Teacher’s Perspectives on the Daily Physical Activity Policy and How Their Position Affects its Implementation in Ontario Classrooms

By

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Abstract

The author investigates how the perceptions teachers hold of daily physical activity (DPA) affect its administration in Ontario classrooms. He considers how teachers are incorporating DPA in classrooms, the opinions teachers hold on the effectiveness of DPA in classrooms, and the barriers to administrating DPA from teachers’ perspectives. Using a sample of three Ontario certified teachers, a qualitative study was done using semi-structured interviews in order to arrive at a rich set of data to enlighten the research purpose. The data was then analyzed and coded in order to uncover themes pertinent to the study. Ultimately, misrepresentations of DPA, teacher attitudes and school culture towards DPA, barriers to implementing DPA in the classroom, and finally, the positives aspects of DPA were the main focuses of the data collected. These themes reinforced the idea that more needs to be done in order to support and achieve a successful DPA program such as: a revision of the DPA document, a greater accountability by school administrators ensuring DPA is practiced, teachers taking ownership of DPA in their classrooms, and finally, the Ministry of Education, school administrators, and classroom teachers need to maintain an open dialogue to create a program that is novel and beneficial for students.

Key Words: daily physical activity (DPA), physical fitness, physical education, semi-structured interviews, teacher efficacy
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

Teachers in Ontario classrooms have a wide array of responsibilities and expectations that come with their occupation. In the grand scope of the profession, a teacher is expected to teach the pupils they come into contact with in their classrooms and entire school community. Within this broad scope of having to ‘teach’ there are numerous teachable moments most of which are highlighted in the Ontario curriculum documents. In addition to curriculum expectations that teachers must accomplish, they also have other expectations and policies that are to be implemented in their classrooms throughout the year. An example of one such policy is the Daily Physical Activity policy (DPA). This was put into effect in 2005, and the Ministry of Education (2006) mandated that teachers are expected to provide at least twenty minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity within instructional time, in addition to regular exercise in Physical Education and at recess breaks.

As a mandated policy, DPA becomes an important part of the curriculum, and its existence emphasizes the importance of raising awareness of being physically active throughout the day. However, within the teaching profession there is a lot of freedom when it comes to how an instructor structures their classroom and their daily schedule. In the midst of this freedom it has been documented that sometimes teachers do not practice DPA daily (Cothran, Kulinna, & Garn 2010; Donnelly & Lambourne 2011; Dwyer et al. 2003; Strampel et al. 2014). Barriers such as space, time, resources, adequate training and comfort level are usually cited as the main reasons for the lack of DPA (Cothran, Kulinna, & Garn 2010; Donnelly & Lambourne 2011; Dwyer et al. 2003; Strampel et al. 2014). The aim of this chapter is to provide an introduction to the steps needed to gain insight into the relationship and perspectives teachers have with DPA in their classrooms.
This research study will explore the elements of DPA, and the relationships and perspectives teachers carry about its existence and implementation.

This chapter explains the structure of this research, beginning with an explanation of the research problem, posed by the lack of actualization of specific mandated policies in classrooms. It will then articulate the purpose of pursuing information in light of the problem, and identify an overarching research question that will guide the rest of the research study. The researcher’s background and interest in pursuing the topic of this study will also be introduced, as well as an outline of the research methods used. A brief summary, as well as a look into the next section will conclude this chapter.

1.1 Research Problem

Despite the fact that DPA is a part of a set of policies that schools in Ontario are expected to follow, there seems to be a lag in its actualization in classrooms (Cothran, Kulinna, & Garn 2010; Donnelly & Lambourne 2011; Dwyer et al. 2003; Strampel et al. 2014). A situation where a mandated policy does not get practiced poses a structural as well as a social problem for the education system. Ultimately, when something like DPA is agreed upon and ratified, it is because the Ministry that overlooks the educational system sees it as a method for bettering and developing the institution. Furthermore, the acceptance of DPA into classrooms illustrates that physical activity is becoming a point of emphasis in our society and that the pursuit of a healthy active lifestyle is something that should be fostered at an early age in the elementary levels. I believe that integrating physical activity in classrooms is an essential component of continuing the growth of our educational system, and that it can be a rewarding experience for the school community. I believe that children need to have opportunities to use their energy constructively, and that physical activity can provide a level of catharsis during the school day. Students need an open and conducive learning environment, and the hope is that DPA can be one pathway to developing this environment. With that said, even though DPA is a mandated
policy in Ontario, DPA does not get implemented in every classroom and this can prove to be problematic on many levels.

1.2 Research Purpose

Through this study, I would like to gain insights into how educators’ attitudes and their perspective on DPA can influence its implementation and administration in the classroom. I truly believe that the set of beliefs a teacher carries with them has an effect on those they teach. I want to explore the influence of teachers being positive role models for their students, and if their willingness and level of engagement in a policy, like DPA, is transferred to their students. I am worried that teachers who are unwilling, and fail, to implement DPA are furthering a discourse in their students that physical activity is unimportant and does not have a place in our academic classrooms. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on how teachers have used physical activity to support student learning and how they perceive physical activity has positively or negatively affected the classroom dynamic and learning experience of their students.

As a teacher candidate, I believe it is important to further my understanding of how my own set of beliefs will influence my future classroom. Thus, through this study, I hope to add to the discourse surrounding the role and practice of DPA as well as gain an awareness of how a teacher’s perception has the ability to filter into their classroom practice.

1.3 Research Questions

The overarching research question pertaining to this paper is: “How do the perceptions teachers hold of DPA affect its administration in Ontario classrooms?”

Subsidiary questions:

- How are teachers incorporating DPA in classrooms?
- What are teachers’ opinions on the effectiveness of DPA in classrooms?
What are the barriers to administrating DPA from teachers’ perspectives?

1.4 Introduction to Research Methods

This research study will follow a qualitative research study approach by first reviewing existing literature relevant to the topic. I will then begin collecting data through semi-structured interviews with criteria-met interviewees. Merriam (2009), states the importance of providing questions that are flexible and interpretable for the interviewee in order to arrive at a rich set of data. Qualitative data allows for the exploration of the meaning people have constructed in their world and how personal perspectives can be reflected in data collection (Merriam 2009). Thus, the semi-structured interviews that are conducted in this research study will focus on acquiring the perspectives of the participants and presenting them in a manner that relates and engages in a discourse about DPA. Following the interviews, there will be a method of qualitative data analysis through identifying and organizing themes unearthed from the data, demonstrating the significance of the findings, and outlining areas for future research.

1.5 Background of Researcher

Physical activity has been a main tenet of my life for as long as I can remember. From a young age I was fortunate enough to be surrounded by healthy and active role models, such as my parents and friends. I was privileged enough to have the opportunity to be enrolled in a variety of sports outside of school, and to continue being physically active in school teams throughout elementary and secondary school. That being said, policies such as DPA in Ontario were implemented once I had already left elementary school. Although I was always genuinely interested as to how it was used in a classroom environment, I did not have the opportunity to experience it first-hand. During my time at York University I took classes on determinism, exploring how our actions have reactions, and how our actions have an effect on those around us. I feel that as a teacher candidate the decisions we make, and our level of determinism, has a large impact on our students.
That is why I want to gain insights into the perceptions teachers carry about DPA and its eventual implementation. Furthermore, I want better understand if a teacher’s perception of DPA can be transferred to their students and impact their perceptions of physical activity. It is important for me to understand the creation of classroom structures, and how we as teachers have an impact on our classroom environment through our actions and set of beliefs. This topic is important to me because it explores an area that I am passionate about as well as a subject that I believe will aid me in my future as an educator.

