# EFFECTS OF CLASSROOM FREQUENCY ON MANAGEMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN UPPER GRADES IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MERU SOUTH SUB COUNTY, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA 

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#### Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate how frequency of classes influence the effective management of the physical education curriculum in higher grades within Kenyan public primary schools located in the Meru South Sub County of the Tharaka Nithi County. The work was based on Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management Theory as its theoretical foundation. The research approach for this study was a descriptive survey, and it integrated both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The investigation was carried out in the Tharaka Nithi County neighborhood of Meru South Sub-County. In total, there were 57 upper primary school teachers and 19 principals represented in the sample. In order to obtain data from teachers and school administrators, questionnaires were used. The statistical analysis was done with SPSS, which stands for the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. According to the findings of the study, there are significant advantages to providing learners in higher grades with regular opportunities to participate in physical education. However, it was also found that the implementation of physical education does not entirely match with the policy guidelines of the Ministry of Education. This was determined to be mostly due to the lack of suitable physical education facilities and resources in primary schools. Nevertheless, it was discovered that the implementation of physical education does not fully align with the policy guidelines of the Ministry of Education


Key words: physical education, class frequency, upper grade, Taylor's Scientific Management Theory

## INTRODUCTION

The National Physical Education Standards (Brooker, 2006) describe PE as "the process of instigating personal transformation through engaging in movement experiences." It emphasizes a person's total growth through exercise, not simply their physical stature. P.E., or Physical Education, is a required course for elementary and secondary school students that aims to develop students' psychomotor skills via active play and exploration of the body's potential movement patterns. There has been a recent uptick in elementary students' enthusiasm for physical activity, sports, and recreation.
Siedentop remarked in 1992 that students' lack of self-esteem and interest in PE classes demonstrates the field's underappreciation. In addition, as Quay (2014) stated, it is clear that a significant component of the physical education curriculum in Kenyan primary schools, especially at the higher elementary levels, fails to satisfy educational objectives. It's worth noting that, as revealed by Pangrazi in 2007, many kids have strong unfavorable views about going to PE class. Teachers say that students are unable to fully realize the potential of physical education because of pedagogical limitations. To solve this problem, Senne (2013) suggests a radical departure from the traditional approach taken to teaching physical education in elementary schools.
According to Guimares and Ciolac (2014) and Senne (2013), it is necessary for primary school educators to ensure that their students comprehend the relevance of physical education and how it influences not only their academic success but also their physical and mental well-being. It is imperative for primary school educators to ensure that their students comprehend the value of physical education and how it influences not only their academic performance but also their physical and mental well-being. It is more likely for children to maintain healthy exercise routines into adulthood if they begin developing these routines when they are still in elementary school. Adopting these activities can help reduce the prevalence of obesity and overweight rates, as well as the incidence of diseases like diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular difficulties that are linked to a sedentary lifestyle.

