

A prominent part of the 'paradigm wars': Example of Applying each in Evaluation of Physical Education programmed Research Endeavour.

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Abstract:

This study investigates A prominent part of the 'paradigm wars': Example of Applying each in Evaluation of Physical Education programmed Research Endeavour. A review of relevant literature in order to view of the nature of the research paradigms, example of applying each in evaluating of physical education programmed research endeavour. The investigation of related literature was look into three domains: Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program; Identify possibilities for modifying the current Evaluation of Physical Education programme; Make a contribution to the theoretical understanding of programme evaluation.

Also the importance of raising awareness of opposing research approaches such as positivist/descriptive. The results found that not a matter of right or wrong to decide upon any particular paradigm They



take on a subjectivist epistemology which believes that reality can only be seen through framework of theory.

Keywords: Paradigms, evaluation teacher programme. Research nature, Physical Education,




Introduction.

A prominent part of the 'paradigm wars' is the classification of the two broad research approaches into two paradigms and the appropriateness of applying each in any given research endeavour. The quantitative approach to research is seen as positivistic while the qualitative approach is relegated to the interpretive paradigm. For advocates of the dichotomous nature of these approaches, it is not right to talk about the complementary nature of these different approaches since they are not only derived from fundamentally different epistemological positions but are also incommensurable (Niglas, 2004). On the other hand, in more recent times in the history of social science research there is a growing position that quantitative and qualitative approaches are not mutually exclusive; that even the so called differences are not paradigmatic or diametrically opposite.

Perhaps, on the strength of the later argument, there has been considerable and growing interest among social researchers in doing research that mixes the approaches usually termed 'qualitative' and quantitative'. Niglas (1999) did a content analysis of 48 research papers published in the British Educational Research Journal to find out whether particular studies were hinged on only one of the two broad approaches or whether they combined both or adopted aspects of both in the framework of the study. The analysis revealed that more than one-third of the studies combined aspects of both approaches in different phases of the study. The researcher therefore concluded that it is the research problem, and not the philosophical position, that determines a research design.

This view is true of the following research design. It is an evaluative study of the Evaluation of Physical Education programme in Oman at the



Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). And in view of the nature of the problem as well as the goals of the study, I have found it imperative to adopt a combination of features from both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect and analyse the necessary data. The write up starts with the statement of the research problem, and is then followed by a review of relevant literature. The method of data collection and analysis are also outlined in addition to other aspects of the study.

The Aim of the study:

This study aims principally at exploring the relevance of the PE to the needs of women in Oman. It would also aim to:

- -Examine the current Evaluation of Physical Education programme in SQU with emphasis on
- -Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program.
- -Identify possibilities for modifying the current PE ITT for women.
- -Make a contribution to the theoretical understanding of Evaluation of Physical Education programme.

For purposes of this study, the following definitions synthesised from a variety of sources, will be applied in denoting the key words used in this assignment:

Keywords Definition:

✚ Epistemology :

Epistemology deals with the examination of the validity of knowledge in any given field based on a variety of sources and claims. It also deals with how to derive knowledge about something as opposed opinion or perception, largely through conclusions based on empirical measurement such as observation and experiment.



+ **Ontology:**

Ontology dwells on the overall nature of the world and the totality of the realities existing within it. In a way it can be seen as an important basis of epistemology since the determination of what is knowledge is not done in a vacuum but on the basis of the realities that exist.

+ **Methodology:**


The term methodology; embodies the strategy or procedure applied in designing or doing a particular empirical study. It specifies research techniques or specific methods of collecting, analysing and interpreting data about the social world such as questionnaire construction, observation schedules, interviews, and statistical analyses.

+ **Paradigms:**

Paradigms cover the aggregate of values and assumptions adopted by certain communities regarding the nature of research enterprise. They are supposed to guide researchers, telling them what to do, what is important, what is legitimate. These would include the conceptualisation of research problems, techniques and methods.