1.6 Overview of the Paper

Chapter One has outlined the context, identified the research problem and stated the principle research question that will explore the purpose of this research paper. In the following pages, this paper will build upon the ideas put forward in this chapter in the hopes of furthering the discourse surrounding DPA and associated teacher perceptions. Chapter Two will investigate and engage in the existing literature on the topics of DPA and its implementation in classrooms, with the hope of familiarizing the reader with the topic at hand. Chapter Three will discuss the methodology of qualitative research as well as the design and procedure that will be used in the data collection of this paper. Chapter Four will then reveal the insights gained from the data collection outlined in Chapter Three. There will be an exploration of common themes found across the data collected, as well as a look into the significance and utility of these findings. Finally, Chapter Five will aim to connect the previous four chapters, and examine how the findings and insights gained in the data collection process provides insights into the topic of teachers’ perceptions of DPA and how it effects the policy’s implementation in classrooms. The final chapter will also include ideas for the future of this area study of study as well as recommendations based on the insights gained. The paper will be concluded by a list of
academic references as well as a set of appendices, including the consent letter and interview protocol involved in the research study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Chapter Introduction

The need to move is an innate human condition. We as a species move to achieve a purpose. We can move across a room to retrieve an object or run away from a situation in order to flee from danger. Movement represents a level of physical activity (PA) that our bodies are capable of producing. This chapter will explore the idea of PA and review the literature surrounding PA within schools, paying particular attention to the Daily Physical Activity Program (DPA), and how the philosophy and implementation of PA within classrooms and the school community is connected to various health issues. Definitions, such as physical education (PE), DPA, and vigorous physical activity (VPA), will be discussed and outlined, which will be beneficial in understanding and differentiating each concept in later parts of the work. Using these definitions as a base, there will be an exploration in the areas of health and obesity and how PA and physical education can help combat these health concerns. A review of the various perspectives surrounding DPA and PA in schools, with specific attention paid to positive outcomes such as community building, while balancing with the negative outcomes will follow. Continuing the discourse will incorporate a discussion of PA from a practical lens, focusing on how to best implement PA in schools as well as shedding light on the culture that surrounds PA and PE. In conclusion, there will be a discussion of how PA culture must be developed in order to arrive at a more positive effective learning environment for our classrooms and the literature found will illuminate the ways in which to arrive at a more holistic environment.

2.1 Definitions

The definition surrounding the ideas of fitness and PA is fluid. PA broadly encompasses movement that takes place on a daily basis and can be defined as walking, stretching, performance of daily chores, and participation in sports (Alberta Ministry of
Education, 2006). These activities serve a purpose that is linked towards an individual’s level of fitness. Every individual has a level of fitness that corresponds to his or her level of physical activity. It is imperative to thus think of PA and its association with fitness as ongoing, rather than static, with the potential for improvement every day. In schools teachers have the potential to educate about physical fitness through physical education, DPA, and emphasizing vigorous levels of physical activity.

2.1.1 Physical education.

The concept of PE refers to and encompasses the Ontario subject area of Heath and Physical Education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). PE thus plays a role in a student’s academic and school experience as it is part of the government-mandated curriculum and as a result, must be taught to students in all Ontario public schools. This is evident in the Heath and Physical Education Ontario Curriculum vision and goals, where it states that this curriculum is supposed to develop competency in movement, as well as an understanding and development of personal fitness and ongoing pursuit of a healthy active lifestyle (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). PE is not a method for practicing and learning sports. Sports can be classified as a participation in a specific activity, whereas PE is described an educational experience through physical means (Green, 2008).

2.1.2 Daily physical activity.

DPA refers to the policy implementing the administration of PA inside Ontario classrooms on a daily basis starting in 2005 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). DPA is an element of the Heath and Physical Education Ontario Curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015) where: “Students are also required to participate in sustained moderate to VPA for a minimum of twenty minutes each day (including warm-up and cool-down procedures) in order to improve or maintain their level of physical fitness” (p. 11). However, DPA is intended to promote the pursuit and maintenance of a healthy
active lifestyle, rather than simply force students to be active. Ideally, DPA encourages students to be lively and carry on active living outside of the classroom; because of this teachers are encouraged to allow for student choice and take into consideration each student’s ability by varying the form of intensity for each method of DPA (Alberta Ministry of Education, 2006).

2.1.3 Vigorous physical activity.

DPA recognizes the idea of varying levels of PA in order to accommodate and meet the individual needs of students. The idea behind VPA is that PA should be classified by the intensity of the activity taking place. The reason why VPA is stressed is because it involves the exertion of genuine effort taking place during the activity. A simple example of would be walking from point A to B versus running from point A to B; the idea behind VPA is that each student is pushing him or herself to move past a leisure walk and maximize his or her individual output. DPA is formatted around this idea of endorsing vigorous forms of PA taking place in the classroom rather than a leisure stretch or walk (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). Strampel et al. (2014) references work from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (2013) where they recommended that youth aged 5 to 17 years complete 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity everyday; but in practice less than ten percent of this age group meets this recommendation. Thus, a healthy life style is not achieved and maintained through PA alone, it must be realized through a higher level—namely VPA.

2.2 Health

The following will discuss the importance of physical activity and how it has an effect on health and wellness. The idea of individual physical fitness will be discussed and the issue of obesity will be raised. These topics are discussed with the intention of introducing the role of DPA in school
2.2.1 Physical fitness.

While PA refers to the active participation of a given movement or activity, physical fitness (PF) is related to the wellbeing of the individual participating. Thus, PF is directly related to the idea of the health of an individual, rather than their ability to perform a specific activity. A student may be able to demonstrate a strong ability to perform an exercise but have a poor level of PF, or a student may struggle with a particular activity, but have a healthy level of PF. Thus PA, exercise and PF are all unique constructs. With regards to PF there are health aspects involved such as an individual's level of cardiovascular endurance, muscle strength and flexibility (Caspersen, Powell & Christenson, 1985). These health qualities can in fact translate to a higher performance in athletic ability, but the two are not necessarily dependent on one another. Ultimately, PF becomes about from being able to perform activities characterized by vigor and the individual begins to participate in activities that are associated with a low risk of diseases that are associated with physical inactivity (Pate, 1988). PF is a state of being, it is a level or status that every individual has and can be improved upon through healthy activity living, nutrition, PA, and exercise.

2.1.2 Obesity.

Weight is a highly scrutinized aspect of body image in the media as well as being the subject of teasing and bullying in school communities. The fact is that obesity in youth populations in Canada is a contemporary and ongoing health issue is presented by Shields (2006) as cited in Strampel (2014): “In Canada during 2004, 26% (1.6 million) of children aged 2 to 7 were overweight and 8% (0.5 million) of them were considered obese; this is an 11% increase from the combined 15% overweight/obesity rate in 1978-79” (p. 14). The problem is not that youth are obese and that they may or may not be teased, but rather, obesity has legitimate effects on the health of an individual. Among youth (aged 12-17) who were overweight or obese in 2014, 56.6% reported very good or excellent health while 74.9% of the rest of the youth population reported very good or
excellent overall health (Statistics Canada 2014). While these individuals may initially report good health, there is a link between obesity and health complications. Excess weight in childhood has been linked to type 2 diabetes and hypertension, due to the fact that obese children tend to become obese adults (Statistics Canada 2014). Thus, obesity is a real issue that needs to be addressed.

As obesity is a public health concern, it is important to explore and find methods for preventing and reducing childhood obesity. The promotion of a healthy active lifestyle, as outlined in DPA, proves to be a good starting point. Although there are a multitude of factors, the two most preventable causes of obesity are a lack of PA and the consumption of an overly high caloric diet (Strampel et al. 2014; McKenzie & Kahan, 2008). Thus, in our schools, Health and Physical Education should support ongoing PA in and outside of school, as well as highlight the importance of good nutrition. DPA, as well as recess, represents a sound method for promoting PA. In addition, by providing recreational game equipment for children to use during recess, school staff and administrators can help increase students’ self-motivated participation in more vigorous levels of activity (Verstraete, Cardon, De Clercq, & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2006). Another method for combating obesity is limiting the amount of high caloric foods sold at a particular school. This can be done by partnering with healthy food alternative programs as referenced in Story, Nanney, & Schwartz (2009) such as: “Farm-to-school programs link local farmers providing fresh locally grown produce to school food service cafeterias” (p. 81). With students spending a significant portion of their day inside of schools, providing healthy food options is not only a great way to battle high caloric diets, but also to educate students about potential food options for when they head home.

2.2 Positive Teacher Perspectives on DPA

DPA as a program provides the opportunity to build a school community through an activity that is mandated across grade levels. As noted in an interview conducted by
Strampel et al. (2014), one particular teacher enjoys a regular approached to DPA: “DPA becomes part of the regular school routine, not only saving time but also creating a school norm that encourages the participation of all students and staff” (p. 20). Through a school-based approach, DPA not only facilitates the need for PA during the day but it can also be an opportunity to build school unity and enhance the community (Strampel et al. 2014; Zarrett, Skiles, Wilson, & McClintock. 2012). Also, having specific DPA plans for the entire school makes the school community accountable for participating each and every day. Through a school-based approach there would be more structure and it could be found in the form of announcements that become a naturalized part of the day, rather than it occurring randomly leading to more opportunities for lost time due to problems with potential transitional aspects of DPA.

