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Non-selection of physical education as an elective course in Ashanti region colleges of education: Physical education tutors' perspectives

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Abstract

Since its inception, physical education has played an important role in the development of learners, particularly in early childhood. This paper sought to investigate the factors associated with the non-selection of Physical Education as an elective course in Ashanti Region Colleges of Education: the perspectives of Physical Education tutors. The findings were based on semi-structured interviews with eight tutors and eight public Colleges of Education in Ghana's Ashanti Region. The research revealed the difficulty of the course at the College of Education, the number of Physical Education tutors available, and the workload of Physical Education tutors. The study suggested that Physical Education be introduced early to dispel the myth that it is difficult, and that Colleges of Education hire more Physical Education tutors to ensure an even distribution of workload.

Keywords: tutor, non-selection, physical education, colleges of education, workload, unpredictability

Introduction

Since the 1800s, physical education has been included in school curricula (Lumpkin, 2009) ^[17]. In essence, it has had a significant impact on the development of students, particularly those at the beginning of their education. It has also been used in the battle against childhood obesity and adult inactivity. As a result, the primary goal is to develop physically competent people who have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage in healthy physical activity and reap the associated benefits (Akindutire & Olanipekun, 2014) ^[4]. Students develop physically, mentally, and socially during the educational process. In other words, as people interact with one another, they are likely to gain experiences that shape their behavior both inside and outside of public spaces (Sofo & Asola, 2016) ^[36]. Physical education enhances and promotes both physical fitness and social skills. Physical Education is important, according to AfEP (2010), because the activities involved benefit both individuals and institutions. Physical education activities benefit not only individuals, but institutions and countries as well. Through game victories, Physical Education promotes and advertises national establishments (Janz *et al.*, 2010) ^[19]. The aims of the Physical Education curriculum for primary schools, according to Ghana's Ministry of Education [MoE] (2019) ^[19], are captured in the following excerpts:

"lead healthy and active lifestyles, develop competence to excel in a broad range of physical activities, athletics, games, and sports (career opportunities), engage in competitive athletics, games, sports and physical activities, become confident and responsible persons in all walks of life, developmental, moral, social and spiritual capabilities, appreciate healthy competition in athletics, games and sports, acquire knowledge of the value of the physical activity, and develop an appreciation for diversity (p. 18)".

Despite their importance, enrollment in Physical Education classes in schools and colleges is declining globally. For example, in the United States, high school Physical Education enrollment has dropped from 70.3 percent in 2017 to 60.4 percent in 2018 (Faulkner *et al.* (2018) ^[14]. However, only half of African countries implement Physical Education programs in accordance with UNESCO (1978) ^[39], which states that students should regard Physical Education, like other rights, as an essential human right (Hardman, 2008) ^[15]. Physical education is perceived differently by teachers; as a result, few teachers are focused on providing learners with the necessary competencies to empower function effectively.

Other teachers may be negative because they do not understand what is expected of them (Kahiga, *et al.*, 2015). Previous research (Gao *et al.*, 2008; Zhu & Chen, 2013)^[13, 43] did not pay close attention in Elementary Schools, High Schools, and Colleges to better understand why Physical Education is failing, which is why interest in the course is declining. As children progress through the early stages of development, there is a strong correlation between rising unfavorable attitudes toward Physical Education and a drop in physical activity (Janz, *et al.*, 2010)^[19]. Participants in Physical Education have a lot of fun and continue to participate after school (Silverman & Subramaniam, 2007)^[35].

Physical Education is not an examinable subject in the majority of African schools, according to Shen *et al.* (2012)^[33]. According to Ocaik (2016)^[27], when given the option of elective Physical Education or other elective courses, students frequently choose the latter. People who were physically active as children are more likely to be physically active as adults and prefer to attend Physical Education classes (National Association for Sport and Physical Education [NASPE], 2004)^[25]. According to Siedentop (1992)^[34], a multi-action instructional program consisting of a series of brief components can influence students' attitudes toward Physical Education. Understanding the goals of Physical Education necessitates an understanding of the attitudes and perceptions that can influence a person's decision to begin or continue participating in the subject (Shen, *et al.*, 2012)^[33]. Meanwhile, the UNESCO Charter (1978)^[39] emphasizes that Physical Education, like all others, is a fundamental human right.

