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AN APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KYELA DISTRICT COUNCIL, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

This study appraises the implementation of the Physical Education (PE) curriculum in secondary schools in Kyela District Council, Tanzania, where despite its recognition as a vital component of holistic education, its practical execution remains inconsistent, particularly in developing contexts. The study adopted a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore stakeholders' experiences and perceptions regarding PE implementation. Data were collected from 31 participants, including teachers, heads of schools, education officers, and students, through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document review, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the implementation of the PE curriculum is significantly constrained by inadequate resources, including limited sports facilities, insufficient equipment, and lack of teaching and learning materials, as well as restricted instructional time. Furthermore, teacher preparedness emerged as a major challenge, with many teachers lacking specialized training and access to professional development opportunities, which negatively affects lesson delivery and learner engagement. Institutional factors also played a critical role, as weak administrative support, poor timetabling, and low prioritization of PE compared to examinable subjects further hindered effective implementation. The study concludes that successful implementation of the PE curriculum requires improved resource allocation, enhanced teacher capacity through continuous training, and stronger institutional commitment. It recommends increased investment in infrastructure, provision of adequate teaching materials, and strict policy enforcement to ensure PE is accorded equal importance in schools, thereby improving educational outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Physical Education, Curriculum Implementation, Teacher Preparedness and Educational Policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical Education (PE) is widely recognized as a critical component of secondary education due to its role in promoting learners' physical health, cognitive development, social skills, and overall wellbeing. Globally, education systems emphasize PE as part of holistic development, enabling students to acquire motor skills, teamwork abilities, discipline, and lifelong healthy habits (UNESCO, 2017; Bailey et al., 2019).

Despite its importance, the implementation of PE curricula varies significantly across countries. In developed nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom, PE is well integrated into school systems, supported by structured policies, qualified teachers, and adequate resources. However, disparities in funding, instructional time, and teacher availability still affect consistency (SHAPE America, 2018; Department for Education, 2019).

In contrast, developing countries experience more pronounced challenges. Countries such as Brazil, India, and Indonesia report inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and low prioritization of PE compared to academic subjects (Silva et al., 2019; Kumar & Bhat, 2020; Suryanto et al., 2018).

Across Africa, PE implementation is similarly constrained by resource shortages, weak policy enforcement, and insufficient teacher preparation. Studies from South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria indicate that PE is often marginalized despite being included in national curricula (Burnett, 2018; Ammah & Kwaw, 2020; Akindutire & Olanipekun, 2018).

In Tanzania, PE is part of the secondary school curriculum aimed at promoting holistic education. However, evidence suggests that it is often underprioritized, with challenges such as inadequate facilities, lack of teaching materials, and limited supervision affecting its implementation (MoEST, 2019; Mhando & Msuya, 2023).

In Kyela District Council, these challenges may be intensified by contextual factors such as limited infrastructure and competing academic priorities. Despite this, there is limited empirical research examining how the PE curriculum is implemented in this locality. This study therefore seeks to appraise the implementation of the PE curriculum to generate context-specific evidence for improving policy and practice.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design and Approach

The study adopted a qualitative research approach supported by a case study design to explore in-depth experiences and contextual realities influencing the implementation of the Physical Education (PE) curriculum in secondary schools. This approach was considered appropriate because it allows for detailed exploration of participants' perspectives, meanings, and lived experiences within real-life settings. The case study design enabled the researcher to focus on selected schools as bounded systems, thereby generating rich, descriptive data that provide a comprehensive understanding of how PE curriculum implementation occurs in practice.

2.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kyela District Council, located in the Mbeya Region of Tanzania, an area characterized by both rural and semi-urban educational settings. The district was purposively selected due to its relatively active implementation of Physical Education programs compared to other districts in the region. Additionally, Kyela presents diverse educational conditions in terms of infrastructure, staffing, and resource allocation, making it suitable for examining variations in curriculum implementation. Its accessibility and availability of relevant participants further facilitated effective data collection and enhanced the reliability of the study findings.

2.3 Study Population and Sample

The study involved a total of 31 participants who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in the implementation of the Physical Education curriculum in secondary schools. The sample comprised one District Secondary Education Officer, two Ward Education Officers, four Heads of Schools, eight Physical Education teachers, and sixteen students. This composition ensured the inclusion of diverse perspectives from key stakeholders responsible for policy implementation, school management, teaching, and learning processes. Purposive sampling was employed to select information-rich participants capable of providing detailed insights relevant to the study objectives.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

Data for the study were collected using multiple qualitative methods to ensure triangulation and enhance the credibility of findings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with

teachers, school heads, and education officers to capture their experiences and perceptions regarding PE curriculum implementation. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with students to gather collective views and shared experiences about participation in PE activities. In addition, document review was conducted to examine school timetables, lesson plans, and related records, providing supporting evidence on how Physical Education is planned and implemented in schools.