PA provides a way to identify and address different types of learning in the classroom. Not all students learn effectively through one teaching style and so incorporating PA in lessons could be an opportunity to support more physical/kinesthetic learners. Finally, as outlined in Zarrett, Skiles, Wilson, & McClintock’s (2012) study, PA can be done at any time of the day, including providing afterschool programing focusing on PA. After school programs not only allows for the promotion of PA, but they also provide students with an understanding of the importance for being physically active because teachers can go further than the recommended 20 minutes outlined in DPA (Zarrett et al. 2012).

2.3 Negative Teacher Perspectives

While the literature acknowledges that there are positive perspectives with regards to DPA implementation, there also issues that exist. Specifically, the literature raises that teachers have had issues with physical space, time and finally the culture that surrounds DPA as a school initiative.
2.3.1 Space

Teachers are ultimately given the responsibility to incorporate PA in their classrooms. However, an issue such as space becomes a barrier to its implementation. As explored in the work of Donnelly & Lambourne (2011): “It is challenging to provide activities that do not require reconfiguration of the classroom yet provide adequate intensity and energy expenditure to impact fitness and fatness” (p. 38). The size of an individual classroom becomes a real problem when trying to incorporate an activity that supports vigorous levels of physical activity, because there is only a finite amount of space available to teachers in the classroom. The same issue arises when teachers have to make use of a portable classroom, where space can be even more limited than in a regular classroom. Thus, many teachers feel they cannot carry out DPA and are restricted to their allocated gym periods (Dwyer et al. 2003). However, the issue of space is not the only barrier in the eyes of teachers.

2.3.2 Time

In addition to space, time is often highlighted as another issue with regards to the completion of DPA. In response to a question about DPA put forward by Strampel et al. (2014), a teacher responded: “There’s not enough time in the day to meet all of the curriculum requirements, particularly in a split grade! It is difficult to fit it all in” (p. 17). Teachers become overwhelmed with the requirements to meet the needs of the traditional academic curriculum that they overlook something deemed an additional responsibility—DPA. Ideally, teachers would have resources and ideas that can quickly and easily be set up and executed (Strampel et al. 2014). This lack of time not only affects DPA, but also impacts the carrying out of PE. The feeling of a lack of time in an instructional day leads to PE becoming a version of supervised play rather than academic instruction as per the curriculum (Morgan & Hansen, 2007). The idea of supervised play should not be surprising, as classroom teachers might not be comfortable with teaching PE due to a lack of experience or training. This means that individuals are asked to teach a topic in which
they have limited instructional knowledge. Thus, the teachers directing PE also contribute to the problem in addition to the existing issues of time and space (Cothran, Kulinna, & Garn 2010).

2.3.3 The culture behind physical activity.

The construction of the education system emphasizes the achievements of high grades across academic subject areas. This perspective creates a hierarchy of subject areas where languages and mathematics takes a priority over the arts and physical education. As noted by Dwyer et al. (2003), PE does not hold much weight in comparison to higher learning subject areas. As a result, parents begin to think that a lower mark in PE does not really matter in the grand scheme of their child’s education. This lack of accountability from the student has a trickle down effect to the administration of PE and even DPA. Knowing that their parents place less emphasis on their PE grades, students can take it as an opportunity to not exert their full effort. This in turn leads to DPA being perceived as ‘playtime’ by those involved (Strampel et al. 2014). The attitudes and pressures that students come in contact with from their parents and teachers have a direct effect on their behaviour. If teachers and parents do not take something like PE or DPA seriously then the children will not either, which might lead to all parties treating the subject like supervised play. With PE typically being deemed a lower priority a response to this might be the inclusion of physical education specialists on staff to implement HPE (Dwyer et al. 2003).

2.4 Strategies for Physical Activity Implementation

While the literature exposes that there are barriers to implementing DPA in the classroom there are strategies that are available to aid its completion. One of the most effective ways to implement PA in schools is through having teachers who care about the topic be responsible for administering PA activities. As discussed in Parks, Solmon, & Lee (2007): “It is clear from previous work, however, that teacher efficacy is an
important element when teachers adopt or embrace new programs or instructional interventions” (p. 318). In order to achieve a higher level of interest and participation, the teachers must be committed to the program/subject. This can be a method for changing the culture of unimportance that surrounds PA and PE. There have been PA initiative programs that show engagement by staff is critical to effectively administering the program, as found by Zarrett, Skiles, Wilson, & McClintock (2012). These researchers recommend that individuals who are not comfortable and do not have a desire to engage in program components, should not be considered for their program staff positions. This is because their findings indicate that having unengaged staff members can negatively affect program implementation. Continuing along this line of thinking leads to speculation that having devoted PE teachers could challenge the culture that frustrates the administering of PE. Morgan & Hansen (2007) and Sallis et al (1997) discuss how having PE specialists correlates to higher academic and developmental achievement in primary school children in comparison to students without PE specialists as instructors. Ultimately, for PA and PE to become a more respected field of study and area of concern within the classroom teachers must first believe in its importance. Too often access to recess, PE and PA is contingent on children’s classroom behaviour or academic standing. Children labeled as “problem” students by their teachers therefore may not get to participate in PA as often as other “well-behaved” pupils. The truth of the matter is these so-called “problem” students might in fact be the most in need of PA (McKenzie & Kahan, 2008). This mindset looks at being physically active as a privilege when it really should be considered their right. No teacher would take away a student’s opportunity to eat their lunch, and that is the same outlook teachers need to have with PA in their school community.
2.5 Moving Forward

The education system has a responsibility to get involved in the issue of the level of their students’ PA. Students spend most of their lives in schools and so the environment they are placed in must be one where they can find positive role models for them to learn how and why they should live a healthy and active life. Many times parents have a misguided perception of how active or healthy their child is because they depend on visual cues such as their energy level or weight to deem their fitness and activity level as normal (Bentley et al. 2012). However, these cues are often erroneous as a perceived ‘skinny’ child can have a poor PF level. Thus, this child will not receive the proper PA needed for development because the parent associates ‘skinny’ with healthy. Teachers and schools can look to take initiative through developing platforms such as a Healthy Homework initiative as discussed in McPhee, Duncan, Schofield, & Zinn (2010), where students are given an activity and nutrition plan to follow at home. This kind of thinking into the issue of PA and students, is one of the elements of PA policy in schools that can be continually improved upon. The more policy reflects an increase in investments from a faculty training perspective as well as a development of facilities and programs the more PA will be respected and appreciated in our communities and classrooms (Lagarde & LeBlanc, 2010).

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the definitions that surround the culture of PA within the classroom as well as the reasons why it is important to get students engaged and participating in a healthy active lifestyle from a young age. I have discussed the various perspectives surrounding DPA as a method for implementing PA on a daily basis, from both a positive and negative perspective, as well as strategies for putting PA in place. What I have discovered in this literature review is that policy makers are looking to place ownership on every individual teacher to instruct students on what a healthy active
lifestyle is. The fact remains that many of the teachers conducting the instruction could themselves be poor role models and not value PF. What I believe is needed is a genuine involvement from teachers and instructors so that students receive PE that is truly lived, and understood, by the people teaching it to them. The needs of teachers and what can be done to assist the implementation of DPA will discussed in the coming chapters.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.0 Chapter Introduction

The research that was conducted during this study explored the perspectives teachers hold about Daily Physical Activity (DPA) as a policy, and whether their perspectives had an impact on the administering of DPA in the classroom. Data was collected through interviews conducted with a selection of teachers from Ontario classrooms in order to gain insights into the topic of DPA and its implementation. The ability to gain insights from teachers and their experience directly was a critical element and aid in forming opinions and building the significance in the purpose of this study.