Physical education has the potential to achieve and promote holistic development. The International Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Sports ([UNESCO], 2015)^[40] states that everyone should have early positive experiences with play, games, and physical activities to lay the groundwork for the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation needed for long-term participation in physical activity and games. Physical Education, as in other countries, faces numerous challenges that limit students' participation in the program (Akindutire & Olanipekun, 2014)^[4]. A study of the temporal patterns and relationships of physical activity, inactivity, and physical wellness among school-aged children in Sub-Saharan Africa discovered that urbanization was linked to a developing pattern of decline in Physical Education, increased sedentary behavior, and decreased fitness procedures over time (Muthuri *et al.*, 2014a)^[24]. Physical Education was taught by trainees who felt obligated as future teachers to do so (Mudekunya & Sithole, 2012)^[22]. According to Kinnunen and Lewis (2013)^[18], almost no internal and external evaluation of students' attitudes toward Physical Education has taken place. In general, teachers will recognize gifted students and will make every effort to support and energize them so that they can reach their full potential. Most teachers believe that skilled students value and enjoy Physical Education. Students must be positively socialised into Physical Education, according to Kinnunen and Lewis (2013)^[18], in order for them to have positive attitudes toward it. Successive administrations in Ghana have not fully committed to Physical Education as a subject in schools and colleges (Ammah & Kwaw, 2005)^[5]. This is especially true given that most Ghanaian schools place a strong emphasis on English language, Mathematics, and Science achievement from the start (Sofa & Asola, 2016)^[36]. According to Ammah and Kwaw (2005)^[5], in many parts of

the world, physical education is regarded as a non-productive activity that is less important to a prosperous future than academic disciplines.

Despite the fact that sports is a vital industry around the world, particularly in several African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Ethiopia, there is a widespread misconception that it cannot be turned into a career. Physical Education graduates from Winneba Sports College led Ghana's football success stories in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These examples of overcoming adversity in game execution demonstrate how society's attitudes toward Physical Education are gradually changing (Musanganya *et al.*, 2000)^[23]. The dynamism of the twenty-first century has altered the lives of Ghanaians as well as the educational system (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, and Addo, 2016, p. 3)^[2], emphasizing the importance of sports in the school setting. The excerpts support the claim:

"all schools should have a playing field."

According to the excerpts, a playing field is important in the development of young children, which explains why every elementary school should have one. Most schools and colleges lack playing fields, some institutions do not participate in zonal and circuit sports and athletics, and despite being on the timetable, Physical Education is not taught in elementary schools (Adu-Gyamfi *et al.*, 2016). Physical education is becoming less popular among parents and students as society discourages students from participating in physical activities, which has changed the course of studies (Adu-Gyamfi *et al.*, 2016)^[2]. Concerned about the country's recent decline in sports development, the then-Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports mandated that Physical Education be taught and learned in schools and colleges on an equal footing with other courses (Prempeh, 2019)^[30].

Interest heavily influences the decision to specialize in Physical Education. This explains why intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are the driving forces behind the growth of a person's interest in Physical Education (How, *et al.*, 2013). Adolescents form their attitudes in response to the influences they encounter, according to social cognitive theory. Friends, instructors, and coaches or mentors become more important as the learner matures (Bandura, 1977; 1986)^[6, 7]. Physical education among Ghanaians is low, according to Ghana's Physical Education Report Card (Ocansey *et al.*, 2015)^[28]. According to Hardman's (2008)^[15] perspective on the management of Physical Education in Schools, Physical Education is marginalized in Ghana, according to a study on the difficulties of providing adequate Physical Education (Sofa & Asola, 2016)^[36]. As a result, research into why college trainees in Ghana, particularly in the Ashanti Region, do not major in Physical Education is required.