The importance of including physical education into the curriculum of schools has been highlighted by recent research. According to what Reid expressed in 2013, when these programs are scaled back or discontinued, it is possible that they will not only fail to improve academic achievement, but they will also deprive young children and adolescents of opportunities for physical activity. It is imperative that students who lead sedentary lifestyles be encouraged to adopt more active lifestyles. Schools have the potential to play a crucial role in providing students with positive experiences in physical activity while also imparting the knowledge necessary to lead an active life. As a result, it is vital that schools continue to offer physical education, and authorities should desist from making any attempts to abolish the subject entirely from the curriculum. As Luepker argued in 1999, in order to give children access to a well-rounded educational experience, it is imperative to make use of the various opportunities for physical activity that are available.
In their study from 2009, Chomitz, Slining, and McGowan used a dataset that included approximately 12,000 adolescents from the United States to investigate the connection between regular physical activity and higher levels of academic accomplishment. According to the findings, adolescents who participated in school-based physical activities such as physical education (PE) and team sports, or who engaged in sports with their parents, had a 20 percent greater chance of earning a "A" grade in mathematics or English compared to their peers who were sedentary. This was the same regardless of whether or not the adolescents played sports with their parents. According to the findings of the study, there are specific circumstances in which increasing the amount of time devoted to physical education could contribute to improvements in academic performance as well as results on standardized tests.
One more study was conducted by Evenson, Ballard, and Lee in 2009, and it was a cross-sectional analysis of 1,800 middle school pupils in the state of Massachusetts. They made the discovery that kids who achieved greater fitness test scores in physical education also performed better on math and English accomplishment exams in comparison to children who achieved fitness test scores that were lower in physical education.
The study uncovered widespread patterns and trends in school physical education across a wide range of countries and areas around the world. According to the findings, physical education generally has a poor academic rank in the curriculum, there is a shortage of teachers who are sufficiently trained, particularly in primary schools, and there is a dearth of basic facilities, equipment, and materials. In addition, it was discovered that funding for physical education was constantly inadequate, despite the high number of students who enrolled in the course. In addition, there was a lack of understanding among educators regarding the options for children to participate in broader community activities and facilities outside of school. The study found that there is an alarmingly high frequency of obesity among youngsters who are of school age.
The majority of teachers in Ghana agree with the findings that were presented by Ammah and Kwaw in 2005, which underlined the significance of physical education as an essential component of the secondary school curriculum. However, there is currently just a marginal academic significance attached to it. There is a significant predisposition among school officials against physical education; as a result, many physical education classes have been repurposed for use in other activities. Dedicated educators in the field of physical education are working hard to change the way the general public views physical education via the use of various media initiatives. The attitudes of school administrators are a major factor in determining both the performance of school-based physical education programs and the attitudes that teachers have toward physical education.
According to findings published by Johnson, Delva, and O'Malley in 2007, adolescent involvement in physical activity has drastically decreased among teens in Nigeria, which has led to a decrease in students' levels of selfmotivation in physical education classes and an increase in the prevalence of obesity among students aged 12 to 19. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggested that adults and children participate in at least 60 minutes of daily physical exercise. One of the most important roles that physical education classes play in accomplishing this goal is encouraging healthy eating habits. According to research published in 2005 by Beets and Pitetti, engaging in regular physical activity can assist in the prevention of cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure, in addition to contributing to increased muscular development and good weight control.
Njororai's research was conducted in Kenya with the participation of 118 physical education instructors. The study's objective was to evaluate the existing procedures and identify areas in which physical education and sports could benefit from prospective enhancements. The research looked into a variety of topics, including demographics, different types of sports, coaching, scheduling physical education, as well as supervision and recommendations. The findings suggested that ministry inspectors rarely oversee physical education instruction, students have a significant interest in sports, and despite the importance of physical education, there is a dearth of certified coaches in specific disciplines. As a consequence of this, the government ought to make physical education (PE) a priority by retraining teachers, putting in place an evaluation system, supplying facilities, and teaching additional sports disciplines in schools. The findings of the study highlighted the significant and beneficial effects that regular physical activity had on youngsters.
In addition, the authors noted the fact that in 2002, the Kenyan government legislated the teaching of physical education in secondary schools and made it examinable at that level. In spite of these efforts and the fact that
physical education has been included into the curricula of schools, the research found that it still lacked the focus and efficacy it ought to have in educational settings. This highlights the importance of kids participating in physical education since it improves psychomotor abilities, cultivates good health, fitness, and general wellbeing, and adds to enhanced physical and mental well-being.