1. Paradigms wars:

The Paradigm wars, as Gage (1989) calls it, refers to the robust debates raging in the world of educational research starting notably in the early 1980s, and reaching a climax in 1989. It has come to underscore the claims and counter claims and the lack of agreement among the different schools of thought on what should be the well-established results, the proper research procedures, and the theoretical approaches to follow. Narrowing it to the field of physical education, the paradigm war involved scholars advocating for particular methods of conducting research in PE beginning from the later part of the 1980s.



Among the contentious advocacies include the use of alternative approaches, a preference for descriptive and critical paradigms over the dominant empirical or positivist paradigm. According to (Smith,1989) the debates produced labels dividing the various research approaches along opposing lines such as quantitative/qualitative , scientific / naturalistic , empiricist/ interpretive .

But some observers have noted that the paradigm debate is not just about differences in research techniques, but the complex webs of background knowledge and philosophical leanings that researchers bring with them explicitly or implicitly to the research.

2. The Three Paradigms:

Three paradigms which have influenced research in PE are: positivist, descriptive and action research according to (Sparkes 1992)

+ Positivist paradigm :

It is the conceptualising and conducting of research on social phenomena through empirical observations, construction of standardized data collection instruments, and use of sophisticated statistical techniques in data analysis just as in the natural sciences, with the aim of separating of facts from mere opinions or values.

+ Interpretive paradigm :

This paradigm seeks to understand the nature of the social world as it is, based on subjective experiences, interests, emotions, biases and values. It therefore employs approaches such as ethnography, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, constructivism, case study and qualitative research.

A graphic in the top left corner shows a silhouette of a person running, with a heart rate monitor line overlaid on it. The text 'Action research paradigm.' is written in red next to a small icon of a person with a plus sign.

Action research paradigm.

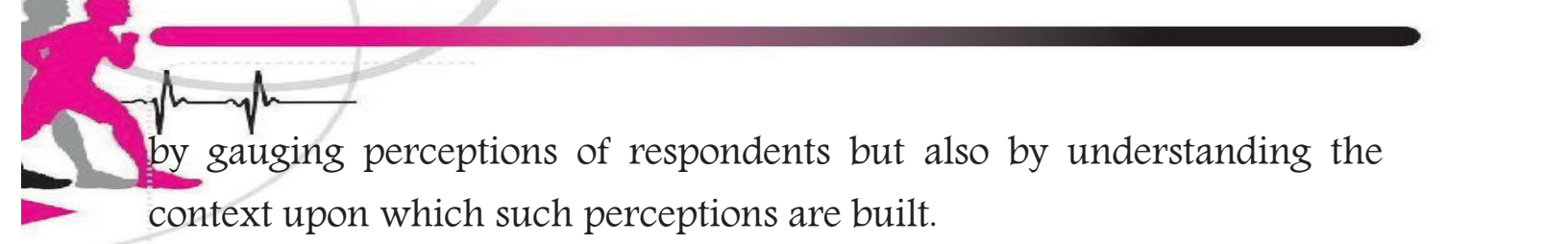
Involves structured observation aimed at understanding or describing a social phenomenon, event or action with the aim of changing or improving the action being studied. It may not be based on clearly defined theoretical framework or other methodological specifications but the main idea is to obtain first hand data.

It may be pertinent to state here that rather than concern itself with the merits or suitability of a particular paradigm, this study, as stated in the introduction, will use whatever aspects it deems relevant in its various stages.

Research Methodology.

This study will employ the survey method using both qualitative and quantitative analyses in order to capture in depth the nature, process and effectiveness of the PE ITT program. Cresswell (2003) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) and have recently advocated greater use of a mixture of methods in social science research. This attracts so many of researchers as a general phenomenon in the last decade (Brannen 1995). For example in sociology (Rogers and Nicolaus 1998), psychology (Debats et al 1995), economics (Lawson 2003).

While quantitative methods are expected to show the numerical distribution of responses, qualitative methods were selected for this study for purposes of generating data rich in detail and embedded in context. As this study is centred on the teachers' initial training, a combination of both methods can yield results that are more reliable in building a foundation for an Evaluation of Physical Education programme not only



by gauging perceptions of respondents but also by understanding the context upon which such perceptions are built.

