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Assessing Teacher Preparation in Physical Education at the Colleges of Education in Ghana

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to conduct descriptive survey to assess the level of teacher preparation in physical education at the colleges of education in Ghana. Data was collected from a sample size of 250 respondents. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed that when correct formations and periodical demonstration of activities are done in lessons and sufficient facilities and equipment are used, teaching of Physical Education becomes effective leading to competent teacher turn out.

Keywords: Stakeholders, equipment and facilities, competence, methodology

1. Introduction

Teaching can be reflected in the words of Aristotle when he said that “those who educate children well are to be honoured more than those who produce them, for those who educate them give them the art of living well” (Hellison & Templin, 1991, p.32).

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).

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 factors that militate against the teaching of the subject in COE in Ghana.

2. Statement of the Problem

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, inadequate contact hours of teaching, and lack of workshops for teachers teaching the subject in the colleges.

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 assess the level of teacher preparation in physical education in Colleges of Education in Ghana.

2.1. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the level of teacher preparation in physical education in Colleges of Education in Ghana.

2.2. Research Questions

- What is the level of teacher preparation in physical education in Colleges of Education in Ghana?
- Do the COE have adequate Facilities and Equipment for the teaching of P.E?

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

4.1. Research Question 1

What is the level of teacher preparation in physical education in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The responses are presented on Table 1.

Responses	SA		SD	
	F	%	F	%
P.E. tutors use correct formation when teaching practical lessons	244	97.6	6	2.4
P.E. tutors periodically demonstrate how to perform activities	233	93.2	17	6.8
P.E. tutors assist students to perform the activities	220	88	30	12
P.E. tutors give clear instruction on how to perform activities	211	84.4	39	15.6
P.E. tutors give correct feedback during practical lessons	194	77.6	56	22.4
P.E. tutors are friendly during P.E. classes	181	72.4	69	27.6

Table 1: Level of Teacher Preparation in Physical Education in Colleges of Education in Ghana

Note: Total Number of Responses = 250

Table 1 indicates that the two major competencies needed for effective teaching of P.E. are the use of correct formation by tutors when teaching practical lessons (97.6%) and tutors periodically demonstrating how to perform activities (93.2%). This means that when teachers adopt correct formations and also demonstrate how to perform practical activities it elicits better learning of the subject.

Mawer (1995) corroborated the study result by indicating that demonstration and content presentation are some competencies needed for effective teaching and learning of P.E. Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1991) report believed that there was the need to strengthen the links between the theoretical components of P.E. and practical experiences with the students. Metzler (1990) pointed out that there is the need to establish a safe learning environment for effective participation of students during practical lessons. Since every activity goes with its formation then it is better to note that P.E. tutors use correct formation for various activities for effective practicing of the activities. In line with this, Shulman (1986) maintained that broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter are necessary in the teaching and learning of P.E. Borko et al. (1988) also asserted that there should be clear support for a relationship between subject knowledge and planning and strong content area preparation, confidence and responsiveness coupled with good demonstrations to pupils in their learning of concepts.

Other competencies that received substantial responses are P.E. tutors assisting students to perform the activities (88%), and P.E. tutors giving clear instructions on how to perform activities (84.4%). Rink (1996) confirmed this in his reviewed research on competencies for effective teaching. Rink maintained that effective instruction in the P.E. realm is one of the distinct teacher characteristics and that presentation of tasks in a clear manner helps students to acquire skills with ease. Farrant (1980) concluded that several factors such as lesson clarity, structure, involving student ideas and clear instruction help in the teaching learning process.

Metzler (1990) also confirmed that P.E. tutors assist students to perform the activities they hitherto were ignorant of or had no retrospective knowledge about.

In addition, Metzler reiterated that performance feedback and regular evaluation of pupils' progress affect the teaching and learning process.

The study results imply that when P.E. teachers are up to the task getting involved in all aspects of the subject; demonstrating, using correct formations or methods, and enabling students to participate in activities, makes the teaching of the subject effective. This calls for the use of the right methods to teach the various techniques inherent in the subject. The use of the right methods by the teachers will elicit the right responses from the students. This will go a long way to sustain the interest of the students in the subject. They will thus want to engage in P.E. activities at will. If the right methods are not applied, students understanding will suffer and their interest level will go further down.

4.2. Research Question 2

4.2.1. Do the COE Have Adequate Facilities and Equipment for the Teaching of P.E?

This question was to find out from the respondents whether they have adequate facilities and equipment in the colleges for practical lessons. Table 2 gives an overview of the responses.

Responses	SA		SD	
	F	%	F	%
The COE do not have enough facilities and equipment for effective practical lessons	228	91.2	22	8.8
There are storerooms for keeping equipment and supplies	177	70.8	73	29.2
Enough facilities and equipment are provided in the COE for P.E. lessons	73	29.2	177	70.8

Table 2: Adequacy of Facilities and Equipment

Note: Total Number of Responses = 250

From Table 2, the most cited concern on the adequacy of equipment was that COE did not have enough facilities and equipment for effective practical lessons (91.2%). This means that facilities were not provided in the COE for P.E.

Fiat and Vennier (1975) corroborated the study result by indicating that facilities and equipment for P.E. are deficient in most schools. Fiat and Vennier pointed out that in the absence of equipment; activities turn to focus on the body more than being explanatory. Community use of Schools and School use of Community Facilities (2010) asserted that facilities and equipment are one of the factors that influence programme development. In line with this assertion, Fiat and Vennier pointed out that availability of facilities and equipment encourages the choice of activity as well as variability. However, they also stated that in the absence of equipment teachers can always improvise to suit the needs of the lesson. Scott et al. (2007) in line with the study result indicated the accessibility of recreational facilities and physical activity equipment being an important predictor of physical activity in youth. Verstraete et al. (2006) also found out that providing game equipment during recess periods was effective in increasing children's physical activity levels and contributed to reaching the daily activity levels recommended for health.

The results imply that availability of adequate equipment is essential for effective teaching and learning. Facilities and equipment are not usually adequate in the COE thus making the teaching and learning of the subject very difficult. When this happens, the students lose a lot of practice hours and are thus not able to perfect the required skills very well. Also, P.E.

lessons lose their interesting nature and the lessons become drabbed. Students will thus not find any interest in participating in such lessons adding to the miserable status of the subject in COE and the educational system as a whole.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study it is concluded that when the right approach is used with correct formations and periodical demonstration of activities employed in lessons, coupled with the provision and use of appropriate facilities and equipment, teaching of P.E would become effective in the colleges of education and this would have a rippling effect on the output of trainees.

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