This chapter explains the methodology that went into the data collection portion of this paper. It begins with a review of the overall research approach as well as an overview of the procedure that was followed. It details the criteria for the selection of participants for this study, as well provides an explanation of the data analysis process. Furthermore, this chapter goes on to explore any ethical considerations, pertinent to the study, in addition to highlighting the strengths and limitations of the research process and findings. A brief summary, as well as a look into the next section concludes this chapter.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach and involved the examination existing literature relating to the topic, as well as interviews with three Ontario teachers. A qualitative research approach allows for a holistic method in terms of data collection. Normally in a research study, there is the potential for a power dynamic to be developed between the researcher and participants. However, through implementing a qualitative research approach, the separation between subject and researcher is limited, as both parties are critical to the completion of the study. As Zeichner (2006) states, the practice of teaching is often separated from academia, but a good academic researcher in the area of education should be able to fuse these perspectives together.
Given the nature of the research question, which involves gaining insights into the perspectives of teachers about the policy and implementation of DPA, a quasi-partnership with teachers during research was beneficial to gain genuine understandings. As Creswell (2013) explains, qualitative research allows for the voices of participants to be properly reflected and allows for the researcher to engage in reflexive thinking and writing when interpreting the data that has been collected. The participants in this study are very important, as they are the main source of data will be collected. Therefore, it is imperative to allow a platform for them to experience respect and have their voices heard as not only as instruments, but also as people and academics.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument of data collection within this study is semi-structured interviews conducted with three teachers in Ontario. The questions were chosen in such a way as to allow the interviewer and interviewee to engage in the discourse surrounding DPA in an accessible manner, which allowed for the most authentic answers and conversations with the interviewee as possible (Merriam 2009). Teachers were approached professionally through an initial email and every interview was done outside of school time on a strictly volunteer basis.

In a qualitative setting, interviews provide an opportunity to gain authentic rich data from multiple perspectives. Turner (2010) explains that interviews are a valuable tool in acquiring data based on its ability to be shaped by the researcher, but still reflect the personal experiences and viewpoints of the interviewee. Qualitative research can also allow for a level of comfort for the participant, in that interviews take place in a neutral setting rather than a controlled environment like a laboratory (Creswell 2013). Allowing both parties in an interview to be comfortable is key as it permits an open dialogue to develop. Ultimately, the interviews were carried out as semi-structured conversations with the goal of arriving at rich dialogue.
3.3 Participants

The following section of Chapter Three will investigate the criteria that were established in order for the selection of interview participants. The participants in this study have practiced or are currently practicing within both the Catholic and Public Toronto and York Region District School at the elementary school level in either the primary, junior or intermediate divisions. All participants have also had experience teaching with the policy of DPA implemented in their schools and classrooms.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria.

I have established a set of criteria in order to guide my selection of participants for this research study. Participants reflect teachers that I have either had a professional relationship with from my past, either through volunteer experience or practicum experience or have been referenced to me as valuable sources of information by colleagues. In addition, participants represent have different levels of experience, but their teaching experience including time after the DPA policy was put into effect in 2005. While gaining insights into the past and exploring how physical activity was incorporated in classrooms prior to DPA, it is imperative that participants can reflect and engage with the current policy in place. There is no level of physical fitness or association with sports needed to be a participant, and finding participants with varying levels of physical fitness was sought in order to provide a multitude of perspectives surrounding physical activity in the classroom. Following the sampling criteria allowed me to utilize my limited selection of interviewees in order to arrive at rich data that will allow me to engage in reflexive thinking and writing.

3.3.2 Sampling procedures.

I have used the connections I have made within the teaching community, as well as suggestions for participants, in order to arrive at a pool of interview candidates for this research study. The sampling procedure in this research study must be thoughtful because
of the nature of the small number of participants being used to arrive at a rich collection of data. Candidates were given an overview of what the interviews would entail and were encouraged to give feedback and if they felt their position could aid the research study. Furthermore, potential interviewees were asked to provide contacts with other teachers that they felt had the perspectives and experiences that would help with the undertaking of this research study.

### 3.3.3 Participant biographies.

Participant A is a teacher with three years of teaching experience in the elementary school division. They consider themself active and place an importance on being physically fit in order to maintain their personal health. As a teacher with the least amount of experience in this study, Participant A, was imperative in order to establish the perspectives of how new teachers deal with implementing DPA in their daily schedule.

Participant B is a teacher that taught for over twenty-five years including during the implementation of DPA and retired in 2010, four years after DPA was implemented. Participant B considered themself integral to the initial implementation of DPA in their school and took on responsibility to educate their colleagues through personal development opportunities that were presented by their school board. They were an accomplished rower during their university life and raised their family with an emphasis on sports and the importance of maintaining a healthy active lifestyle. Participant B is important to this research study because of their teaching experience during the time DPA was newly implemented in schools by the government.

Participant C is a teacher that possesses teaching experience abroad as well as fifteen years of experience in the primary/junior division in Ontario elementary schools. They did not consider themself very active or involved in sports, but explained that
maintaining their physical health was one of their priorities. Participant C is important to this research study because they provide data and experience during the time of DPA implementation as well as experience during the present time of the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis took place once the interviews had been conducted. Once the data was collected the information was transcribed, it was also organized and coded in order to develop common themes that aided in the process of analyzing and interpreting the data found in the interviews.

Once this information has been organized the data found will be used in cross-reference to the existing research that was discussed in Chapter Two during the literature review. As Creswell (2013) explains, preparing and organizing data and then linking existing academic literature allows for the larger meanings of the data collected to be explored.

Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout this research study. The analysis I drew from the data reflected the purpose of this research paper as well as the themes and codes that were organized after the research interviews. Within the process of data analysis there was also a consideration of null data, the absence of particular data, in my analysis. It is important to discuss topics and themes that are brought up, but it is equally important to discuss and illuminate topics that were not spoken and why those ideas were lacking in interviews, literature or across both. Through this data analysis themes were consolidated and identified in order to raise questions and make recommendations for future research.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

Every research study opens the door for ethical issue to exist and develop. Creswell (2013) underlines that in order to combat ethical issues, the researcher must take
steps to reflect and anticipate what situations could arrive, or be brought up during the process of data collection. Since the data collected in this research study was gathered through interviews, it was essential to develop nonintrusive questions that were accessible to each participant. It was equally as important for the researcher to consider the active interview process and ensure a safe and positive experience for each interviewee.

Otherwise, there are no known risks in the participation of this study. Participants were nevertheless provided with a consent form, found in Appendix A, which acknowledges their agreement to participate in the research study. Participants were also assured the right to anonymity and the right to omit the data collected from their interview at any time. Interviewees were also given the questions that will be asked during their interview ahead of time in order for them to achieve a comfort level, and ease any anxiety they may have about the whole interview process. Throughout the completion of this research study, steps were taken to maintain a dialogue with participants and provide a level of transparency between the parties involved. In addition to these steps taken, participants were assured that any data collected will be kept on a password protected laptop, and any existing data used will be destroyed after five years following the completion of this research study.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

The most evident limitation in this study is that the data collection process features a small scope of participants. In most qualitative studies sample sizing can be an issue when interpreting data and trying to connect overarching themes. Given the time constraints and nature of this paper within OISE’s Master of Teaching program, a smaller sample was necessary. However, rich data was still achieved through a small sample through asking engaging and explorative questions during the interview process, with a suitable selection of participants.
Another limitation is the ethical review criteria put in place by OISE, with regards to the limited number of participants that researchers were able to work with. As a highly structured research study, researchers were given specific limitations of who was deemed acceptable participants; unfortunately, students and parents were not eligible. Their perspectives would have been very valuable, as they both would have brought a unique lens to the issues surrounding DPA in classrooms. Another limitation placed by the nature of the ethical boundaries of the university was the necessity of the interview process and the lack of flexibility to engage in other methods of data collection, such as surveys or any classroom based observations of students or teachers.

While there are specific limitations of this study, there are also strengths that should be considered. Being given the opportunity to interview teachers directly presents the researcher, and readers of this paper, with a window into the subject’s actual perspectives and feelings. This method of research provides participants with the opportunity to leave their personal stamp on the research study, and really allows for a holistic research study that unites practicing teachers and academics, as Zeichner (2006) recommends. However, with that being said, researchers need to be aware of the possibility that an interviewee may be providing socially desirable responses that are inauthentic in an attempt to appease the researcher (Zarrett, Skiles, Wilson, & McClintock 2012). While no research study will be without its limitations, it is important to address them and be transparent with the reader in order to foster a trustworthy reading and academic experience.

3.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research approach, procedures as well as the elements and criteria that determined the participants in the research study. The overall approach of this research study has been structured within the ethical parameters of OISE’s Master of Teaching program, which in turn provides its own set of limitations
and strengths. Ultimately, the methodology yielded rich data through a commitment to the research study and contributed to answering the research purpose that was designed and outlined throughout this paper. Through the interviews I conducted and the data that was organized and analyzed, I have been able to build significance within the discourse of teachers’ perspectives of DPA and its implementation in classrooms.

