

Assessing the Level of Knowledge of Students in the Colleges of Education in Ghana on the Benefits of Engaging in Physical Educational Activities

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to conduct descriptive survey to assess the level of knowledge of students in the Colleges of Education on the benefits of engaging in physical educational activities. Data was collected from a sample size of 250 respondents. The instrument used to collect the data was questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that exercises taken regularly are good for one's general health; P.E. helps a person to gain all round good health, and helps in building extra strength for daily living. This means the students had knowledge of the benefits of P.E. They agreed that when P.E. is done regularly it builds extra strength for one's general health. It was recommended that students should be encouraged to participate in physical and educational activities at all times to gain all the health benefits.*

Keywords: Exercises, Equipment and Facilities, Good health

1. Introduction

As regards the teaching of P.E. the Colleges of Education are to build among others adequate competencies in trainees; to enable them help pupils develop their P.E. abilities and to understand the nature of P.E., prepare student for games and sports festivals, maintain various equipment, and design and make simple man-made or improvised equipment for classroom use.

Moreover, teacher trainees must gain competencies in performing simple games that are performed in the basic schools. Also the trainees must be familiar with the syllabus designed for the teaching of P.E. in our basic schools (Ghana Education Service [GES], 2007). In effect, without gaining these competencies from the initial training programme, teachers cannot handle P.E. effectively at the basic level. This matches with the assertion by Renes (1982) that what is taught and particularly how it is taught at the pre-service institution has great influence on the future career of the products of the Colleges of Education.

Historically, the field of P.E. was once regarded as an aggregate of sports and games activities providing avenues for playful experiences in recreation and leisure hours in schools. With the passage of time, P.E. has grown to be an organized field of study, thus becoming a full-fledged academic subject.

Physical Education is the study, practice and appreciation of the art and science of human movement. Physical education is an educational process that has as its aim the improvement of human performance and enhancement of human development through the medium of physical activities selected to realize this outcome (Wuest & Bucher, 1991).

Nash (1992) also defined P.E. as one phase of the total education process that utilizes activity drive inherent in each individual to develop a person organically, neuromuscularly, intellectually and emotionally. This means that P.E. is not only concerned with the physical outcomes that accrue from participation in activities, but also with the development of knowledge and attitudes conducive to lifelong learning and lifespan participation.

Physical education, according to Nash (1992) is concerned with the promotion of active lifestyle for people of all ages and abilities. Participating in appropriate kind and amount of physical activity which is part of P.E. promotes change in brain structure and function in infants and young children. Nash recounted that sensory stimulation through physical activity is very important for the development of the nervous system. It also assists in the development and refinement of perceptual abilities involving vision, balance and tactile sensations. Participating in physical activity is also an important regulator of obesity because it increases energy expenditure, suppresses appetite, increases metabolic rate and increases lean body mass. Nash indicated that physical activities improve aerobic fitness, muscle endurance, muscle power and muscle strength. It also improves cardiac function as indicated by an increased stroke volume, cardiac output, blood volume and total haemoglobin.

Despite the importance and values of P.E., the attitudes of society have not been positively affected. Not much regard is given to the subject and so little attention is paid to it in most schools. It is regarded as a frill and as a good means of entertainment but not connected with life and health (Wuest & Bucher, 1991). Many students, parents, teachers and policy makers are confused about the real worth of physical education as part of the school programme. Some of their comments reflect this confusion that physical education is exercise done to entertain students. They therefore contend

that P.E. should not be part of the educational programme and too much time should also not be devoted to it. Physical education from all intents and purposes is more than these comments. Expressing the views of other people on P.E., Onifade (1997) contended that some sports enthusiasts even go to the extent of insulting sports experts or P.E. graduates. Onifade recounted a girl who made a remark that P.E. is a game not a subject when an announcement was made to a class that there would be a P.E. theory lesson. This really depicts the degree of attitude and misconception about P.E. carried by some students, parents and policy makers.

Many teachers look at P.E. as a subject of little or no importance to the education process of the learner and that people should not waste time learning it. According to Hardman (1997) reduction in allocation of time or contact hours in teaching P.E. seems to increase in almost all countries in Europe as depicted in studies in Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and Finland among others. The study further revealed that the plight of P.E. appears even worse in Greece where despite its compulsory status and position as a graded assessed subject, it is not seen to be effective. Many schools have minimal periods for P.E. lessons and in some cases it does not even exist on the time table. Hardman indicated that in Kenya, P.E. suffers from low esteem and status. He described it as a subject without academic significance and in the present century, physical educators have been repeatedly called upon to defend and justify the inclusion of P.E. as part of the school curriculum.