## Statement of the problem

It cannot be denied that students benefit from physical education in a favorable way when it comes to their overall growth and development. During the time period in which it is taught, the tenets of the philosophy behind school physical education are congruent with the imperatives of promoting sporting potential and advancing educational development on a national scale. It is an essential component in the whole process of delivering the various physical education programs. Unfortunately, because of a rise in sedentary activities such as watching television and playing video games, as well as technological advances, increased automation, and the elimination of physical education classes in high schools, young people are at an increased risk of becoming overweight and less physically fit. This is evident in the lack of health knowledge among children attending public schools in Kenya, which contributes to concerns like obesity as well as a lack of understanding regarding health and fitness. Despite the numerous studies that have been conducted that illustrate the necessity of physical education, the topic continues to be undervalued in classrooms all around the world.
Meru South Sub County in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya was selected as the site of the study because of the urgent need to combat the undervaluing of PE within that county's current school system. The positive effects of PE on students' physical and mental health are well-documented. School physical education is grounded in a philosophy that supports both the development of young athletes and the growth of the country's educational system. Since physical education can have a profound effect on the health and future prospects of young people, it is especially important to target areas like Meru South Sub County.
The current situation, in which youth are at a higher risk of obesity and poor physical fitness due to sedentary activities, technological improvements, automation, and the elimination of physical education classes in high schools, supports the choice of location for the study. Since Meru South Sub County is a microcosm of Kenya as a whole, studying it can shed light on problems that aren't exclusive to any one region but affect the whole country.
Even though many teachers and principals have had considerable training in physical education, Gikonyi's 2019 study reveals their negative sentiments toward it. This emphasizes the importance of targeting change-making interventions at specific places, such as Meru South Sub County. The research site is a perfect fit for investigating the myriad aspects that affect PE teaching and putting new methods into practice.
In addition, there is a dearth of study on the importance of implementing physical education in Kenya's public schools, especially at the higher grade levels, despite the fact that past research has mostly focussed on the influence of school-related factors on physical education. Meru South Sub County is a good place to investigate these problems in depth and draw conclusions that can be applied outside its borders.
According to Gikonyi's research from 2019, it is depressing to see that many teachers and principals have unfavorable attitudes regarding the topic of physical education instruction, despite the fact that they undergo significant training in how to teach it. Many schools in Kenya have made the discovery that students would occasionally utilize the time allotted for physical education as an opportunity to take a break from the more traditional academic tasks they are required to do. The majority of prior study has concentrated on the question of how factors associated to schools affect the delivery of physical education classes. Given the size of Kenya's population, it is not surprising that there is a paucity of research on the topic of the importance of including physical education in Kenya's public schools, particularly at the more advanced grade levels. This finding was brought to light in the review of the relevant literature. The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya lays a great emphasis on physical education and classifies it as an examinable subject, which ensures its full coverage in the curriculum. Consequently, this problem does not persist at higher grade levels. On the other hand, the circumstance is very different at the upper primary school level, where students do not need to worry about taking exams in the subject. The task of ensuring that students and teachers attend physical education classes often lies on the shoulders of the school administration, and it is typically delegated to the headmaster of the institution. In many instances, this duty also includes the provision of adequate equipment for physical education. On the other hand, this is not always the true in Tharaka Nithi County, particularly in the elementary schools there.
As a result, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the school-related elements that influence physical education in upper grades within public primary schools located in the Meru South Sub County of the Tharaka Nithi County in Kenya.

## Research Objective

To determine the frequency of elementary school physical education classes for upper grade learners in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical literature review

Frederick Taylor's (2004) scientific management theory is used as a theoretical framework for this study. Taylor argued that productivity could be increased through clear job descriptions, the provision of enough resources, payment based on output, and the careful selection and preparation of workers. Okumbe (2019) argues that all school leaders, teachers, and students must have a clear understanding of the school's mission in order to effectively collaborate toward its goals. Teachers who want to have successful classrooms must devote time each day to planning and preparing for lessons. Textbooks, visual aids, high-quality scientific equipment, and well-equipped laboratories are also essential to the success of both students and teachers in the classroom. Having competent educators and administrators on board is also crucial for making progress in this direction.
To ensure that all subjects, including physical education, are taught in accordance with the mandated curriculum, the study's scientific management theory is vital because it describes the crucial elements that play a role in establishing the responsibilities of instructors and school management. The primary school's curriculum must be implemented in accordance with Ministry of Education regulations, and the headteacher is directly responsible for supplying these components and fostering a conducive learning environment.
Several factors, such as those related to the school and the teachers themselves, are hypothesized to affect the way physical education is taught in the upper grades and so serve as the dependent variable in this investigation. These elements either help or hurt the delivery of the physical education program. These characteristics, both institutional and pedagogical, distinguish between schools that implement the physical education curriculum and those that do not. This theory models the connection between teacher and school factors and the dependent variable (teaching physical education in upper grades), and the importance of physical education cannot be stressed.