The data that has been collected and organized from the interviews will be presented in the form of key themes in the coming chapter. The insights gained from this data will then be examined in contrast to the existing literature outlined in Chapter Two and will provide greater meaning and significance towards the topic under study.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter identifies and discusses information gathered through the process of conducting research interviews with three separate participants: Participant A, B and C. The information gathered during the research interviews has been analyzed and viewed under the scope of this paper’s research question: How do the perceptions teachers hold of DPA affect its administration in Ontario classrooms? At the same time, a number of key subsidiary question were considered: How are teachers incorporating DPA in classrooms? What are teachers’ opinions on the effectiveness of DPA in classrooms? And, what are the barriers to administrating DPA from teachers’ perspectives? Connections are drawn between the personal experiences and opinions of the participants and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The connections and findings of this chapter are organized into four main themes:

1. The Misrepresentation of DPA
2. Teacher Attitudes and School Culture towards DPA
3. Barriers to Implementing DPA in the Classroom
4. The Positives Aspects of DPA

Each theme is introduced and examined through the perspective of each participant. Following a brief introduction, each theme will be divided into subthemes to organize the various elements involved. Throughout this process there will be a connection to the information retrieved from the research interviews and the existing material found in the literature review of Chapter Two, which will help to draw out the significance of each theme. Finally, this chapter will be completed with a conclusion that summarizes the contents of this chapter and begins to make suggestions for next steps in the context of the research question.
4.1 The Misrepresentation of DPA

In conducting the interviews, it became apparent that teachers held quite different understandings of what constituted DPA. Even though each participant understood the official definition of the policy outlined by the Ministry of Ontario, there were still discrepancies in their practice. The understanding ranged from the idea of any level of physical activity equating to DPA to DPA being viewed as an opportunity for a break rather than physical stimulant.

4.1.1 Opportunities for physical activity equating to DPA.

Upon conducting interviews, it became noticeable that participants would shape the notion of DPA to fit with their teaching practice. For example, Participant A noted: “I think kids are active regardless because we also have recess, right? At recess the majority of our kids are very active. I know in some places they may not even have recess.” The idea of any type of physical activity becoming DPA is something that was shared by others. Since students had the opportunity to be physically active outside of class, the instructor would not feel guilty for not providing actual DPA opportunities in the classroom. Participant C treated extracurricular opportunities similar to how Participant A referenced recess: “We have lots of teams… The kids are physically active during the day through gym and through sports teams or through clubs, and [so they] participate [in that way].” The responsibility for students being physically active is again placed on events happening outside the classroom setting and places the burden on other teachers or practices to provide an opportunity for students to be physically active. What is important to note is how both participants are quick to assume that their students are physically active, and that neither comment on the students that are not members of school sports teams or the students that do not run around during recess.

In Ontario’s curriculum, however, a clear distinction is drawn between DPA and other physical activities such as recess or team sports. In its inception, DPA was regarded as a space for all students to have access to vigorous activity for at least twenty minutes a
day (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). Using the classroom as the physical space for DPA was designed with the intention that all students would have equal access to a level of physical activity that is linked with providing health benefits such as combating obesity and emotional wellbeing (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006; Strampel et al. 2014; Verstraete, Cardon, De Clercq, & De Bourdeaudhuij, 2006). Once the space for DPA is altered, the intended outcomes may be hampered, leading to a system and structure that is no longer serving its original purpose.

4.1.2 DPA as a break.

The more extreme example of participants skewing the idea of DPA is when they began to associate DPA with activities that did not require any level of physical activity. Participant C noted that while DPA as a twenty-minute activity may not occur consistently, they have breaks instead: “What I do is use brain breaks… When the kids can’t really focus anymore or I find that they need a break, we stop and we do something, but not really planning a lesson with that in mind.” Here the teacher assesses their students and provides them with an instructional break when they seem to need it. The problem here is that these types of breaks rely on the teacher’s subjectivity, which may result in inconsistent practice, whereas with DPA it should happen regardless of the visual cues students may be transmitting to their teacher. Participant A also mentions the idea of breaks in general: “Sometimes, just a period where they can relax also goes as far as a period where they are physically active because, if their mind isn’t stimulated, their body has a chance to rejuvenate.” Teachers may seek ways to stimulate their students with the purpose of getting back on task to academic learning. This, however, is distinct from the purpose of DPA, which seeks to get students physically active with the hopes that it can impact their physical fitness (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006), while teachers are instead starting to emphasize attention span and the general focus of their students.
Through this theme the purpose of DPA has shifted in the mindset of the teachers from getting students active to getting students refocused on academic lessons. Participant B, who taught during the inception of DPA, echoes the original train of thought with regards to DPA: “The goals were really important. The kids had to know the goals of DPA and that they were responsible for it, [they were responsible] for their own health.” Originally a lot of emphasis was placed on promoting the healthy, active lifestyle and the community building involved in DPA (Strampel et al. 2014; Zarrett, Skiles, Wilson, & McClintock. 2012). However, when contrasting this view with actual practice, there is a suggestion that there has been a shift in the purpose of DPA and what the end goal of DPA is. Ultimately, much of what is done with DPA is highly dependent on the school climate and perspectives of the instructor with the responsibility to administer DPA.

4.2 Teacher Attitudes and School Culture

The theme of teacher attitudes and school culture focuses on the individual beliefs and perspectives of the participants of the research interviews as well as their commentary on their school culture stemming from their administration. The attitudes of the participants in this study varied on their perspectives of DPA. The individual beliefs and perspectives of the participants greatly affect how they implemented DPA within their classrooms. The efficacy of each teacher, and the perspectives of school administration, directly affect the overall school climate with regards to DPA implementation.

4.2.1 Teacher efficacy.

An essential component of DPA in schools is for teachers to display a willingness to administer activity in their classroom. During the research interviews, both Participants A and C displayed low levels of efficacy while Participant B demonstrated how approaching DPA with an eagerness to produce an intended result can lead to a
successful DPA program. Participant A had an apathetic view with regards to the state of DPA: “It’s almost unrealistic to say when you are a new teacher, ‘Here, set aside twenty minutes for this,’ because it’s unrealistic. I’d be lying to you if I say you’d have an easy time doing it.” Here Participant A refers to the position of new teachers having a tough time incorporating DPA and because of this difficulty it becomes a perceived unrealistic expectation. This positionality influences a negative approach to DPA before it has even had the chance to be integrated. Participant C reverberates A’s sentiment. When asked if external resources or workshops would help with engaging with DPA, they responded: “No, I think that if you go on the computer and Google something, you will find it… Its just be willing, finding the time to do it.” This notion of overlooking substantial resources and putting the onus on the teacher to “Google it” and find the time is interesting because it would take additional time to find these activities on their own in comparison to having resources available.

Participant B contrasts with the viewpoints of Participants A and C by providing an outlook of what the perspective and attitude was surrounding DPA at its’ inception. When asked about the general feeling among staff when DPA was announced as a policy, B responded: “There was a learning curve. People weren’t really comfortable at first trying to fit it in the classroom, but by the end of a year of doing it, it became a part of your regular daily lesson plan.” Participant B acknowledged the difficulty with having to incorporate something new, but in their experience once it was practiced enough it became a natural part of the day and lesson. Participant B mirrors what Parks, Solmon and Lee (2007) try to convey in their discussion of efficacy: “Collective efficacy influences the willingness of individuals and teams to work toward intended goals, with higher levels of efficacy translating into stronger motivation” (p. 317). When an individual approaches a problem or situation with a high level of efficacy, it enables the individual to think positively and tackle a situation in a way that is constructive. When teachers approach DPA with a defeatist mindset, it becomes difficult to plan or engage
with the content. The attitudes and perspectives held by teachers are just as important as the planning component with regards to DPA and facilitate a higher level of achieving specific goals within a DPA scope. While the attitudes of the three participants emerged during the research interviews, a subtheme involving each of their school administrations was also explored.

