



## Influence of teacher attitude challenges on the implementation of physical education instruction in public primary schools Nyamira south sub-county, Kenya

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### Abstract

Physical Education is of vital importance as it contributes to improved fitness levels as well as enhance children's physical, social and mental development. The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges that hinder implementation of Physical Education instruction in public primary schools in Nyamira South Sub-County in Kenya. Derived from the study, this paper explores the impact of teachers' attitudes in the implementation of PE instruction in schools. Data was collected using a questionnaire and observation checklist. Both stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain a sample of 278 public primary school teachers. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data. Frequencies and percentage were used to summarize teachers' background characteristics. Means and standard deviations were used to describe prevailing levels of teacher training in PE, teacher attitude towards PE, learner gender and learner age towards PE. Thematic analysis was employed in analysing recurrent themes emanating from PE lesson observations. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 20) aided in the analysis of data. The results showed that most of the teachers of PE in Nyamira South Sub-County did not take PE lessons seriously. They either did not teach it or used the PE hours to cover other subjects in the school syllabus. Therefore, the study recommends that the government, through the Ministry of Education, should make PE examinable in order to redress negative attitude.

**Keywords:** teacher attitude challenges, implementation, physical education instruction, public primary schools, Nyamira, Kenya

### 1. Introduction

Physical activity has been and remains part and parcel of the educational programmes. Learners also need to engage in activities that require regular bodily movement. Without a structured physical education programme, often children engage in random physical activities that could be detrimental to their physical and psychological health and development. The recognition that children develop through different stages necessitated an avenue through which appropriate activities could be designed to impart children with fine and gross motor skills commensurate with the relevant developmental stage (Robinson & Goodway, 2009; Robinson, 2011) <sup>[12]</sup>. Therefore, as noted by National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2012) <sup>[11]</sup>, Physical Education is a focused, organized and planned manner of teaching students the science and methods of physical active and healthy living. In essence, rather than let children participate in harmful random activities, PE provides a structured and constructive approach to physical activity.

According to Sallis and McKenzie (1991), PE is education content aims at teaching social, cognitive and physical skills through physical activity. Viewed from this perspective, the authors contend that children and the youth are prepared to cope with the rigours of physical activity and also to engage in physical activity during PE. In emphasizing this perspective, Siedentop (2009) <sup>[14]</sup> argues that PE is education through the physical. Consequently, PE encompasses dimensions of movement education, sport education and fitness education.

The importance of PE has been highlighted by the International Charter of Physical Education and Sports (UNESDDC, as cited in Kipngetch & Rotich, 2014), supported by the UNESCO member states conference of 1978 (as cited in Kipngetch & Rotich, 2014). These two bodies have declared physical education and sport as a fundamental right for all. Besides, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1990) requires that education be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to full capacity. Additionally, the recognition of the utility of PE is emphasized in the Moscow Declaration (1990), the Berlin Declaration (1999), the and the Punta Del Este Declaration (2000) which together call for clear spelling out of time allocation for PE in both primary and secondary school levels.

### Physical Education in the School Context

As a subject, it is reported that Physical Education was introduced in form of German and Swedish gymnastics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in recognition of their role in human health. With the contribution of ideas from discourse among scholars like Weston (1962) <sup>[16]</sup>, personal hygiene and exercise for bodily health were further incorporated to the gymnastics. This focus on bodily health was however viewed by critics as rather too narrow, thereby necessitating inclusion of fundamental movements and physical skills for games and sports (Wood & Cassidy, 1930) <sup>[17]</sup>. Changes to PE in the context of schooling have continued to be made leading to connecting of body

movement to its consequences as well as, teaching children the science of healthful living and skills for active lifestyle (NASPE, 2004) <sup>[11]</sup>.

As part of Education, PE provides opportunities for children to learn about physical movement while engaging in physical activities. In this case, three curriculum models have been advanced as useful in PE instruction; these include movement education, sport education and fitness education. According to Abels and Bridges (2010) <sup>[1]</sup>, children use their bodies for self-expression and could benefit more from movement education. Siedentop *et al.* (2011) <sup>[14]</sup> argue that sport education as a model of PE instruction is relevant in educating students to be players in the fullest sense. This indeed is quite rewarding in contemporary world where so many people earn their living from sports. The conceptual framework for fitness education hinges on health related components that accrue from fitness such as cardio-respiratory fitness, muscular strength and endurance (Lonsdale *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[8]</sup>.

