

# FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE TEACHING OF PE IN ETHIOPIA: AN EXPLORATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WEST GOJJAM ZONE

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**ABSTRACT**

*The Ministry of Education, and sport commission of Ethiopia produced several policies which guide the teaching of physical education. All the policy pronouncements make physical education a compulsory teaching subject in both primary and secondary schools in Ethiopia. However, in spite of the existence of these policies, physical education is still not being taught effectively in most primary and secondary schools in Ethiopia. This paper discusses the factors that affect the teaching of physical education in the ten secondary schools in west Gojjam zone. West Gojjam zone secondary schools were selected for study because of their proximity and exposure to the researcher which enabled the identification of the need for an empirical study. The study is expected to bring about increased understanding of the barriers that impede the teaching of physical education and also help to find ways of improving the teaching of the subject. This study combined both qualitative and quantitative research methodological analyses. Questionnaires, observation and document analysis were used as research instruments. The questionnaires were administered to fifty qualified primary school teachers who were purposely selected from a total population of one hundred thirty five. The schemes of work for the sampled teachers were also inspected. Observations were conducted on all the ten schools. Results from the study seem to indicate that West Gojjam urban secondary school teachers are not affected by negative attitude. Heads do not supervise any PE lessons is an indication that they do not value physical education because it is not examinable. The physical education training programmes in colleges are not comprehensive and not standardized and failing to interpret the syllabus and coming up with meaningful PE activities. There is very little staff development going on in the schools. Equipment, sport specific facilities, teaching and reading material in physical education are grossly inadequate. The physical education curriculum is not user friendliness.*

**Keywords:** Teaching, PE, PE equipment and facilities, PE literature, knowledge and qualifications of PE teachers.

**INTRODUCTION:**

With exercise and activity habits commencing early in life and the development of healthy lifestyle behaviors among children and adolescents translating into reduced health risks in adulthood (Dobbins, De Corby, Robeson, Husson, & Tirilis, 2009), quality education at an early age is paramount. Hence, schools have been identified as key health settings and are being called upon to give greater attention to their physical education and physical activity programs (Naylor & McKay, 2009; Pate et al., 2006).

The combination of the decline in fitness standards of young people, high drop-out rates, and inadequate pathways to accessing physical activity (Hardman, 2008) and the substantial increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents around the world (Eisenmann, 2006) undoubtedly equates to a growing concern. Therefore, it is not only schools that have been identified as having a key role to play, but it is also apparent that physical educators are becoming more accountable than ever before as their role continues to evolve and they pursue opportunities to facilitate activities that engage students and provide education on lifestyle choices and healthy behaviors. Schools are learning environments with the capacity to equip students with these attributes; however, it is the quality of the programs in schools that will ensure that young people are given the opportunities to become physically-educated individuals (Lee, Burgeson, Fulton, & Spain, 2007). The provision of quality physical education curriculum can be affected by many factors, some of which can assist or hinder delivery and participation.

According to Nixon and Jewell (1980), physical education is an integral component of total education and it creates an environment that stimulates selected movement experiences resulting in desirable responses that contribute to the optimal development of the individual's potentialities in life in general and in sport in particular through the medium of human movement. (Bucher 1983), states that the basic objectives of physical education are to develop physical skill, physical fitness, participation, knowledge, attitudes, social values and emotional stability. In Ethiopia, the physical education curriculum seeks to achieve the same objectives as those propounded by Bucher.

To highlight the importance of physical education, the United Nations International Charter of Physical Education and Sport UNESCO Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1978) declared physical education as a basic human right. The sport for all policy of SRC (1996) as reviewed in 2006 was developed in line with this declaration. In addition, the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture Secretary's policy circular No 2 of 1994 and circular number 5 of 2005 stipulate that physical education and sport are compulsory in all schools in Ethiopia.

However, in spite of the availability of evidence which justify the significance of teaching physical education in schools as well as the existence of policy pronouncements which make the teaching of physical education mandatory, physical education in Ethiopia still faces numerous challenges and is not being taught effectively. In Ethiopia, primary schools times allocated for physical education is regarded as free and play time for children. In most cases where an attempt to teach the subject is made, it is supervised by ill prepared and unwilling classroom teachers. In some cases, teachers use physical education time to teach nationally examinable subjects. In some secondary schools in Ethiopia, physical education is not included on the time

table and there is no attempt to design regular programs to teach by qualified teachers the subject in the majority of the schools. This observation is strongly supported by Hardman (Hardman K. 2003) who contend that “it is clear that in too many countries children are being denied the physical education opportunities that will transform their lives. Such denial of opportunities is inconsistent with the UNESCO charter as well as the PE and Sport policy principles of the Ethiopian government, thereby creating the need to know why.