4.2.2 School administration.

During the research interviews, the participants critically assessed the role of their administration in the context of DPA policy. When asked how their administration engaged with DPA, Participant C stated: “The admin told us we had to have DPA, it has to show in your schedule…, but most of the times that didn’t happen so it was just on paper.” DPA became an activity that had to be acknowledged but not seen in the classroom. The tone of the interview signified that DPA was something that could be overlooked and, as long as the proper paperwork was done, administration would not give teachers any problems. Thus, a government mandated policy is ignored for the most part and both the teacher and administration seem to have an unspoken agreement that this is the best way to handle the policy’s existence. Participant A expands on the role of their administration: “Do they [admin] come and check and make sure that you are following [the timetable] exactly? Not really. If anything, their emphasis is making sure that math and language are met as much as they need.” Participant A offers a reason as to why something like DPA is neglected – namely, academics. Administration is invested in their students achieving high scores for the EQAO and so having their teachers sacrifice DPA in the name of math and literacy seems justifiable.

The idea that there are external pressures by administration, and even parents, to emphasize specific subjects in school is a reality in classrooms. There is an underlying hierarchy of subjects in the curriculum where math and literacy are deemed more significant in comparison to something like physical education, let alone an activity that is not accompanied by a grade. As Dwyer et al (2003) observe: “Well, ok, they got a C in
phys ed. That doesn’t really matter… Whereas if it’s a C in math or language, their eyebrows go up and questions start popping. So, it’s the value you put on the subject” (Dwyer et al. 2003, p.450). With administration seemingly willing to overlook the implementation of DPA, it creates a convenient justification for teachers not to try and find a way to incorporate the policy in their classrooms. Due to the fact that the school system is highly dependent on grades in order to achieve progression, the end product – in the form of report cards and progress reports - is stressed and obsessed over. Thus, due to the structural and systematic established in our school system, there are stressors that influence what subjects are taught, what subjects are emphasized, and evidently what policies (such as DPA) can be considered justifiable to ignore.

4.3 Barriers to Implementing DPA in the Classroom

While the theme of teachers’ attitudes and school culture touched on why DPA is being left out of the daily classroom, the data gathered about barriers towards DPA implementation warrant further discussion. The subthemes of both time and space represent the most common and major obstacles expressed in the opinions of the participants of the research interviews and align with information found in a review of the literature.

4.3.1 Time

Once the topic of addressing barriers towards the implementation of DPA was raised, all three participants initially responded with issues stemming from a lack of time during the school day. In a classroom setting, there are a limited amount of minutes in the day to get through the material needed; subsequently, time was considered one of most precious resources teachers have. Thus, when teachers are told to dedicate twenty minutes of their day, which equates to half a period, it takes away from another subject’s completion. Participant A explains: “Our bell rings at 9:00 AM, but lucky if we start by 9:15 AM between O Canada, prayer, announcements… That period, that subject, is cut in
half. So, we’re playing catch up right from the beginning of the day.” The fact that school involves so much administrative work throughout the day often gets overlooked. The school is a place for more than just subject-oriented learning, it is a platform for social and civic experiences. There are activities and excursions that require time during the day to plan and complete, which take away from intended instructional time, as well as breaks such as snack time at the elementary level. Participant C explains how hectic a schedule can be in spite of subject instruction: “But there were so many other initiatives that were thrown at us, like so many other requirements from the board that we had to deal with…, it left less time for things like [DPA].” When Participant C referred to DPA as an initiative, it alluded to the idea of DPA and physical activity being the buzzword during their time of inception. DPA being treated as a buzzword, or a fad, relates back to the idea of academic subjects associated with letter grades needing preferential treatment over policies like this that can be completed with the right paperwork and an understanding administration.

The curriculum expectations intertwined with a lack of time leads to a volatile situation where mandated subjects or policies are glossed over. Participant A was hesitant to name specific subjects, but they mentioned that DPA was not the only casualty to fall as a result of a finite amount of time during the day. The literature reinforces the sentiment of an anxiety surrounding time where teachers “do feel strong curriculum pressures in other areas… By having to make executive decisions on where to cut corners DPA is often begin modified or cut altogether” (Strampel et al., 2014, p.20). The idea of cutting corners is a reality in classrooms where there is a list of expectations and only so much time to complete what is on an agenda. However, there are alternatives in the form of integrating DPA within actual academic lessons in order to save time. Participant B explained that planning ahead was necessary because incorporating DPA would become unrealistic if it was treated as an unimportant component of the day. In addition, planning
DPA ahead of time limits the risk of facing additional obstacles that were not planned or accounted for, such as issues with physical space.

4.3.2 Space

After the issue of time was discussed with regards to actually commencing the act of DPA, each interview participant noted how space was a factor once the activity was actually put into practice. Like time, the physical space found in classrooms and hallways is often limited (Dwyer et al. 2003). These spatial limitations represent an obstacle that must be dealt with and taken into consideration when planning a DPA activity.

Participant B cautions about the issue of student safety within the realm of issues in space: “Safety is imperative when you are bringing physical activity into a smaller facility like a classroom with desks, sharp edges… while remembering you are trying to get twenty minutes of vigorous activity.” The classroom is not a natural arena for being physically active so the space itself represents a challenge when there is an expectation to achieve a level of activity that is usually facilitated in a space like a gymnasium or outdoors. Participant A and C both raised the idea that having an open gymnasium would make the completion of DPA more manageable; however, both had an understanding that the gymnasium is a shared space that occupies a variety of events ranging from presentations to physical education, let alone the potential for DPA.

Another drawback within the issue of space is the potential for parental grievances with regards to their child’s safety, which could be a deterrent for teachers fearing confrontations and complaints. Thus, teachers who are implementing DPA may be modifying the activity to the point where an appropriate level of physical activity is sacrificed in the name of safety. While it is important to keep students safe in schools, it is important to remember the purpose of DPA is to provide a space for moderate-to-vigorous physical activity; in others words, “you couldn’t just sit there and touch your toes for twenty minutes. There had to be a purpose,” as Participant B pointedly described. Donnelly and Lambourne (2011) echo the challenge of space and the necessary level of
physical activity when they state: “It is challenging to provide activities that do not require reconfiguration of the classroom yet provide adequate intensity and energy expenditure to impact fitness and fatness” (p. 38). Ultimately, DPA was constructed with the hopes of impacting the physical fitness of students and building habits for students to engage with a higher level of physical activity outside of the classroom (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). When DPA begins to be modified in a way that moves away from moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, it becomes disingenuous and could be doing a disservice for teachers taking the time to administer as well as the students who are participating. However, despite these calls for concern and the level of depth within the barriers to implementing DPA in their classrooms each participant was unanimous in their support for DPA as a component in classrooms.

4.4 The Positives Aspects of DPA

For all the negativity associated with low teacher efficacy, the lack of oversight by administration, or the various barriers involved with actualizing DPA, each participant - no matter their athletic background – agreed that there was a place for DPA in school structures. Thus, across the research interviews, a theme and feeling of wanting to highlight the positives involved with DPA developed; however, there was a caveat in varying in what was considered to be appropriate or necessary levels of DPA. However, all the participants expressed the varying understanding of the need for a physical outlet to deal with the stress of the school day.

The interviewed participants varied in terms of their athletic ability, ranging from a former athlete to someone with no sports background, but each one mentioned the idea of a healthy, active lifestyle as something that was important to them personally and something and important to pass off to their students. With that, each participant saw the place for DPA in the school system. As Participant A explained: “It is important to give students that outlet and that break from strictly academic topics, and I would love to see
if there was a way that I could [incorporate DPA] in a more structured way.” There was a feel of hopefulness in Participant A’s voice that made me understand that, while the current structure of DPA may not work for them, there was still a willingness to be open to trying alternatives. The philosophy of teaching the importance of physical activity is alive in teachers and it became evident that participation is not their problem with DPA. The notion of a belief in the philosophy of being physically active is also mentioned in Zarrett, Skiles, Wilson, and McClintock’s (2012) study where the importance of teachers being positive physically active role models was highlighted; however, in order to be a physically active role model and engage with DPA, there must first be a structure in place for success.