## Empirical Literature

## Frequency of Teaching PE

Students' access to chances for physical activity in physical education (PE) classes across the United States was empirically evaluated by Bevans et al. (2010). The results of the study showed that pupils who went to schools with a small number of students compared to the number of physical education teachers participated in more physical education (PE) time and were more physically active overall during the school day.
Konstantin (2014) compared the prevalence of physical education programs for elementary and junior high school students in Sweden and South Africa. The purpose of this research was to examine students' reports on the regularity with which their respective physical education programs promoted health, fitness, and personal growth. A total of 2,495 students from Sweden and 3,748 students from South Africa participated in the survey. While physical education lessons became less common as students moved from elementary to middle school in both countries, health education programs in South African schools were found to be of a high quality.
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According to Hardman and Marshall (2000), the amount of time allotted for physical education differs among European countries and regions. Similarly, PE time allotment varies widely across Central and Latin American primary and secondary schools. Between the years 2000 and 2005, more classroom time was devoted to physical education. Physical education teachers, according to Curry's (2012) research, give their pupils more time to exercise and a greater quality of instruction than classroom teachers. The emotional strain of the large curriculum, however, leads many primary school instructors to forego the required number of hours of physical education, as noted by Curry (2012).
According to Katherine (2011), kids in schools with a sufficient number of expert physical education teachers learn more about physical education and develop more abilities each week.
Quality Physical Education (QPE) in schools and Quality Physical Education Teacher Education/Training (QPETE/T) at provider institutions were examined as part of a global study undertaken by UNESCO in 2014. The project's goals mirrored CIGEPS' overarching goal of strengthening physical education programs around the world. Non-implementation of prescribed or mandatory time allocations further complicates the issue of time, frequency, and allocation for physical education. The availability of space and apparatus has a major impact on the frequency of P.E. classes in African countries. According to research conducted by Toriola et al. (2010), PE sessions are held more frequently in schools with suitable facilities than in those without.

## Conceptual Framework

## METHODOLOGY

## Research Design

An exploratory descriptive survey research design was used in this study, with both quantitative and qualitative methods being used in the analysis. For example, in this research, the design included gathering information on the participants' present state of health. Specifically, according to Orodho (2009), it was suitable for researchers since it enabled them to collect information and synthesize it, present and analyze the results without having to manipulate the study variables. This design was also suitable since questionnaires were utilized to collect data from teachers from higher grades settings, particularly from standard three teachers in lower-primary schools, utilizing both closed- and open-ended questions, as would be the case in this study.

## Sample size

A sample population of 152 public elementary schools in Meru South Sub County, Kenya, was selected for this study (Source: Meru County Government, meru.go.ke). This regional focus was chosen so that the impacts of PE on student performance could be studied in more depth (Education Ministry of Kenya; education.go.ke). The study focused primarily on secondary school students. Because of this focus, researchers were able to examine the correlation between these programs and student achievement in depth. In addition, academics were included in the research. Included individuals worked in positions that allowed them to offer unique perspectives and data on how encouraging physical education influences student performance in the classroom (Source: Kenya National Union of Teachers, knut.or.ke). Teachers' participation allowed for a more nuanced examination of this pressing pedagogical issue, guaranteeing that the views of all relevant parties were taken into account.

## Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

## Demographic Information

## Gender of Participating Teachers

The rearcher found it important to find out the gender of the respondents as an aspect for getting to know the kind of subjects who participated in providing the needed information. The teachers were therefore asked to state their gender which was measured by generating the frequencies against each variable and Figure 4.1 and 4.2 present the responses of teachers and those of head teachers respectively.


Figure 1: Teachers' Gender

As shown in Figure 4.1, 14 (24.6\%) of the teachers were male while 43 ( $75.4 \%$ ) were female. Generally, there were more female teachers in lower primary schools in Laikipia County as compared to their male counterparts. The presence of more female teachers confirms the stereotypes that most female like teaching and work near their homes.

## Gender of Participating Head teachers

The following task is that of establishing the gender of participating head teachers and figure 2 presents the findings.


Figure 2: Head teachers' Gender
As presented in Figure 4.2, the head teachers in the primary schools were dominated by males 17 ( $89.5 \%$ ) as compared to $2(10.5 \%)$ who were female. Despite the disparity, the findings show that both genders were represented in the study.

## Professional Qualifications of Participating Teachers

The researcher found it important to establish the level of professional qualification of participating teachers and head teachers and Figure 3 presents the findings.


Figure 3: Teachers' Professional Qualification

As shown in Figure.3, the findings show that $20(35.1 \%)$ of the teachers had Diploma level of education, 16 $(28.1 \%)$ had bachelor of education degree and $1(1.8 \%)$ with masters level of education and $20(35.1 \%)$ had a certificate in Primary Teacher Education (PTE). This implies that all the teachers were qualified to handle the questions related to the study variables.
Trained teachers have experience and understanding of benefits of physical activities and have pushed children from poor background to situations where they have acquired sports scholarships and this further motivates them to do better academically. It was important to establish the teacher's qualification because according to Lynch (2007), implementation of the PE curriculum is dependent on a range of factors including the teachers"e qualifications, experience in the learning area including knowledge of the syllabus documents, as well as the teachers" ability to share with colleagues. Understandably, experienced teachers who had been in-serviced in teaching PE syllabus are more confident and have a better understanding of the PE syllabus than less experienced teachers.