1. Research Instruments.

Sources of information for the study will include a questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews and formal observation.

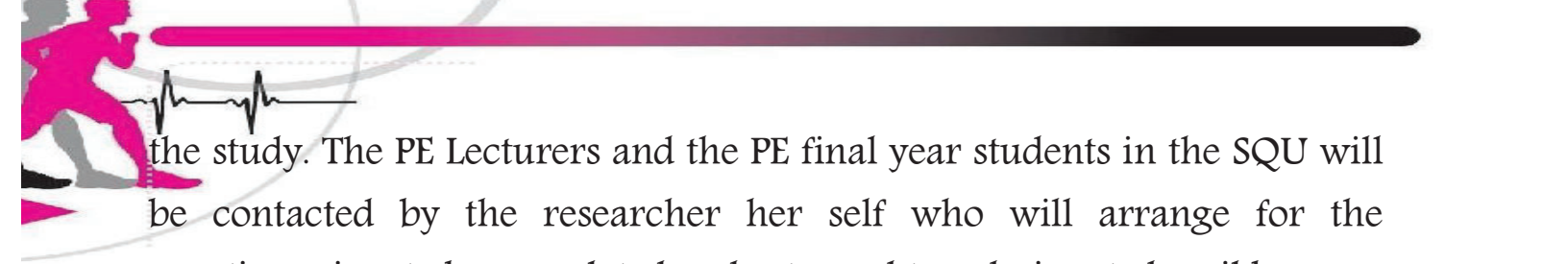
✚ The Questionnaire.

Start with (De Vaus, 1996) believe that the questionnaire is a very common method of collecting data in social research.

Wiersma (1986, p.179) defined questionnaire as interments “a list of questions or statements to which the individual is asked to respond in writing; the respond may range from a checkmark to an extensive written statement”.

According to Gay (2000, p.280) defined the questionnaire as an tool for gather “standardized quantifiable information from all members of a population or sample”.

To clarify, the survey will consist of scaled response and open-ended questions. The data collected from the survey will be analyzed using specialized computer software (SPSS). It is appreciated that differences will emerge between the responses of all female PE participant in Oman with varying levels of experience, and therefore, the questionnaire will be designed to allow for testing via ANOVA. The questionnaire will specifically designed for all female PE lecturers, PE inspectors, PE teachers, PE final year students. Since the Ministry of Education encourages research aimed at improving educational standards in Oman, the Ministry usually helps in the distribution and collection of questionnaires to appropriate respondents in all the regions. This assistance ensures that both PE teacher and PE inspectors are included in




the study. The PE Lecturers and the PE final year students in the SQU will be contacted by the researcher her self who will arrange for the questionnaires to be completed and returned to a designated mail box.

✚ The Interviews:

Nachmais and Nachmais (1996, p.232) define an interview by “face to face, interpersonal role situation in which an interview asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research hypotheses. The questions, their wording, and their sequence define the structure of the interview”.

As Oppenheim (2001) showing the advantages of semi-structured interviews by saying the questions do not have to take a rigid direction and may be asked in a flexible way. Moreover Morrison 1993 add to those advantages that there are more freedom and individuals The semi-structured interviews will provide more in-depth information about Evaluation of Physical Education programme. They will also be used in order to focus the discussion around central topics and yet allow for deviation based on the interviewee’s responses. All interviews will be tape-recorded and coded according to pre-determined categories in accordance with the literature review, and the researcher’s personal knowledge of the context in which the interviewees work, and the problems they encounter. The interviews will be chosen by the researcher for the benefits of the research finding in general. Some of the participant will be meeting the researcher for first time and since the people in Oman don’t like to express their feelings honestly this approach may not help. Also not all the female participants would like to be recorded it might lead to the loss of some points if the researcher has to write the responses while interviewing. In order to overcome these potential



problems In this case the researcher will conduct the interviews in a most cordial and informal atmosphere and at the respondents' convenient schedule.