Only 281 students out of 46 Colleges of Education with a trainee population of 19,780 final year students chose Physical Education as an elective Institute of Education ([IoE], 2022), representing 1.4% of the total population of students pursuing Physical Education in Ghana. The irony is that if they are hired as classroom teachers at the end of their studies, the 98.6% of students who did not take Physical Education as an elective may end up teaching Physical Education as a subject. Over half of this number has been assigned to the elementary school as classroom teachers, where they will be required to teach Physical Education because it is one of the subjects on the timetable, and all subjects on the elementary school's timetable must be taught

by a classroom teacher. The total trainee population of final year trainees in the Ashanti Region, the study's focus, is 2,962. Only 110 of these schools provide Physical Education, accounting for 3.7% of the total population (IoE, 2022).

This is a problem because the vast majority of these teachers will eventually become classroom teachers and will be required to teach Physical Education as a subject. In light of this, the purpose of this study was to discover why trainees in Ashanti Region Colleges of Education do not choose Physical Education as an elective subject, as well as the perspectives of PE tutors.

Objective of the Study

The goal of this study was to find out why trainee students who took Foundations of Physical Education (PRA 122) as a compulsory subject in their first year refused to take Physical Education as an elective.

Research Questions

1. What factors influence trainees' non-selection and pursuit of Physical Education as an elective in Ashanti Region Colleges of Education?
2. How well-equipped are Colleges of Education for teaching both core and elective Physical Education courses?

Methodology

The phenomenological qualitative study design was used because it provides experiences of a phenomenon and seeks to generate an in-depth explanation of the phenomena and feelings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) ^[12]. Many studies have been conducted to investigate Physical Education as a subject, but few quantitative studies appear to have investigated Physical Education as a non-selection subject in Colleges of Education. The current study seeks to investigate the phenomenological research approach, which is significant because it will provide a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under consideration (Creswell, 2009) ^[11].

Informed consent was obtained from the College and tutors prior to conducting the various interviews. The identities of participants were concealed in order to ensure the security and confidentiality of the information they provided.

Table 1: Physical Education Tutors in Target Colleges of Education

College	N
Agogo Presbyterian College of Education	2
Agona SDA College of Education	2
Akrokerrri College of Education	3
Offinso College of Education	3
Mampong Technical College of Education	1
St. Monica's College of Education	1
St. Louis College of Education	1
Wesley College of Education	4
Total	17

Because participants possessed qualities on which I could rely for rich excerpts, I used purposeful sampling. Because randomly selected participants may not accurately represent the population of interest, eight Physical Education unit heads were purposefully chosen for the study. PE unit heads may interact with trainees who have chosen or have not chosen to pursue a career in Physical Education.

To allow for an open, in-depth discussion of the identified problem, a semi-structured interview schedule was used. This instrument helped me understand the situation's

unpredictability without requiring any prior naming. This made information reporting and analysis very reflective of the perspectives of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) ^[12]. The most effective way to learn about feelings, concerns, and goals is through an interview (Cohen *et al.*, 2007) ^[10]. This interviewing style focuses on the specifics of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009) ^[11]. The interview guide focuses on the perspectives of Physical Education tutors on why trainees did not choose Physical Education as an elective.

The first guide question elicited responses about the tutor's teaching experience at the College. The second question is about how the subject is taught in college. The third and fourth questions asked about the number of Physical Education tutors and the amount of work they are expected to do. The fifth question compared the number of trainees who chose Physical Education versus those who chose other electives. The six questions focused on the barriers to teaching Physical Education at the college level. The seventh question on the tutor interview guide looked into how trainees in the College of Education can be motivated to choose Physical Education, and the final question looked into how management supports the facilitation and learning of PE in the College.

I validated the interviews by comparing them to another, previously proven reliable measure. Because the two measures agreed, it was assumed that the interview's validity is comparable to the other measure's proven validity, a concept known as convergent validity (Cohen *et al.*, 2007) ^[10]. That mechanism essentially improved and promoted validity. During the interview, care was taken not to lead the trainees to a specific point of view; thus, responses to questions were accepted as they were provided, and probing questions were offered primarily to obtain the trainees' reasons for their thoughts. I was able to determine whether the translations accurately reflected the participants' perspectives by asking key questions. Participants were occasionally asked to comment on the transcripts to ensure that the data accurately reflected the researcher's views.