### **Teacher attitude and Implementation PE Instruction**

Attitude in this paper is operationalized to mean feelings and beliefs exhibited towards PE instruction. The easiest way of ascertaining people's attitudes is to ask them. Attitude relates to self-image and social acceptance. Therefore, in order to preserve a positive self-image, people's responses may be affected by social desirability. They may not reveal their true attitudes, but answer questions in a way that they feel socially acceptable. Given this problem, various methods of measuring attitudes have been developed. In particular, the different measures focus on various components of attitudes – cognitive, affective and behavioural. However, all of these methods have limitations of their own.

An attitude scale is another approach used to provide a valid, or accurate, measure of an individual's social attitudes. According to Fisher (1993) <sup>[4]</sup>, however, anyone who has "faked" an attitude knows there are shortcomings in these self-report scales of attitudes. The most common problem associated with attitude measurement scale is that of social desirability. Socially desirability refers to the tendency for people to give "socially desirable" responses to the questionnaire items. People are often motivated to give replies that make them appear "well adjusted", unprejudiced, open-minded and democratic.

Self-report scales that measure attitudes towards race, religion, sex etc. are heavily affected by socially desirability bias. Respondents who harbour a negative attitude towards a particular group may not wish to admit to the experimenter (or to themselves) that they have these feelings. This makes responses on attitudes invalid 100%. Indirect methods typically involve the use of a projective test. A projective test is involves presenting a person with an ambiguous (i.e. unclear) or incomplete stimulus (e.g. picture or words). The stimulus requires interpretation from the person. Therefore, the person's attitude is inferred from their interpretation of the ambiguous or incomplete stimulus.

Teacher attitude features strongly in existing literature as having an influence on implementation of curriculum and eventual learner performance. It is reported that individual teachers have inherent views about schools and learners which they tend to bring into the classroom context without due

consideration of their effect on learner perceptions of the subject (Hendrikz, 2000) <sup>[5]</sup>. Empirical evidence explicitly shows that teacher beliefs and attitudes tend to define their strategies to teaching and handling of learner's and is therefore central to successful implementation of instruction (Hendrikz, 2000) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Bucher (2003) <sup>[3]</sup>, in a study on teachers' attitudes and physical activity, have revealed that a teachers' attitudes play a pivotal role in ensuring that students have positive experience of physical activity in school settings. The findings by Bucher (2003) <sup>[3]</sup> support the view that teachers who feel good about themselves and are competent and confident in what they do are more likely to create supportive and nurturing environment for their students. Besides, Bucher (2003) <sup>[3]</sup> has established that teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring that students have positive experience of physical activity in school settings. These findings, however, focus only on physical activity which is just one component of Physical Education. It was, therefore, important to investigate how teacher attitudes pose challenges to the implementation of all facets of PE. It is important to note that PE has many components, for instance, gymnastics, aerobics and other activities such as learning of skills of playing various ball games. All these components contribute to total development of pupils.

Atoni (2013) <sup>[2]</sup> has conducted a study on teachers' perception on teaching of Physical Education in public primary schools in the then Eldoret Municipality Kenya. The study revealed that PE implementation is low in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. Moreover, teachers' perception of PE teaching was negative and the factors that were found to be affecting PE teaching were; education level of a teacher and age of a teacher. A teacher's past memories on school PE was also found to be affecting PE teaching (Atoni, 2013) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Morgan and Thompson (2001) <sup>[10]</sup> have conducted a study in Australia on the teachers' attitudes and experiences on teaching primary schools. They found that a teacher's prior experiences influence teaching methodology and practices. Further, they established that a teacher's past experiences contributed immensely on their current attitudes towards PE. From the study it was concluded that for many primary teachers their own experiences of PE and sports in schools often combine into a negative attitude towards PE and PA. Monsen (2004) <sup>[9]</sup>, in a study in New Zealand, has explored teachers' attitudes towards PE curriculum in high schools. The study revealed that students at high school did not willingly participate in PE programs unless forced to. The participants recommended that awareness should be created among teachers and students on the importance of PE (Monsen, 2004) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Sharma, Loreman and Forlin (2011) <sup>[13]</sup> have attempted to measure teachers' attitudes towards implementation of PE curriculum practices. The results of the study indicated that the attitude of a teacher affects instruction of PE. Similarly, Sololainen, Engelbrech, Nel and Malinen (2013) <sup>[15]</sup> have carried out a study on teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy in teaching PE in an inclusive education classroom. The results of the study indicated that whereas the overall sentiments towards disabilities were positive in both countries teachers had concern about the consequences of including children

with disabilities in a regular PE classroom. The most positive aspect of self-efficacy among the South African teachers was their self-efficacy in managing behaviour. The Finnish teachers saw this as the weakest point. Self-efficacy was clearly related to overall attitudes towards inclusion of students in a PE class.