A perceived decline in the position and presence of P.E. in school curricula worldwide was apparent in some countries in the 1970s and 1980s. subsequent manifestations of a deteriorating situation were evidenced by a number of conference themes; a range of journal articles reporting on the perilous position of P.E. in schools, several international and national surveys, and a plethora of international agencies' and regional and continental organisations' position, policy, advocacy and declaration statements (Hardman & Marshall, 2000).

The disseminated findings from the Hardman and Marshall (2000) survey reaffirmed the perilous position of physical education revealed in earlier findings. This brought a United Nations Educational and Scientific Conference (UNESCO) concessionary response that the principles of its 1978 International Charter had not filtered down into practice with physical education and sport not yet established as a national priority (United Nations, 2003). According to United Nations, P.E. was seen to have been pushed into a defensive position. It was suffering from decreasing curriculum time allocation, budgetary controls with inadequate financial, material and personnel resources; it had low subject status and esteem and was being ever more marginalized and undervalued by authorities.

United Nations (2003) affirmed that school P.E. appeared to be under threat in all regions of the world. At best it seemed to occupy a tenuous place in the school curriculum. In many countries, it was not accepted on par with seemingly superior academic subjects concerned with developing a child's intellect. The so-called "Berlin Agenda" according to United Nations, called for governmental and ministerial

action to implement policies for P.E. as a human right for all children in recognition of its distinctive role in physical health, overall development and safe supportive communities. Furthermore, in making the case for quality physical education, United Nations called for investment in initial and in-service professional training and development for well-qualified educators and support for research to improve the effectiveness and quality of P.E. These were issues, which were repeated in an appeal to the General Conference of UNESCO. The General Conference was urged to commit to developing strategies for effective implementation of and properly resourced P.E. programmes, to mobilize inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and public and private sectors to co-operate in the promotion and development of physical education.

According to United Nations (2003) the general conference reiterated the importance of P.E. as an essential element and an integral part in the process of continuing education and human and social development. United Nations expressed concern that in spite of the expansion of elite sport and sport for all programmes in recent years, opportunities for children to participate in P.E. had been significantly curtailed. The body also noted that the time required for P.E. in schools was not being respected and was even being substantially reduced in many countries because of changing priorities.

The above notwithstanding, P.E. has not received the needed attention it deserves in national curricula. Is it the case of inadequate teachers, under-qualified tutors, an obscure curriculum, knowledge level of students, disinterest in the subject, lack of facilities and equipment, or the use of inappropriate methodological delivery? One would have thought that the subject will receive a boost at the COE in view of the fact that it is a compulsory core subject offered by students during their first year of schooling. A careful observation indicates that the effective teaching of the subject is bedeviled with so many problems. An attempt will therefore be made to identify the level of knowledge of students in the colleges of education regarding the benefits they tend to derive by participating in physical educational activities..

2. Statement of the Problem

The educational reform introduced into the country was intended to correct and improve the quality of the educational system that existed. With this, P.E. was fully recognized and therefore considered as a core subject in the basic and secondary school levels and in the COE throughout the country. In these colleges, emphasis is laid on training in such courses as Music, Physical Education, English Language, Mathematics, Science and others. Students in the colleges are prepared as classroom teachers for the basic schools.

The main objectives of the programmes in the COE include the introduction of the students to the basic aims, objectives and theoretical principles of P.E. and sports. Also, demonstration lessons are organized as part of the practice teaching programme. In addition, the students are taught general rules and regulations including the teaching of the

basic skills in all the games played in the basic schools. However, P.E. programmes in the COE are saddled with lack of students' interest in engaging in physical educational activities to derive the benefits intended for them.

It is with this background that the research wants to find out the level of knowledge of students in the colleges regarding the benefits they tend to derive by engaging in physical educational activities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the knowledge level of students regarding benefits in engaging in physical educational activities.

Research Question

What is the level of Knowledge of Students in the Colleges of Education on the Benefits of engaging in Physical Educational activities?

3. Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used. The target population for the study was one thousand (1000) student trainees in first year were used. A sample size of two hundred and fifty (250) respondents was selected for the study. The stratified sampling and simple random sampling methods were used to select the sample. The six colleges were put into six strata with each college forming one stratum. Since the population in the colleges differed, the proportional sampling in selecting the number of respondents from each college was used. The instrument developed for the study was a questionnaire. Respondents were requested to respond to each item on a four-point Likert scale.

4. Results/Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the level of Knowledge of Students in the COE on the Benefits of engaging in Physical Educational activities?