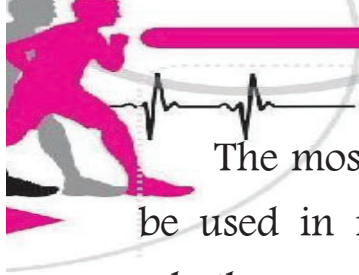
2. Sampling:

The research population will consist of all the PE Lecturer, inspectors, teachers in the field and PE final year students in Oman and the head of the physical education department in college of Education at SQU of which a sample of 200 respondents will be drawn for the questionnaire survey, using a two-stage quota and random sampling method. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 5-10 teachers. The number of interviewees will be determined by practicalities, such as teachers' availability to participate, and the time required properly processing and analysing each interview. At this point, the researcher estimates approximately six hours for each interview on the basis of one hour for the meeting, one hour for travelling, and four hours for transcription. This may well be an under-estimate and therefore, the final number will not be decided upon until some experience in the field has been gained during pre-tests.

3. Ethical Issues:

Ethics in research "As a researcher you have a duty to respect the people you are studying and you need to make sure you ask their explicit permission first, and then make very clear how you intend to collect, analyse and disseminate the data you have gathered by talking to them". (Grix 2004, p.142).

American Psychological Association (APA, 1998) was one of the first professional organisations to develop ethical guidelines for research, recognising both the needs of the research and the rights of participants.

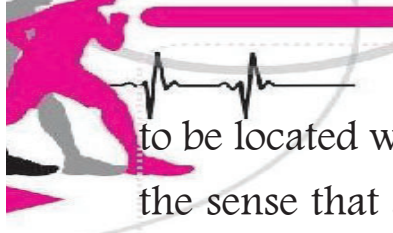


The most important safeguard built into these guidelines, which will be used in my research, is that it is the participant's right to decide whether or not to take part, and that she also has the right to discontinue the study at any time, even after having agreed to participate. Ethical research is bound to honour this right and can neither coerce participants nor prevent them from withdrawing. Informed consent is an important safeguard; that is, the researcher must provide participants with enough information about the research to enable them to make informed decisions about their participation. Another important safeguard concerns the responsibility of the researcher to maintain strict confidentiality of information gathered about participants. In this respect, the researcher will use code numbers rather than participants' names on records that contain sensitive information to help protect participants' confidentiality. All the personal data stored on computers and files will not be saved without the knowledge, agreement and access of participants.

Conclusion of the study:

The boundary between opposing research approaches such as positivist/descriptive can often be blurred, and in most cases the opposing approaches may share common features. For example, as Bassey (1996) rightly points out, both the positivist and interpretive paradigm involve the idea of observers trying to describe the phenomena of their surroundings.

It is therefore not a matter of right or wrong to decide upon any particular paradigm for this study. Be that as it may, based on the problem of the study, the research questions, and the aims of the study, and after a careful review of the various paradigms, this study can be said




to be located within the interpretive and action paradigms. Interpretive in the sense that attempts will be made, as explained in the methodology to elicit information from respondents, and since such responses are likely to be based on perceptions rather than empirical facts, the resulting data and their analysis would fit into the descriptive paradigm rather than the empiricist positivist paradigm.

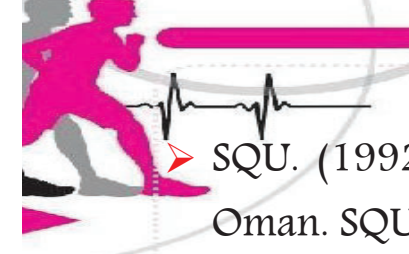
They take on a subjectivist epistemology which believes that reality can only be seen through framework of theory. This fits into the action research paradigm. Once more, according to Bassey (1996), the methods of data collection, analytical techniques and styles of presenting findings as embodied in action research reflect the needs of teachers the most. He supports this claim by pointing out that action research in education is grounded in school and classroom practice. The intention, as he put it, is to change action involving people. These perspectives relate most closely to the aim and design of the study, to evaluate the Evaluation of Physical Education programme by studying teachers, and other education personnel involved in the implementation of the program, with a view to suggesting ways of making it more effective and beneficial to the students and the Omani society in general

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