools. These projects are usually coordinated by the Physical Education (PE) teachers and include (mainly extra-curricular) activities to promote PAS and healthy lifestyles. The teachers in charge of promoting PAS need to be convinced of their value and must feel confident that implementation will result in change (McGann et al., 2022), even if they are not adequately prepared for that purpose (Harris, 2014; Moreno et al., 2021). The present work thus aims to identify both the training needs and that received by active school coordinators in Valencia.

Methods

152 school PAS coordinators (30.9% women) participated in the study during the academic year 2018/19. They completed a questionnaire via Google Forms on the characteristics of the active school program, their profiles and training needs. Descriptive statistical analyses were carried out on SPSS v.28.

Results

As can be seen in Table 1, most of the participants had higher education qualifications in their initial training although only 38.8% had completed degrees which included sports management.

Table 1. Initial training received by active school coordinators.

	n(%)
Degree in Teacher Education	21 (13.8)
Degree in Physical Education Teacher Education (for Primary Schools)	107 (70.4)
Degree in Physical Activity and Sport Sciences	59 (38.8)
PhD	5 (3.3)
Other training	22 (14.5)

65.1% reported having received specialised training in different formats in subsequent courses related to designing, implementing, and assessing school PAS programs (Table 2).

Table 2. Further education received by active school coordinators.

	n(%)
Self-education on the Internet	49 (32.2)
Seminars and conferences	67 (44.1)
Further teacher training centres	47 (30.9)
Coordination with other active schools	42 (27.6)
Scientific journals	12 (7.9)
School self-training plan	7 (4.6)

Lastly, among the measures highlighted by the participants that could significantly or greatly improve PAS promotion programs in schools were: i) 'creating an annual training event' (87.5%), ii) 'continuous advice by authorities on how to prepare, implement and evaluate the programs' (85.5%), iii) 'increasing teacher training' (84.9%), and iv) 'improved coordinators' communications driven by the authorities' (72.2%).

Conclusions

In conclusion, changes clearly need to be made to improving specialised knowledge of PAS promotion in schools in PE Teacher Training or any associated degree (Harris, 2006). The authorities should also offer more specific training and support in designing and monitoring students' PAS and assessing the sustainability and effectiveness of the programs.

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