In addition, the barriers mentioned in theme two need to be addressed because there is a belief in a correlation between being active and student engagement. Participant C supports this belief and gives their perspective: “I believe that if they are active during and after the school, they perform better… Being active will improve their overall health, which means they won’t be absent from school as often.” For Participant C, as well as the rest of the participants, there was an idea of linking DPA with the entire idea of promoting a healthy active lifestyle. The participants mentioned sleep, diet and exercise when stressing the importance of educating students about the benefits of being active. DPA seems to open the door for the potential of a larger discourse where all aspects of a healthy lifestyle can be discussed in the classroom. When DPA is brought into the classroom, it allows students to be engaged physically while also allowing them to think critically as to why this activity is important enough to be practiced daily. Administration and parents understand the importance of math and literacy because it is taught every day and there are assessment strategies to go along with it. This supports the perceptible importance that is often placed on those subject areas. If DPA and physical activity in general were treated with the same intensity, perhaps similar attitudes and investment would sprout out of the practice.
The idea of assessment and making goals with regards to DPA was something mentioned by Participant B: “Assessment is really important. I used rubrics on a one to two-week period to see how they were progressing in the DPA program: Were they enjoying it, were they slowly getting more involved?” Just because the practice is not reflected on the report card does not mean it cannot be assessed, monitored and worked on with the goal of development in mind. The fact that these participants are able to understand the importance of DPA and physical activity for students in general signifies hope for the future of the policy. While it may have been a buzzword at its inception, DPA is still something understood by educators as having a place in schools, even though its purpose may have been muddled. It is the responsibility of the entire educational system to reintroduce DPA and provide teachers the space and opportunity to implement a successful DPA experience for students.

4.5 Conclusion

Through an exploration of the research interviews, four main themes were organized and then cross-referenced with existing literature. First, the interviews each yielded the notion of a fluctuating definition of what constitutes DPA. From its inception DPA has changed in the eyes of practitioners, even though the institutional definition and purpose has remained unchanged. At times, the existence of other opportunities for physical activity through the day, such as recess or the opportunity to participate in school sports teams, became examples of physical activity being prevalent in schools; however, that does not equate to the practice of DPA. This was further highlighted by the idea of using DPA time as a general break from academics without any physical activity being involved. The participants in the interviews explained how there was a need to break up the academic vigour of classroom life, with or without physical activity, to provide a mental outlet for their students. The participants’ responses are important because they indicate the need for students needing a breather during the course of their
day. The need for a break allows for a discussion focusing on whether DPA as a policy should be focusing on physical or mental health or how to advocate a balance for both within the activity.

The second theme further probed the ideas held by schools in general by gauging teacher’s level of efficacy with regards to DPA as well as the values and practice of the teacher’s school administration. An analysis of the research interviews displayed a link to existing literature where low teacher efficacy has a negative impact on DPA being administered, as well as indifference on the behalf of the administration leading to a lack of urgency to actually practice DPA. The qualitative data in this theme illustrates the importance of engaging with DPA with a positive attitude and how it is essential for all parties involved to be prepared with the implementation of DPA. What this theme brought to light is having people in place who want to administer DPA is key to its success moving forward.

Next, the participants all expressed an array of complaints with regards to DPA in the form of barriers associated with its implementation. Of the barriers, the notions of a lack of time as well as the finite amount of space available in classrooms were stressed. The lack of time during a school day presents a real problem for teachers who are trying to teach a rich curriculum with a vast amount of expectations that need to be met. When DPA is supposed to take twenty minutes, it takes away from subjects that need to be assessed and might need additional attention. School administrations also see this problem, and side with teachers needing to focus on subjects such as literacy and math because of the external pressures of parents and the importance placed on standardized tests like the EQAO. These realities illustrate the need for more structure within DPA in order to help teachers successfully implement DPA.

The final theme involved a sense of optimism from the participants. No matter the barriers and the low levels of efficacy, there seems to be a consensus that getting students physically active is imperative and that there needs to be opportunities for non-academic
outlets over the course of a school day. This opens the question if DPA is the right avenue to meet the needs of students or whether teachers and students would be better served with a new or refurbished policy aimed at meeting the needs DPA is intended to reach.

On the outset of this paper, the question of whether or not the perceptions that teacher’s hold have an effect on the administering of DPA in their classrooms. Through the research interviews and the qualitative data found, this question is met with a variety of additional question marks. While teachers’ perceptions may affect engagement with DPA, there are real barriers in the structure of classrooms and school days that impede the implementation of DPA. Going forward, there needs to be an exploration of the intended goals of the practice DPA at the level of policy. There seems to be a consensus that there needs to be outlets available in school to support and advocate for the emotional wellbeing and physical health of students, and that may be found in the form of DPA; however, there needs to be more structure and emphasis placed on the implementation process at the level of policy makers, administrators and teachers for that to take hold in a classroom every single day.

In Chapter Five there will be a further discussion of the implications of the findings examined in Chapter Four. Furthermore, recommendation will be raised with regards to the future of DPA as well as the potential for future areas of research within this discourse.
Chapter Five: Implications and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

The present study was designed to learn more about how DPA (Daily Physical Activity) is being implemented in Ontario classrooms and how teacher efficacy affects its implementation. The findings serve to support the existing literature pertaining to the implementation of DPA in elementary schools and to specifically tell us more about why a government mandated policy is not being implemented as intended in Ontario classrooms. This chapter summarizes the research findings, highlights the present study’s implications for various stakeholders, provides several recommendations and suggests directions for future research.

5.1 Overview of key Findings and their Significance

The present study investigated the perceptions of teachers and their administration of DPA in the classrooms. The findings of this study support the existing literature, which maintains there are barriers that exist in Ontario classrooms and these barriers make implementing DPA a difficult task for teachers. Following research interviews with three separate Ontario teachers, a rigorous analysis revealed four main themes and subthemes that support and reinforce the present study and existing literature. The four identified themes are: The misrepresentation of DPA, teacher attitudes and school culture towards DPA, barriers to implementing DPA in the classroom, and finally the positives aspects of DPA.

The first theme identified that there was disconnect between the actual policy surrounding DPA and the teacher’s interpretation of what DPA should be in the classroom. This served as a reminder that the practice of teachers within classrooms may
not always align with the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education Ministry. The data showed that teachers misinterpreted DPA as an opportunity to provide their students with a break. Similarly, in some cases teachers viewed physical activity during extracurricular programs or recess as a substitute to class time usually allotted for DPA. This raised the issue that students in these classrooms may be negatively affected as a result and that the elements of healthy active living that the Ministry of Education outline in the DPA policy may not be being met.

The second theme recognized issues surrounding staff and school administration. Teacher efficacy was uncovered as an essential means for implementing DPA; however, the data suggested that teachers perceive DPA as an unrealistic expectation and approach the activity from a defeatist mindset. Low teacher efficacy is compounded with school administrations that do not place importance on the execution of DPA. With both parties treating DPA as a chore, rather than an essential part of the day, the data suggested that DPA was not being practiced daily, if at all. The data suggesting that school climate has a negative affect for the implementation of DPA alludes to potential larger structural and systematic problems.

The third theme addressed barriers with regards to implementing DPA in the classroom. The data showed that time and space were the two main grievances made by teachers when prompted to explain their perspectives on their difficulties executing DPA on a daily basis. These same barriers were raised in existing literature and indicate that there are genuine complications with ensuring DPA is practiced. The barriers force the practice of DPA to change and it creates an environment where DPA becomes inauthentic in the eyes of the students and not important in the eyes of the teachers.
The final theme of the research interviews was the positive aspects of DPA as presented by the participants. Even though the teachers acknowledged their perceived faults with the policy, they still recognized the need for DPA within the school structure. The interview data yielded an agreement that students need a physical outlet in order to support the mental and physical wellbeing. The positive aspects of DPA link towards the implications of the findings in this present study where there would be consequences if the policy of DPA was not reviewed by the Ministry of Education and that teachers and school administration would be better off implementing and being advocates for DPA as a permanent and active structure in their schools.

5.2 Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for educational reform. This study should serve as a reminder to policymakers and curriculum planners that there is a need for ongoing dialogue between them and teachers about the initiatives that are formed and outlined and how they are subsequently implemented in the following years. Consistent with the conclusions of Strampel et al. (2014), the present study finds that there are structural barriers for implementing DPA in Ontario elementary classrooms. The study also provides novel insight into the role and importance of teacher efficacy in the classroom. Policymakers should be mindful to engage with teachers to support the policies they implement in order to better understand its actualization in practice and to promote teacher engagement with what they are expected to implement.

