

An Investigation into the Attitude of Students towards the Teaching and Learning of Physical Education in the Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to conduct descriptive survey of the attitude of students, teachers and policy makers towards teaching of physical education in the colleges of education in Ghana. Data was collected from a sample size of 250 respondents. The instrument developed for the study was a questionnaire. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that when the right structures are put in place and sufficient facilities and equipment are used, teaching of Physical Education becomes enjoyable. It recommended that stakeholders including National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), Ghana Education Service (GES) and other body's should organize periodic in service training courses for tutors and teachers of various institutions of learning to enhance their methodology and to keep them abreast with current trends of teaching the subject.*

Keywords: Stakeholders, Equipment and Facilities, competence, methodology

1. Introduction

According to Siedentop (1983) teaching must be viewed as a set of observable process skills to be practiced, evaluated and reflected upon in ensuring improved future performance. Siedentop pointed out that several broad areas of salient teacher behavior that contribute to effectiveness of teaching, organization, instruction, motivation and human relationships should be implemented to better provide appropriate practice at a reasonable level of difficulty for pre-service teachers. Practicing pedagogical fundamentals is necessary for all teachers to continually improve overall instruction performance.

Hellison and Templin (1991) argued that in learning to teach, pre-service teachers are asked and expected to comprehend general information about the subject matter. For example, curriculum models and teaching principles of equipment management and planning, principles of motor learning, intra-task skill development and then applying general knowledge to the particular teaching situation. The demand of field experiences and student teaching require the ability to recall this information to interpret it in light of a specific context.

The enhancement of the implementation of curriculum depends on many factors. Two factors identified to have been critical to curriculum implementation are human and material resources. Dunkin (1988) identified teacher training activity as one of the major issues that educational evaluators should address emphasizing teacher preparation as an essential consideration of curriculum implementation.

Teachers should have a broad general education with specialized teaching in child and adolescent development and methods of teaching. Silverman (2011) corroborated this by declaring that curriculum studies in teacher education should aim at equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement curriculum, use available

materials and participate in developing new curriculum materials. Adequate preparation should also be given to teachers who will handle the programme to ensure effective implementation of any policy.

Teachers acquire their pre-service preparation from Colleges of Education (COE) where they gain competencies to teach all the subjects including Physical Education (P.E) at the basic school level. In view of this, it is prudent to introduce measures to raise the quality of teaching in the COE in order to improve the quality of education in our basic schools.

As regards the teaching of P.E. the COE 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 COE.

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. This has necessitated the need to investigate the attitude of students towards the teaching and learning of Physical Education in the Colleges of Education in Ghana.

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 offering the subject as an elective course.

Wuest and Lombardo (1994) revealed that it is clear that P.E. can contribute in many significant ways to the goals of education and the total development of the individual. Yet support for inclusion of P.E. in the school's curriculum is not overwhelming. This is also seen in the COE programme, where only one semester has been given to the content teaching and another one semester for those students who will offer the subject as an elective course to study the methods of teaching the practical aspects of the various sports. It is with this background that the research wants to find out the attitude of students towards the teaching and learning of physical education in the Colleges of Education in Ghana.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the attitude of students towards the teaching and learning of physical education in the colleges of education in Ghana.

Research Questions

What is the attitude of students towards the teaching and learning of physical education in the Colleges of Education in Ghana?

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: What is the Attitude of Students towards the Teaching and Learning of P.E. in Ghana?

This sought to find out the attitude of students, teachers and policy makers' towards the teaching and learning of P.E. in Ghana. Table 1 gives an overview of the responses.

Table 1: Students' Attitude towards Teaching and Learning of P.E.