The purpose of this question was to find out the knowledge base of the students as regards the benefits of P.E. Table 1 gives an overview of the responses.

Table 1: Level of Knowledge on Benefits of P.E.

Knowledge of benefits of P.E.	SA		SD	
	F	%	F	%
Exercises taken regularly are good for one's general health	250	100	0	0
P.E. helps a person to gain all round good health	250	100	0	0
P.E. helps in building extra strength for daily living	250	100	0	0
P.E. contributes to mental and emotional well-being	237	94.8	13	5.2
P.E. helps individuals to get along well with others	233	93.2	17	6.8
P.E. classes provide situations for developing good character	216	86.4	34	13.6

Note: Total number of responses = 250 Codes = SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, SD = 1

Table 1 indicates that all the respondents (100%, n = 250) were knowledgeable to the fact that exercises taken regularly are good for one's general health, P.E. helps a person to gain

all round good health, and helps in building extra strength for daily living. This means the students had knowledge of the benefits of P.E. They agreed that when P.E. is done regularly it builds extra strength for one's general health. In agreement to the study results, Fairclough and Stratton (2005) asserted that young people need to gain the appropriate knowledge; understanding and behavioural skills to ensure physical activity become a regular part of their daily life. With their recommended prescription of at least one hour of physical activity per day and a secondary recommendation of twice-weekly strength and flexibility activities, Fairclough and Stratton indicated that the individual will gain the needed strength for daily living. International Council for Physical Education and Sport Science (2001) corroborated the claim that exercises taken regularly are good for one's general health by indicating that P.E. helps children to develop respect for the body; their own and others, contributes towards the integrated development of the mind and body, develops an understanding of the role of aerobic and anaerobic physical activity in health, positively enhances self-confidence and self-esteem, and enhances social and cognitive development and academic achievement.

When the individual goes through exercise which forms part of P.E. and gains these numerous positive outcomes, the individual will in turn experience general good health. Any serious P.E. programme seeks to prepare the individual's general health. This confirmed Cale and Harris (2005) assertion that there is evidence of clear link between childhood physical activity and bone strength, with its potential impact on osteoporosis later in life and less apparent cardiovascular disease risk factors.

Most of the responses 237 (94.8%) indicated their knowledge to the fact that P.E. contributes to mental and emotional well-being. This also confirms Lindner's (2002) assertion that quality P.E. helps improve a child's mental alertness, academic performance, readiness to learn and enthusiasm for learning. Shephard (1996) also pointed out from a three large-scale studies that academic performance is maintained and occasionally enhanced by an increase in a student's level of P.E. despite a reduction in the time for the study of academic materials. To buttress this, Mutrie and Parfitt (1998) concluded that physical activity is positively associated with good mental health and the psychological benefits of regular physical activity which include reduced stress, anxiety and depression.

The least amongst the responses was the fact that P.E. classes provide situations for developing good character. Table 1 shows that 86.4% agreed to the statement. This confirms Sandford et al's (2006) assertion that the value of P.E. lies in the acquisition and accumulation of various personal, social and socio-moral skills. This in turn acts as social capital to enable young people to function successfully and acceptably in a broad range of social situations. The claims made by Sandford et al. for the social benefits of P.E. centre on developing young people's abilities to interact positively with others which can as a consequence, result in wider range of gains for themselves, their schools and communities at large. In line with this assertion, National Research Council and Institute of

Medicine (2002) pointed out that sport has historically been held in high regard for its character-building potential, whilst a council of Europe report (Svoboda, 1994) stressed the important contribution sport makes to processes of personality development. Svoboda added that P.E. provides opportunities to adjust to team or collective objectives (such as cooperation and cohesion), take different social roles, learn particular skills (such as tolerance and respect for others), and provides experience of emotions that are not available in the rest of life.

The results imply that all the respondents were very knowledgeable of the benefits of P.E. They thus agreed to the contention that when P.E. is done regularly it builds extra strength for one's general health. This calls for concerted efforts by all stakeholders to put mechanisms in place so that students in all the COE in Ghana and the nation at large will cultivate the habit of exercising regularly to turn out strong bodies. This will give them the sound body required to efficiently study at school to come out as good P.E. teachers.

5. Conclusion

The study sought to identify the knowledge level of students regarding benefits in engaging in physical educational activities. Based on the findings of the study it is concluded that student's knowledge level of the health benefits of participating in P.E. was very high.

6. Recommendation

Students should be encouraged to participate in physical and educational activities at all times to gain all the health benefits.

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