The discourse on teacher attitude and PE clearly points to the need for the teacher to maintain a positive attitude towards physical education if learners have to gain. Several gaps however are highlighted in this discourse. Majority of studies have been conducted in developed countries where PE infrastructure is in place. It was therefore prudent to identify teacher attitude towards PE from a developing country perspective.

**Statement of the Problem**

The importance of physical education instruction in primary schools cannot be overstated. Primary schools play a significant part in valuing the idea of an active lifestyle and developing a culture where physical activity is accepted as an enjoyable and all-encompassing feature of daily life. Indeed, research evidence show that by properly designing and delivering PE programmes, schools can enhance young people’s enjoyment of and participation in the subject thereby improving their concentration, memory, behaviour and performance (Hickson & Fishburne, 2004) [6].

Despite the potential PE has in the well-being and health of students, its implementation in public schools has remained a big challenge. Quite often, PE as a subject has not been given the seriousness it deserves; there is fear that PE lessons are being conducted without teacher supervision which makes PE lessons haphazard. In other cases, these lessons have been used by teachers to cover syllabi in other subjects as well as for remedial work. Besides, considering that PE is the foundation of sports and cultural activities. It was, therefore, necessary to explore the challenges to effective implementation of PE in public primary schools in Nyamira South Sub-County.

**2. Materials and Methods**

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The choice of the descriptive design was informed by the observational nature of this quantitative study. It was

conducted in Nyamira South Sub-County, situated in the region between South Rift and Nyanza in Kenya. The study targeted teachers drawn from the six zones that comprise the Sub-County. A total of 1004 teachers were distributed in public primary schools in the sub-county. From the target population, a sample of 278 was selected for the study using both stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was then used to select the respective teachers from each zone.

The study relied on two data collection instruments, namely a questionnaire and observation checklist. The collected data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize teachers’ background characteristics. Means and standard deviations were used to describe prevailing levels of teacher training in PE; teacher attitude towards PE; learner gender perspectives, and learner age. Thematic analysis was employed in analysing recurrent themes emanating from PE lesson observations. Correlations were used to find out how the conceptualized independent variables related with implementation of PE instruction after which multiple regressions were then used to model the magnitude of challenges posed to implementation of PE instruction by the identified teacher and learner factors.

**3. Results and Discussion**

**Teacher Attitude towards Implementation of PE Instruction**

The study sought to establish teachers’ attitudes towards implementation of PE in public primary schools. The structured teacher attitude scale was analysed using mean response scores and associated standard deviations. Teacher attitude towards the implementation of PE instruction was measured using nine items reflecting on possible attitudes elicited by teachers towards PE instruction. Respondents were asked to tick the response that best described their position with respect to practices used to implement PE in their respective schools, and to identify any other practices related to implementation of PE instruction. Responses were elicited on a 5-point scale ranging from 1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree. The research results were as summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Teacher Attitudes towards PE Instruction

Attitudinal items	SA		A		UN		D		SD	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I always attend to all of my PEs lessons	7	2.8	33	13.4	2	.8	175	71.1	29	11.8
I always prepare schemes and lesson plans for PE	10	4.0	38	15.4	1	.4	154	62.3	44	17.8
I find teaching PE boring	8	3.3	139	56.5	12	4.9	68	27.6	19	7.7
PE lessons should be handled by student teachers only	13	5.3	42	17.3	11	4.5	129	53.1	48	19.8
PE provides a good opportunity for learners to nurture their talents	114	46.7	120	49.2	1	.4	7	2.9	2	.8
Teaching in upper primary should focus on examinable subjects only	53	21.5	124	50.4	1	.4	49	19.9	19	7.7
PE as a subject is as relevant as other subjects in the school curriculum	52	21.1	16	6.5	3	1.2	169	68.7	6	2.4
Teaching PE consumes time that would have been used on important subjects	122	49.6	52	21.1	5	2.0	54	22.0	13	5.3
I find teaching PE degrading to me	143	57.9	27	10.9	15	6.1	8	3.2	54	21.9

**Key:** SA-strongly agree; A-agree; UN-unsure; D-disagree; SD-strongly disagree

**Source:** Survey Data (2016)

The results presented in Table 1 portray a negative attitude among teachers in public primary schools in Nyamira South Sub-County towards PE instruction. Whereas a majority of teachers tended to cumulatively agree that PE provides a good opportunity for learners to nurture their talents (95.9%) and cumulatively disagreed that PE lessons should be handled by student teachers only (72.9%), most of them fell short on most PE requirements. Majority of teachers disagreed that they always attended to their PE lessons (71.1%); that they always prepared schemes and lesson plans for PE (62.3%), and that PE as a subject is as relevant as other subjects in the school curriculum (68.7%). They nonetheless agreed that they found teaching PE boring (56.5%); that teaching in upper primary should focus on examinable subjects (50.4%), and that teaching PE consumed time that could have been used on important subjects (49.6%); and that they found teaching PE degrading to them (57.9%).