Responses	SA		SD	
	F	%	F	%
P.E. tutors use correct formation when teaching practical lessons	211	84.4	39	15.6
P.E. tutors periodically demonstrate how to perform activities	198	79.2	52	20.8
P.E. tutors assist students to perform the activities	194	77.6	56	22.4
P.E. tutors give clear instruction on how to perform activities	185	74	65	26
P.E. tutors give correct feedback during practical lessons	172	68.8	78	31.2
P.E. tutors are friendly during P.E. classes	134	53.6	116	46.4
Trainees receive only two periods a week of training in P.E. in a semester	121	48.4	129	51.6
P.E. should not be a classroom subject and does not deserve much attention	86	34.4	164	65.6

Note: Total number of responses = 250

From the Table, the top two most cited concerns that affect students' attitude to the teaching and learning of P.E. were continued reduction in number of P.E. content in curriculum over the years (84.4%) and the inadequate time and contact hours teaching and learning the subject (79.2%). The least cited concern was the non-recognition of P.E. as a class subject and the less attention given to the subject.

The respondents contended that two periods per week for just one semester was inadequate. Abrokwa (1996) citing the research of Zajona stated that the more contact people had with some object or person the more affection they had towards that object or person. In a related study, Nash (1992) stated that behavioural research in different areas has revealed that knowledge of a specific subject is related to attitude towards that subject, and that favourable attitude towards physical activity can be influenced by a better knowledge of health-related fitness concept that is in the curriculum.

This assertion was further buttressed by Adzokpa et al. (1993) that naturally the more contact one has with a subject the more the possibility of getting closer to the subject. Adzokpa et al. further gave example that the SHS academic time table makes provision for two forty minutes periods a week for P.E. whereas other subjects have between 4-6 periods per week. This shows that students would be influenced to have a more positive attitude towards participation in physical education if they are more exposed to have more contact and information about the subject. Abrokwa (1996) again pointed out that P.E. forms an integral part of the total education process, however, it is not treated with the attention it deserves.

On the question of the effects of continuous reduction in the number of P.E. contents in the curriculum over the years on the teaching and learning of P.E. in the COE in Ghana, Wankel (1985) indicated that most of the attempts to motivate greater involvement in physical activity have been based on health education approach. According to this perspective, the provision of information pertaining to the health benefits to regular exercise in the curriculum has led to a consequent increase in physical activity. However, with the continuous reduction, some of these areas of knowledge are removed.

Other assertions that received substantial responses were the effect of frequent changes in P.E. curriculum in the COE on teaching and learning of the subject (77.6%) and students' disinterest in the subject (74%). To these concerns McGee, Hill, Cowie, Miller et al. (2004) stated that some teachers were critical of frequent changes of curriculum to student achievement in class arguing that when curriculum or programme change frequently it brings about a degree of uncertainty over how to cover some of the content in the curriculum. McGee et al. stated that one curriculum issue was the increasing trend towards dividing and changing of curriculum content. The issue of disinterest in activities has been a border for a long time now. The majority's agreement to the statement confirms a review by Carlson (1994) that revealed several factors that seem to influence students' interest towards participation in P.E. Carlson pointed out that students' attitude towards P.E. were influenced by cultural (gender, idolization of elite sports figure), society (family, mass media, sporting experiences, skill level, peer and parental influence, previous P.E. experiences, and perception of fitness) and school (teacher influence).

Reacting to the contention that P.E. is not recognized as a class subject and given less attention, Abrokwa (1996) corroborated by indicating that even though P.E. forms an

integral part of the total education process, it has not been treated with the attention it deserves.

The result has implications for students in COE to change their attitudes towards P.E. otherwise the continuous reduction in the number of P.E. content in the curriculum will make the teaching and learning of the subject more problematic. The number of contact hours for the subject should be increased to reflect the activity levels of the students and the interest in engaging in physical activities. Teachers should also be impressed upon to organize interesting activities to warrant a conducive attitude from the students. This will go a long way to enhance the awareness in and importance of the subject to all others.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study it is concluded that students had knowledge of the health benefits of participating in P.E. Their attitude towards the subject stemmed from the fact that the amount of content and contact hours was inadequate. However, when correct formations and periodical demonstration of activities were employed in lessons coupled with the use of enough facilities and equipment, teaching and learning of P.E would become effective.

6. Recommendation

Ministry of Education through NCTE should increase the amount of contact hours for the teaching of P.E. at the COE from 3-6 hours to enable student teachers acquire the content knowledge and practical skills to effectively teach in basic schools after completing their course. Also, capacity building workshops should be organized for teachers to enhance their output in the COE.

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