Barriers within schools that restrict teachers providing physical education programs have been classified by Morgan and Hansen (2008) as being either institutional (outside the teachers’ control) or teacher-related (arising from the teachers’ behaviour). The simplicity of this classification enables it to be applied to both primary and secondary school settings.

Previous research has highlighted many institutional barriers including budget constraints, scarce resources, reductions in time provisions in the curriculum, the absence of professional development, the crowded curriculum itself and the lack of facilities and equipment (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992; Hardman, 2008; Le Masurier & Corbin, 2006; Morgan & Hansen, 2008). Similarly, Dwyer et al. (2003) reported that the lower priority given to physical education, the absence of performance measures for physical education and activity, and insufficient infrastructure were the three major institutional barriers identified by generalist elementary teachers in Canada to the provision of a curriculum that was capable of meeting the health and physical education guidelines.

Most teacher-related barriers have been reported in primary school studies (Barroso, McCullum-Gomez, Hoelscher, Kelder & Murray, 2005; DeCorby, Halas, Dixon, Wintrup & Janzen, 2005; Dwyer et al., 2003; Morgan & Hansen, 2008). The barriers described include possessing low levels of confidence or interest in teaching physical education, being unable to provide safely planned and structured lessons, having had personal negative experiences in physical education and lacking training, knowledge, expertise and qualifications to provide physical education (De Corby, Halas, Dixon, Wintrup & Janzen, 2005; Morgan & Bourke, 2005; Xiang, Lowy & McBride, 2002).

The comprehensive primary school-based findings reflect not only the lack of research across the secondary levels in schools, but could possibly be attributed to both secondary and specialist primary school teachers having dedicated physical education units as part of their training. This specialization should equip teachers with the skills to overcome barriers more easily and enable them to plan and implement programs accordingly. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors affecting teaching PE in some selected West Gojjam secondary school. This research was designed to achieve the following specific objectives.

### Research Objectives

1. To examine the attitudes of heads of schools towards the teaching of PE.
2. To ascertain whether or not the physical education teachers are adequately qualified.
3. To establish the availability of PE literature necessary for the effective teaching of PE.
4. To assess the adequacy of sport specific facilities and equipment necessary for the effective teaching of PE
5. To evaluate the design of the PE syllabus from the teachers' perspective and its contribution towards the teaching or non teaching of PE.

### METHODOLOGY:

The study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies (mixed methods) according to Jonhson et al. (2007) "Combined methods combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques) for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration". This was a humanistic study justifying the use of a variety of methods. The study used the questionnaire, observation and document analysis to collect data. The questionnaire was administered to fifty qualified primary school teachers who were randomly selected from a total population of one hundred thirty five primary school teachers in West gojjam urban cluster. The schemes of work for these 50 teachers were also inspected in order to assess the adequacy of the planning process. In addition, observations were carried out at all of the schools. The observations focused on the occurrence of PE lessons in relation to the teachers' class time table. Observations were also carried out to inspect sport specific facilities at the schools. The data collection methods necessitated a concurrent triangulation strategy where qualitative and quantitative data was collected concurrently. Data was integrated and analyzed first by reducing it into frequencies according to the research questions. The data was then interpreted to derive meaning out of it.

### RESULTS:

#### Attitudes of Teachers and Heads of Schools towards Physical Education.

Table 1. Teachers and Heads' Attitudes.

Item	Positive		Indifferent		Negative		Total	
	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
personal feeling of teachers towards the teaching of P.E.	25	50	10	20	15	30	50	100

Attitude of the Head towards PE.	42	84	0	0	8	16	50	100
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Table 1 show results about attitudes of teachers and heads of schools towards the teaching of physical education. In order to ascertain attitudes, the respondents were asked to rate their own attitude and that of their heads on a scale ranging from positive, indifferent to negative. The frequencies of the responses were then tabulated as shown in table 1.

The results in table 1 indicate that 50% of respondents believe that their attitude towards physical education is positive. On the other hand, 20% rated their attitude towards physical education as indifferent. 30% admitted that they have a negative attitude towards physical education. The responses for negative and indifferent were combined to give a total of 50% respondents who do not openly support the teaching of PE. The data collected about attitude of heads of schools indicated that 84% of the respondents rate the attitude of their heads of school as positive. Only 16% indicated that their heads' attitude is negative.

### Frequency of observation and supervision by heads of schools

Table 2. Frequency of PE Lesson observation and supervision.