2.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved systematic processes of organizing, coding, and interpreting qualitative information. The analysis began with transcription of interviews and focus group discussions, followed by repeated reading of the data to gain familiarity. Codes were then generated and grouped into themes aligned with the study objectives, such as resource availability, teacher preparedness, and institutional support. These themes were interpreted in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, enabling the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and key issues influencing the implementation of the PE curriculum.

2.6 Trustworthiness

To ensure the quality and rigor of the study, trustworthiness was maintained through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources, including interviews, FGDs, and document review, as well as member checking to validate participants' responses. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the study context and procedures. Dependability was ensured through maintaining an audit trail of research activities, while confirmability was achieved by minimizing researcher bias through reflexive practices and ensuring that findings were grounded in participants' actual experiences.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards to ensure the protection of participants' rights and wellbeing throughout the research process. Ethical clearance was obtained from relevant authorities, and official permissions were secured from educational administrators before data collection commenced. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose and procedures of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by coding participants'

identities and securely storing data, ensuring that information provided was used solely for academic purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The study findings are presented based on key themes that emerged from the analysis of data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and document review. Three major themes were identified as central to understanding the implementation of the Physical Education (PE) curriculum in secondary schools: resource availability, teacher preparedness, and institutional support. These themes reflect the critical factors influencing how the PE curriculum is delivered in practice. The findings provide detailed insights into the challenges and realities experienced by stakeholders involved in curriculum implementation within the study area.

3.1.1 Resource Availability

Findings from the study revealed that resource availability for implementing the Physical Education curriculum was generally inadequate across most of the sampled secondary schools. Participants reported a shortage of essential sports facilities such as playgrounds, courts, and open spaces, which are necessary for conducting practical lessons. Additionally, there was a lack of sufficient sports equipment and teaching materials, limiting teachers' ability to deliver effective instruction. As a result, many PE lessons were conducted theoretically rather than practically, reducing students' participation and limiting the development of physical skills expected from the curriculum.

3.1.2 Teacher Preparedness

The study further found that teacher preparedness significantly influenced the implementation of the Physical Education curriculum. Many teachers responsible for teaching PE lacked specialized training in the subject and had limited exposure to professional development opportunities. This situation affected their confidence, teaching strategies, and ability to effectively engage students in both theoretical and practical lessons. Some teachers relied on general teaching approaches rather than subject-specific methodologies, resulting in less effective instruction. Consequently, students experienced inconsistent learning experiences, and the overall quality of PE curriculum delivery was compromised in many schools.

3.1.3 Institutional Support

Institutional support was also identified as a major factor affecting the implementation of the Physical Education curriculum. The findings indicated that school administrations often gave low priority to PE compared to examinable subjects, leading to inadequate allocation of time in school timetables. In some cases, scheduled PE lessons were replaced by other academic subjects, especially during examination periods. Additionally, there was limited supervision and monitoring of PE activities by school leaders and education authorities. This lack of administrative commitment contributed to weak implementation and reduced the effectiveness of the PE curriculum in achieving its intended objectives.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with global and regional literature indicating that the effective implementation of the Physical Education curriculum depends on the availability of adequate resources, teacher competence, and strong institutional support. Studies by Bailey et al. (2020) and Hardman (2019) emphasize that well-resourced schools with trained teachers are more likely to achieve successful PE outcomes. In line with research from developing countries, this study found that PE is often marginalized in favor of examinable subjects, limiting its implementation and reducing student participation in physical activities.

The observed lack of teacher preparedness supports the findings of Darling-Hammond (2017), who highlights the importance of professional development in improving teaching effectiveness. Similarly, the weak institutional support identified in this study reflects findings from Tanzania and other African countries, where PE is often undervalued due to academic pressures and limited policy enforcement (Mhando & Msuya, 2023). These results confirm the applicability of Curriculum Implementation Theory and Educational Effectiveness Theory, which emphasize the need for alignment between policy, teacher capacity, and institutional support to achieve effective curriculum delivery and improved learning outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the implementation of the Physical Education curriculum in secondary schools in Kyela District Council is generally inadequate due to a combination of interrelated challenges. Key issues identified include limited availability of essential resources such as sports facilities, equipment, and teaching materials, which restrict practical lesson delivery. Additionally, insufficient teacher preparedness, characterized by lack of

specialized training and limited professional development opportunities, affects instructional quality. Furthermore, weak institutional support, including poor timetabling and low prioritization of PE, significantly undermines effective curriculum implementation in schools. Improving the implementation of the Physical Education curriculum requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that addresses the identified challenges. There is a need for increased investment in infrastructure and provision of adequate teaching and learning resources to support practical activities. Enhancing teacher capacity through regular training and professional development programs is also essential for improving instructional effectiveness. Moreover, strengthening policy enforcement and ensuring that PE is given equal importance alongside examinable subjects will promote balanced curriculum delivery, foster holistic learner development, and ultimately improve overall educational outcomes.

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