The themes were qualitatively analyzed thematically. According to Orodho (2009) ^[29], qualitative data analysis is critical because it allows the researcher to identify relevant themes related to the data collection methods that defined the study, allowing the researcher to obtain robust data about the phenomenon under investigation.

To answer research question 1, thematic analysis data was used. I skimmed the transcripts and took quick notes. During the preparation of the notes, a list was compiled using the data obtained from the research instruments. Later, I went through the list and classified each item so everyone knew what it was about. I searched for links between the categories and classified them as major or minor categories (or themes), then compared and contrasted the major and minor categories or themes. After gathering all eight transcripts, I painstakingly classified and evaluated each one, determining if it fit and its significance. I evaluated the information after categorizing all of the transcript data into minor and major categories or themes. Later, I went through each category to see which could be combined and which needed to be subdivided. Finally, I went over the original transcripts to ensure that all of the material that needed to be classified was completed.

To answer research question 2, thematic analysis was used. I went over the transcripts and took some quick notes. After taking notes, I made a list of the various types of material I discovered. I then went through the list and classified each item in a logical way. I determined whether or not the

categories were related and then classified them as major categories (or themes), comparing and contrasting the major and minor categories or themes. After gathering all eight transcripts, I painstakingly classified and evaluated each one, determining if it fit and its significance. After categorizing all of the transcript data into minor and major categories or themes, I double-checked everything. Later, I went through each category to see which could be combined and which needed to be subdivided. Finally, I double-checked the original transcripts to ensure that all necessary classifications had been completed. Participants' verbatim responses were used to assist; sound sounds even more convincing.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What factors influence trainees' non-selection and pursuit of Physical Education as an elective in Ashanti Region Colleges of Education?

As a subject, Physical Education has both advantages and disadvantages. According to Tuckman, people participate in Physical Education and related activities because of the benefits they receive (1999). Students, according to Muindi (1998), Wamukoya (1994)^[42], and Njororai (1994)^[26], have negative attitudes toward Physical Education and related activities. According to Njororai (1994)^[26], university students studying Physical Education are perceived by their peers and society as dull and unintelligent. Based on the data gathered, participants clearly stated the factors underlying trainees' non-section of Physical Education. These factors include the difficulty of Physical Education, trainees' lack of interest, the absence of Physical Education in college curricula, a lack of information and knowledge about PE, and PE misconceptions.

The difficult nature of the course at the Colleges of Education

It can be discerned from the excerpts that some trainees do not pursue Physical Education because they deem it difficult. A participant remarked that:

"...they think Physical Education is difficult" (Physical Education Tutor 1)

According to this narrative, some trainees do not pursue Physical Education because it is unrelated to their field of study. Furthermore, the excerpt implies that the difficulty of the subject explains why many trainees do not choose it. Sync with the views of Physical Education tutors in the Colleges of Education and this is captured in the following extract:

"Truly, Physical Education is a little technical because it is not just one of the general courses that they can simply read. Certain areas are very technical and you know technical subjects are in some way demanding and it takes extra effort. Students these days want the simple and cheap side so that is one of the reasons". (Physical Education tutor 3).

According to the excerpt, some Physical Education tutors agree that the course load and sub-areas of study make Physical Education slightly technical. Furthermore, the statement implied that modern students prefer the easy way out. Another participant remarked:

"Here, one of the problems which I will term as local has to do with the fact that students are sometimes discouraged by their seniors. When they come, they listen to them. They tell them Physical Education is difficult and that discourages the students from selecting it as an elective. Unfortunately, certain utterances from some tutors are discouraging so I can say it is 50-50 on the part of students (seniors) and some tutors". (Physical Education tutor 3).