## Professional Qualifications of Head Teachers.

Participating head teachers were also asked to state to state their level of professional qualification and Figure 4 presents the findings.


Figure 4: Head Teachers' Professional Qualification
Figure 4 shows that 1 ( $5.3 \%$ ) of the head teachers had Master's degree level of education, 3 (15.8\%) had a certificate in Primary Teacher Education (P1) 5(26.3\%) had bachelor of education degree and 10 ( $52.6 \%$ ) had a diploma in education This shows that many primary schools head teachers have gone back to school for further studies to attain higher education. Head teacher's attributes such as professional training or qualifications and work experience since graduating as trained teachers could influence how frequently or not, they ensured that PE was availed to children. Training for instance, helps to mould their attitude towards the importance of PE.

## Work Experience of Participating Teachers

The teacher respondents were asked to state their years of experience as teachers in upper primary classes and Figure 5 presents the findings.


Figure 5: Teachers' Years of Teaching Experience
The Figure 5 shows that $34.0 \%$ of the teachers had over 10 years of experience in teaching, $21.0 \%$ had 1-5 years and 6-10 years of experience respectively and $3.2 \%$ with less than one year. The reason for training teachers is to make them competent and self-confident. It also instils in them an appreciation of the value of health and personal wellbeing through physical activity. Consequently, teachers are expected to empower the young learner under their care to take responsibility of their own lives. The next section presents findings on teachers understanding of importance of PE to children.

## Frequency of Engagement in PE by Learners

The researcher endeavoured to establish the frequency with which early learners in upper public primary schools were engaged in PE lessons per week. Figure 6 summarises and presents the findings.


Figure 6: Frequency of PE in Early Childhood Classes
The study found out that 15 ( $37.5 \%$ ) of teachers in public primary schools availed 5 lessons of PE per week to children while $9(22.5 \%)$ availed 4 lessons per week, $6(15 \%)$ of the sampled teachers availed 3 lessons per week, $5(12.5 \%)$ attended only 2 lessons per week, another 5 teachers ( $12.5 \%$ ) availed only 1 lesson per week. It was also found out that children were given balls to play alone unsupervised during lesson breaks.

The study was informed that the higher the frequency of PE lessons to children, the higher the increase in growth of the children's psychomotor ability, good health and refreshing feelings after tedious classwork. It was also established that the higher the frequency in attending PE lessons, the higher the learners' interest in attending school hence the lower the absenteeism and truancy levels.
Wanyama (2011) revealed that the frequency of cancellation of PE lessons is very high in Kenyan schools and it's done by academic subject teachers who use allocate PE time to supplement that of examinable subjects. Whenever extra time is needed for academic or other school activities, PE lessons are often the ones to be reallocated.

## Summary

In terms of demographic information, the studies found out that majority of the upper grade primary teachers were females with more than ten years of teaching experience. In contrast, headship of primary schools was dominated by male teachers. On the qualification levels, all cadre of academic and training qualifications were represented. Majority of the teachers had a diploma in education, a few had bachelor's degree in education while one had a Master's degree in education. A small number had the primary school certificate popularly known as P1. The same was revealed in the head teachers' qualifications. All the head teachers were further found to have to have more than ten years of teaching experience.
Some of the facilities were inadequate while others were just adequate. There were facilities that were found to be adequate and a good number was very inadequate. Most of the fields were unkempt and uneven. In schools with learners with special needs, an attempt was made to adapt play facilities to suit their needs but a few schools did not cater for children with special needs at all.

### 5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that teachers were qualified to handle the teaching of PE to learners in upper grades in primary schools and influence positively to the frequency of teaching physical education. It also concluded that trained teachers have experience and understanding of benefits of physical activities and all teachers were found to have various levels of training. None of the schools sampled avail PE lessons completely as the school time table dictates.
The attitude of teachers and head teachers in regard to whether or not physical education is availed to children is of importance and has far reaching influence in the teaching of PE. Due to negative attitude in some schools by their head teachers, physical education teachers have been isolated and deprived of meaningful badly needed support systems necessary for professional learning and for teaching of PE to be successful in schools. Head teachers must exhibit positive attitude as it will make the teachers to strictly follow the time table. On the other hand, due to negative attitude by some teachers, frequency of cancellation of PE lessons was found to be very high in schools and was done by academic subject teachers who use allocated PE time to supplement that of examinable subjects.


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