These results show that despite teachers' awareness on the importance of PE in nurturing learners' talents, they hardly put in sufficient efforts to improve its instruction. Not preparing professional documents and failure to attend lessons implies that teachers do not take PE seriously. By agreeing

that teaching PE is degrading, they showed a negative attitude towards PE instruction.

These results add to existing literature by showing that teacher attitudes contribute immensely to non-implementation of PE instruction. Teachers' negative attitudes were manifested through lack of preparation for the subject, non-attendance to lessons, and general apathy towards teaching PE. This contradicts the views by Howie (2012) [7] that teachers need to create a supportive and nurturing environment for their students.

The above results were consistent with comments made by a host of teachers in their responses to the unstructured sections of the attitude scale (Table 2). When asked whether or not there were other practices related to implementation of PE instruction, the respondents intimated that despite PE's potential to open up opportunities for students to nurture their skills and get captivated to seek knowledge, lack of PE uniforms and rooms to change or bathrooms to shower was a major challenge to the implementation of PE instruction. Besides, it also emerged that teachers lacked motivation to teach non-examinable subjects such as PE.

**Table 2:** Teachers' Comments on other Practices on Implementation of PE Instruction

Question	Comment
Are there other practices related to implementation of PE instruction?	✓ Most boys and girls complain of pain and inactivity after the PE lesson.
	✓ Teachers see PE as a waste of time
	✓ Most teachers find PE as a subject that should be taken solely by pupils as a normal activity
	✓ PE opens up opportunity for students to nurture their skills and get captivated to give out knowledge
	✓ Yes, have no PE uniforms, no rooms to change, no bathrooms to shower
	✓ Most teachers find PE as a subject that should be taken solely by pupils as a normal activity
	✓ Yes, more time is given to the examinable subjects
	✓ Yes, reward to be awarded to teachers who perform their duties in PE lesson so as to encourage more to join in the training. This will nature the future generation in the society ✓ Yes, the teachers are not motivated so they don't want to carry the burden of teaching subjects which are non-examinable like PE

Source: Survey Data (2016)

The above tabulated results raise concern considering the findings of Barney and Deutsch (2009) which revealed that classroom teachers in Oklahoma and Utah were of the view that PE was important for students in the sense that it could help combat the problem of obesity. Besides, it was argued that PE could encourage students to have an active lifestyle or to be physically active. These findings on negativity among teachers support the view by Atoni (2013) [2] that teachers' perception on PE teaching is negative. Nyamira Sub-County is one of the sub-counties renowned for producing athletes who compete mainly in long races. There should therefore be an inherent liking for PE among individuals in this area. The negative attitude exhibited by teachers towards PE instruction is further likely to compromise Nyamira County initiatives for talent academy considering that the academy is to be situated in a school.

**Teachers' Views on Implementation of PE Instruction**

PE implementation measurement scale consisted of twelve items measuring various aspects of PE instruction.

Respondents were asked to tick a response that best described their views with regards to how suggested aspects of PE instruction prevail in their respective schools. Responses were elicited on a five point Likert type scale ranging from 1-strongly agrees to 5-strongly disagree. The results shown in Table 3 portray a picture of poor implementation of PE instruction in Nyamira South Sub-County. There were disagreements with most of the expected practices required for appropriate implementation of PE instruction. This included: all classes' participation in PE (64% disagreement); preparation of lesson plans prior to lesson (61.5% disagreement); availability of teaching aids during PE instruction (70.5% disagreement); provision of adequate facilities for PE (73.3% disagreement); provision of indoor and outdoor facilities for teaching PE (73.1% disagreement); and availability of standard fields for athletics and football (61.3% disagreement). The only positive response noted was that teachers agreed that PE is allocated time on the master time table (49.6% cumulative agreement).