The present study has two main implications for the educational community. First, the data shows that DPA is not being practiced in the way the policy outlines. If there is nothing done to address the current program, DPA will continue to be considered
a superfluous activity in classrooms. This is consistent with the warning outlined by Dwyer et al (2003) and Strampel et al. (2014) which categorizes DPA as supervised play and noted that DPA is perceived as being of lower importance when contrasted against content learning in the classroom. The participants in this study echo the sentiment of DPA being an example of a surplus responsibility and that will continue to be a detrimental mentality unless there is an intervention in DPA as a policy and practice.

The second implication of this study is the impact of an ineffective DPA program on the students in these classrooms. DPA was put forward as a policy with the intention to foster learning and support the mental health and physical wellbeing of students as outlined by Ontario Ministry of Education (2015). Morgan & Hansen (2007) and Sallis et al. (1997) also mention the benefits of physical activity on student behaviour and achievement. Thus, when DPA is not implemented effectively, students will not receive the subsequent benefits. The participants of the study acknowledged the need for a physical outlet and the need for breaks during the day. DPA is ultimately meant for the students and a disservice is done when it is not properly implemented and it remains a problem if nothing is done about the current state of DPA.

5.3 Recommendations

The two implications of the present study lend themselves to recommendations specifically for the Ministry of Education, school administrators and the teachers within schools. The previous chapters and data collected influence four recommendations moving forward: first, the revision of the DPA document, secondly, greater accountability on the part of school administrators, third, teachers need to take ownership of the DPA in their classrooms, and finally, the Ministry of Education, school
administrators, and classroom teachers need to maintain an open dialogue on the implementation of DPA to mould a program that is innovative and beneficial for students.

It is imperative that the Ministry of Education revisit the DPA document and make amendments. There is a need for revision at the policy level concerning the intended purpose of DPA as well as a reinforcement of why it should be practiced in Ontario classrooms. Revised policy would benefit from a greater focus on how DPA is beneficial for mental health, promoting a healthy active lifestyle as well as an emphasis on why these measures are important. At its inception, DPA policy focused on addressing increased obesity within the student population; however, in contrast, the research highlights that there should be a greater emphasis placed on supporting holistic wellbeing rather than on getting students into shape. The Ministry of Education should review the intended purpose of DPA and consider alternative activities, which do not satisfy the vigorous physical activity aspect of DPA. Activities such as yoga or mindfulness exercises should be explored and considered because of their ability to provide health and mental benefits, even though it would not be inline with the current DPA structure.

Secondly, in order to foster a school environment that supports the achievement of DPA, school administrators have to make a more concerted effort in providing an effective framework for DPA and hold teachers accountable in delivering these frameworks. School administrators should look to ensure their teachers are integrating DPA in the classroom daily, either by visiting classrooms or establishing school wide initiatives where DPA is done collectively within the school community. School administrators should ensure that their educators have the resources available to create and administer activities that can be used to maximize classroom space, as well as
integrate the outdoors. This would emphasize the importance of actualizing DPA as well as ensure that it is actually being practiced.

Next, at the micro level, teachers need to take responsibility for implementing DPA in their classrooms. Engaging in personal development such as attending training sessions and advocating for support and resources in their local schools would benefit learning new and authentic ways of implementing DPA in their classrooms. Teachers should be encouraged to voice their opinions on how to improve DPA and communicate the resources their classroom and school need in order to implement DPA successfully. Teachers also need to express an interest in actualizing the DPA program and communicate with their students why it is an integral part of their day in order to support the culture around the program.

The final recommendation includes all parties involved, the Ministry of Education, school administration and teachers. There needs to be an openness and a dialogue between parties to ensure what is being actualized is also what is outlined in the policy. There needs to be a fluidity in the program to ensure all parties remain accountable and so DPA remains contemporary in order for students to experience the full benefits of a successful DPA program.

With these recommendations in mind there are multiple avenues for further research moving forward.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Inasmuch as the present study has served to expand upon the extant literature in the area of DPA integration, it has also highlighted the need for further study. In future research endeavours, it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed upon whether
there are other structures or initiatives that can be developed to better cultivate the goals of DPA. This has not been explored through the data presented in this study, but transitioning away from a simplified model of DPA towards a more intensive program may be a viable option. Educational scholars should also explore the role of the teacher in DPA and whether involving specialists in schools would be a viable solution for widespread implementation. The role of specialists was raised by the participants of the study as well as by Dwyer et al. 2003, Morgan and Hansen (2007), and Sallis et al (1997), but should perhaps be explored by the Ministry of Education as a reasonable alternative. Finally, there should be an investigation into student perceptions of DPA and how they view the program in the scope of their day. The student perspective in particular has not been explored in this study but would represent a new voice in the discourse and may be able to present additional opportunities for implementing a successful DPA program.

5.5 Concluding Comments

The study of teachers’ perspectives on DPA is important because it identifies and explores the shortcomings of DPA at the level of implementation. Policy currently exists that is meant to be being implemented daily, but the research indicates that this is commonly not the case. There are structural and systemic barriers that make DPA implementation a struggle for teachers. The research indicates that if the educational community wants DPA to be a successful and integral part of schools, then these barriers need to be addressed at the level of policy and practice.

At the beginning of the present study the research question revolved around the role of teacher’s perspectives and efficacy when implementing DPA. The data implies
that when teachers engage with DPA and make it an important part of their classroom there is a space for the program in their classroom. However, it has been demonstrated that the barriers to implementation are a genuine hindrance for successful program and that more needs to be done and revisited at the level of policy and practice in order to move forward. The present study exemplifies the importance of policymakers needing to maintain dialogue with the teachers who are putting their document in practice if they intend to implement structures that can actualize the benefits they envision.
References


Appendix A: Consent Letter

Dear __________________________,

My name is Luka Pratnemer and I am a graduate student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on the perceptions teachers have about Daily Physical Activity (DPA) and its implementation in classrooms. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have experience teaching at the elementary school level and have taught while DPA has been in effect (post 2005). I believe that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer, and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my research coordinator Angela Macdonald. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to
participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very thankful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Researcher: Luka Pratnemer
luka.pratnemer@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor Angela Macdonald
angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Luka Prtnemer and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: _____________________________

Name: (printed) _____________________________

Date: ____________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to explore the effects of physical activity on the academic success of elementary students with learning disabilities. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and will be composed of approximately twenty questions. These questions will be focused on some background information about yourself; with regards to professional experience and your perspectives and beliefs about the topic under study. Questions regarding your current teaching practices, supports and challenges, and finally some next steps in terms of your professional goals in this area will also be addressed, before ending off with any advice you may have for beginning teachers who are committed to the topic at hand. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I have explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Background Information**

1. How long have you been practicing teaching?
2. Did you always want to be a teacher?
3. What have been your greatest influences on your teaching practice?
4. Generally, what do you think it means to be a good teacher?
5. Do you have any sports-related background?

**Teacher Perspectives**

6. How important is maintaining a healthy-active lifestyle to you?
7. How important is maintaining a healthy active lifestyle for your students?
8. How do you involve DPA in the classroom?

9. Do believe DPA is necessary in the classroom?
   a. Do you see a role for DPA during the day, or is it something that should be extra-curricular?

10. Do you believe DPA can have a negative or positive impact on students in the classroom?
    a. Why, why not?

11. Do you feel your administration places sufficient emphasis on ensuring that DPA is practiced?

**Teacher Practice**

12. How do you see physical activity being used in your school?

13. How do you see DPA being implemented in your school?

14. Is DPA a structured component of your own classroom?
    a. Is it a premeditated part of your lessons?

15. What are some examples of effective PA practices that you have adopted in the past, or are currently adopting today with your students?

16. What are some examples of ineffective practices, and why do you think those did not work?

17. Have you felt pressure to incorporate DPA in your classroom, either from parents or administration?
    a. If yes, why this is the case?

**Supports and Barriers**

18. How have you seen DPA as a practice grow or diminish from year to year in your school?
    a. Can you provide examples to support your perspective?

19. What barriers do you see in implementing DPA in your own classroom?
20. What more could be done to make DPA more accessible for teachers?
21. What could be done to make DPA more accessible for teachers?
22. If your colleagues made an effort to infuse DPA on a daily basis, would it influence your practice of DPA more/less/the same?

Next Steps

23. Do you have any professional goals with regards to implementing DPA in your classroom?
24. What advice would you give a newly graduated teacher about implementing DPA in their classroom?
25. If you could have one thing in your school/classroom in order to be able to complete DPA every day, what would it be?
26. Is there anything you would like to add about DPA and its role in the classroom and our schools?

Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it.