The excerpts suggest that some trainees were influenced by their predecessors and, in some cases, tutors from other disciplines, according to the excerpts. Furthermore, they are led to believe the course's complexities. This is likely to cloud their judgment and influence their choice of Physical Education as an elective.

The Lack of Interest by Trainees

Despite the numerous benefits that Physical Education provides, such as assisting students in cognitive development (Adu & Aboagye, 2022; Wankel, & Kreisel 1985)^[1, 41], allowing students to acquire key life skills (Bekiari *et al.*, 2017)^[8], and many others, some people are not interested in the discipline for a variety of reasons. According to the excerpts, some participants were uninterested in Physical Education. Others were turned off because the course did not match their career goals. A participant revealed that:

"... this college is a female College and I have noticed that women especially at this level are not very much interested in physical and vigorous activities because they are ladies. At that level, they are so mindful of themselves, their body, maybe hurting themselves and other things so the interest is not there and the desire is low" (Physical Education tutor 8).

The excerpt clearly shows that some people are uninterested in or dislike Physical Education and related activities. This is consistent with the arguments of Njororai (1994)^[26] and Breen (2006)^[9] that Physical Education is not a preferred option for students who are not interested in it. Men's socio-cultural perceptions of sports appear to be dominant, as well. This explains why it appears to be dominated by men (Adu & Aboagye, 2022).

Absence of Physical Education in the Colleges' Curriculum

Physical Education is not offered as an elective course of study in Ashanti region colleges of education, according to the findings in this subsection. Similarly, Akindutire and Olanipekun (2014)^[4] agree that curriculum in educational institutions needs to be improved. Some participants shared similar perspectives. Interestingly, a tutor in one of the Colleges of Education believes that this is an institutional issue because it involves noncompliance and fewer efforts by some principals to mount PE as an elective course in the Colleges of Education. And this is captured in the following excerpt:

"Secondly, when students come here you can see the zeal trainees want to study PE as elective but the course doesn't reflect in their portal. Also, principals are not making the subject interesting because when you ask them to make inquiries from various platforms and during professional board meetings and those things, you come and they tell you we are on course. You can deduce from the information they give that they are not making efforts to make sure that the subject is mounted. Because it has not been mounted, students don't see it to select it at all" (Physical Education tutor 4).

Misconception about Physical Education

Regardless of the benefits of physical education to an individual's health and well-being, some people dislike the discipline. This section addresses some of the misconceptions about Physical Education held by some participants, particularly Physical Education tutors. These points of view tend to label PE as football or simply sports, viewing PE as a man's sport and making statements that imply gender stereotyping. This is captured in the following excerpts:

“As I said earlier, people see PE as only football oriented and because it is not examinable at the secondary school level, they do not add more value to it. So, it is not in their course and a lot of people think about football when Physical Education is mentioned. So that may be the main cause for the non-selection of it” (Physical Education tutor 1).

“The next reason is that people see PE as sports, not a course or an academic subject one can select and pursue...” (Physical Education tutor 6).

According to the excerpts, some people are unfamiliar with Physical Education as a course. This explains why, according to the first tutor, people mistake Physical Education for nothing more than football. The following excerpts also demonstrate that students' misconceptions about Physical Education explain why they do not choose it. The tutor further provides insights and this is captured in the following excerpts:

“This misconception that sports and PE are for men is also a factor. So sometimes they ask the question of why a female is pursuing PE as a course. I think that is also one of the reasons” (PE tutor 2).

Physical Education, by extension, is aimed at men. This concept raises the question of gender socialization in Physical Education. The excerpt clearly shows that participation in Physical Education is related to how young people perceive their feminine and masculine roles in society. “Self-efficacy” refers to a person's beliefs about his or her ability to perform specific behaviors or actions in specific activity areas, according to Lent *et al.*, (2002) ^[20] and Shen and Bordon (2017) ^[32] Social Cognitive Career Theory. In our Ghanaian society, it appears that some people associate Physical Education with masculinity. Furthermore, a gender stereotyping issue arose during the data collection process. And this captured in the following extract:

“The last thing I will say is that because it is a female college, we have courses like home economics, management and others which attracts women more as they are future wives and home managers” (Physical Education tutor 5).