**Table 3:** Teachers’ Views on Implementation of PE Instruction

	SA		A		UN		D		SD	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
PE is always allocated time on the master time table	112	45.9	131	53.7	0	.0	1	.4	0	.0
All classes participate in PE sessions in this school	17	7.0	59	24.4	4	1.7	155	64.0	7	2.9
Teachers are required to scheme for PE just like in other subjects	44	18.1	174	71.6	2	.8	21	8.6	2	.8
Lesson plans for PE are prepared prior to the lesson	13	5.3	68	27.9	4	1.6	150	61.5	9	3.7
Teaching aids are availed for use during PE	6	2.5	41	16.8	2	.8	172	70.5	23	9.4
Resource persons are often invited during PE	6	2.5	20	8.3	4	1.7	186	76.9	26	10.
The school provides adequate facilities for teaching PE	3	1.2	25	10.3	4	1.6	178	73.3	33	13.6
Both indoor and outdoor facilities are provided for teaching PE	4	1.6	30	12.3	3	1.2	180	74.1	26	10.7
Realia materials are often used in teaching PE	6	2.5	41	17.2	9	3.8	172	72.0	11	4.6
The school has adequate outdoor space for teaching PE	21	8.8	153	64.0	2	.8	53	22.2	10	4.2
The school has adequate indoor space for teaching PE	10	4.1	21	8.7	1	.4	185	76.8	24	10.0
Standard fields are available for athletics and football	19	7.8	55	22.6	4	1.6	149	61.3	16	6.6

Source: Survey Data (2016)

The implication of these results is that, despite PE being recognized as a subject that requires time allocation and maintenance of professional records, it is not given the required seriousness in schools in the sub-county. While it should be mandatory for all classes, it is noted that not all classes participate in PE instruction. More challenging is the reported lack of necessary teaching materials, facilities and infrastructure required for implementation of PE instruction. These results are consistent with views drawn from teachers’ comments directed towards implementation of PE instruction

in the sub-county. When asked to comment on implementation of PE instruction in the Sub-County, the key theme emerging concerned facilities. It was reported that there was a general lack of required facilities and proper gear for PE instruction. Fields were mainly muddy as a result of weather conditions and types of soils. Besides, schools lack rooms that pupils can change in leaving no chance for an array of PE kit. Another theme that emerged concerns class size. It was observed that the very large number of pupils per class made it hard for the teacher to conduct effective PE instruction.

**Table 4:** Teachers’ Comments on Implementation of PE Instruction

Question	Comment
Comment on implementation of PE instruction in your school	✓ It is poor since there are no facilities and children don’t have PE kits
	✓ It is poor. Class sizes are too large it becomes a problem controlling these children
	✓ Poorly done. Sometimes the fields are too muddy due to climate and the type of soil
	✓ Poor. Should provide facilities and construct changing rooms

Source: Survey Data (2016)

**Correlation Results on Teacher Attitudes and Implementation of PE Instruction**

The research results on the correlation between teacher attitudes and implementation of PE instruction were as shown in Table 5 below. The findings indicate a significant negative correlation between teacher attitude and implementation of PE

instruction ( $r=-0.180, p<0.05$ ). This implies that there indeed exists a negative correlation between teacher attitude and implementation of PE instruction. Consequently, teacher attitude can negate implementation of PE instruction and vice versa.

**Table 5:** Relationship between Teacher Attitude and Implementation of PE Instruction

		Teacher attitude	Implementation of PE Instruction
Teacher attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.180**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
Implementation of PE Instruction	Pearson Correlation	-.180**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The implication of these results is that teacher attitude poses a challenge to implementation of PE instruction in the study area. Results of lesson observations pointed to absence of teachers from PE lessons where pupils were left to play on their own. This is a result of negative attitude towards the subject and which could be a major concern to the implementation of instruction in the subject in the particular sub-county. These findings support views by others showing that teacher attitude correlates negatively with implementation

of PE in schools (Atoni, 2013; Bucher, 2003; Hendrikz, 2000) [2, 3, 5].

**4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the research findings discussed in this paper, it is clear that the fact that PE as a subject is not examined in national examinations has made teachers to adopt a negligent attitude towards its instruction. This is despite the findings showing that there exists a relationship between teacher attitudes and

instruction in PE. This then poses a major challenge to implementation of PE instruction in public primary schools. This situation is further compounded by a lack of relevant materials and facilities for use during instruction. Therefore, considering the negative impact teacher attitudes has on the implementation of PE instruction, public primary school administrators should put in place sensitization programmes to address teachers' negative attitudes. On its part, the government, through the Ministry of Education, should consider making the PE subject examinable so that it can be taken seriously like other examinable subjects. More importantly, focus should be directed at provision of the requisite materials and facilities to facilitate proper instruction of PE.

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