Research Question 2: How well-equipped are Colleges of Education for teaching both core and elective Physical Education courses?

The issue of Physical Education tutors in Ashanti Region colleges of education is addressed in this section. The data analysis revealed two sub-themes: one on the number of Physical Education tutors and the workload of the few Physical Education tutors employed in various Colleges of Education, and the other on the workload of the few Physical Education tutors employed in various Colleges of Education.

Number of Physical Education Tutors Available

When asked how many Physical Education tutors each college had, participants responded as follows:

We are two. Looking at the number, I think three will be okay (PE tutor 1).

Two (PE tutor 2).

It used to be one but now we are two (PE tutor 3)

We are two teaching Physical Education in this college (PE tutor 4).

I am the only PE tutor ... (PE tutor 6).

We are four teaching both core and elective PE (PE tutor 8).

The excerpts revealed that each College had two Physical Education tutors on average. The first excerpt suggests hiring more Physical Education tutors to help reduce the workload on the current Physical Education tutors. The excerpts

demonstrate that there are not enough Physical Education tutors in the various colleges. As a result, Physical Education tutors are required in educational institutions to improve and promote effective teaching and learning (Adu & Aboagye, 2022; Kinnunen & Lewis, 2013) ^[18].

The Workload of Physical Education Tutors in the Colleges of Education

In terms of Physical Education tutor workload, data collected revealed that due to the trainee-to-PE tutor ratio, PE tutors are dealing with an enormous workload. The views of the PE tutors are revealed in the following excerpts:

The workload is massive especially when Physical Education is a core subject. Is taught in the first year and you can imagine one person teaching all the classes, adding practical and sporting activities. This is so intensive. So now that we are two the burden is a little lightened now. Still, because of the organisation of sports and other activities, it makes the work very, very intensive (Physical Education tutor 3).

The students are many here. They are about 417 plus and the tutors are only two and all students must study Physical Education. It is a core so there is an overload of work for the Physical Education tutors (Physical Education tutor 4).

It has been very tedious. At times we teach more than ten classes. We have about nineteen groups that we teach and so I take nine classes and my colleague takes nine, then we share the remaining one. So, it has been very, very tedious and stressful but we have been managing (Physical Education tutor 2).

As for the workload, it's a little heavy because you teach, train students, and also do other activities. So, the workload is heavy (Physical Education tutor 1).

Because Physical Education is a required course for all first-year students, the workload on PE tutors becomes excessive, causing them to become tired and stressed in the shortest amount of time, according to the excerpts. More PE tutors must be hired in order to reduce the workload on existing PE tutors and make them more efficient and effective. The study's findings support Rashid's (1994) ^[31] claim that there are few, if any, Physical Education teachers in many black Sub-Saharan African schools. As a result, Physical Education teachers are scarce, resulting in a massive workload for the few who are available.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study discovered that factors such as the difficult nature of Physical Education, trainees' lack of interest, the absence of Physical Education in the Colleges curriculum, insufficient information and knowledge about Physical Education, and misconceptions about Physical Education influenced trainees' non-selection of Physical Education as an elective course in the Ashanti region's colleges of education. Furthermore, the study discovered a shortage of Physical Education tutors in the Ashanti Region's eight Colleges of Education, which increased the workload for the tutors who were available. Finally, the research identified some motivators that encourage trainees to choose Physical Education as an elective course. Raising awareness and educating trainees, offering Physical Education as an elective course in Senior High School, utilizing the practical components of the course, hiring more Physical Education tutors, and providing health benefits were among these initiatives.

This study yielded several recommendations for school administrators, stakeholders, and policymakers to focus on success factors in order to encourage trainees to pursue

Physical Education while also improving the course's efficiency. These are some ideas: To debunk such notions, misconceptions about the difficulty of Physical Education should be addressed as part of the first-year introductory course. College administrators intend to hire more Physical Education tutors in order to improve the teaching and learning of the course. This will allow for a more equitable workload distribution.

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