Item	Always		Usually		Seldom		Never		Total	
	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
Frequency of observation and supervision by heads of schools	4	8	14	28	24	48	16	32	50	100

Table 2 shows data obtained on frequency of PE lesson observation and supervision by heads of schools. The data that was collected on the frequency of observation and supervision by heads of schools indicate the following; 8% of the respondents revealed that they are always observed while teaching physical education, 28% said they are usually observed. 48% revealed that they are seldom observed, while 16% said they are never observed.

### Result on Initial college training of teachers.

Table 3. Initial college training.

Item	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Total	
The initial training of teachers.	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
	0	0	4	8	16	32	30	60	50	100

Table 3 shows responses on initial college training. Data in table 3 indicate that none of the respondents rated their initial college physical education training as excellent. 4% rated their initial college training as good. 32% of the respondents indicated that their initial college training was fair. On the other hand 60% indicated that their training was poor.

To support the above data, the inspection of schemes of work conducted also indicated that the schemes of work lacked detail. Teachers were struggling to come up with meaningful activities thereby confirming the above findings.

### Result on teachers coaching certificates.

Table 4. Coaching certificates.

Item	0		1		2		3		4		Total	
Number of sport specific coaching certificates.	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
	22	44	17	34	8	16	2	4	1	2	50	100

Table 4 shows data collected on sport specific coaching certificates. Data in table 4 indicate that 44% of the respondents did not acquire any sport specific coaching certificates after leaving college. 34% of the respondents acquired only one certificate, while 16% acquired two certificates, 4% acquired three, while only 2% acquired four or more certificates. Three or more certificates would be considered for purposes of this study as reasonable staff development for the secondary school teachers. This question sought to establish the extent of staff development or further knowledge the PE teachers had acquired to supplement their formal college training.



### Availability of physical education literature/reading materials

Table 5. Teaching and Reading Materials.

Availability of P.E. teaching/ Reading materials at school	Adequate		Little		None		Total	
	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
	2	4	24	48	24	48	50	100

Table 5 shows responses to the questionnaire item that sought to establish the adequacy of physical education literature/reading materials in the ten secondary schools in West Gojjam. Responses in table 5 indicate that 48% of the respondents believe that physical education teaching and reading materials are nonexistent in their schools. Another 48% indicated that there is only a little bit of teaching and reading materials available at their schools. Only 4% of the respondents indicated that there were adequate physical education teaching and reading materials at their schools. An inspection of all the libraries at these schools revealed that there was not even a single textbook on each school.

### Result on availability of equipment.

Table 6. Availability of equipment.

Item	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Total	
	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fre.	%
	0	0	8	16	10	20	32	64	50	100

Table 6 shows data collected on availability of physical education equipment such as balls, hockey sticks, whistles, cones and others. The results in table 6 indicate that 64% of the respondents rate availability of equipment as poor. 20% of the respondents indicated that availability of equipment is fair while 16% rated it as good. None rated availability of equipment as excellent.

The inspection which was conducted on all the schools sports rooms revealed that the basic equipment such as balls, high jump equipment, whistles, uniforms and button sticks are not available.

### Result on availability of sport specific playing areas suitable for teaching PE

Table 7. Sport specific playing facilities.

Item	Soccer		Volleyball		Handball		Basket ball		Tennis	
Sport specific playing facility.	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fre.	%
	50	100	50	100	0	0	10	20	0	0

Table 7 shows data collected on availability of sport specific playing areas suitable for teaching PE such as gymnasiums, soccer fields, Athletics track, swimming pools and others. Table 7 displays data which indicate that all respondents 100% have access to soccer and volleyball pitches at their school. The result indicated that they have no access to a tennis court. 20% indicated that they have access to a basketball court. None have access to a handball and swimming pool. The inspection of the physical sports infrastructure at the schools which was conducted by the researcher confirmed the above data.

### Result on the design of the physical education syllabus

Table 8: - PE Syllabus Interpretation and user friendliness.

Item	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Undecided		Total	
Current syllabus interpretation?	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fre.	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Re f	%
	1	2	3	6	10	20	30	60	6	12	50	100
Current syllabus user friendliness?	1	2	3	6	10	20	30	60	6	12	50	100

Table 8 shows data collected to establish how easy it is to interpret the physical education syllabus and its user friendliness. Data in table 8 indicate that only 2% rated the physical education syllabus as being excellent in terms of both Interpretation and user friendliness. 6% of the respondents rated the syllabus as good. 20% rated it as fair. The three frequencies excellent, good and fair were combined to give a total of 28% which are too small compared to 72% frequencies rated as poor and undecided. This represents the number of respondents



who indicated that the syllabus is not user-friendly. 60% rated it as poor. Sixteen percent 16% indicated that they have never seen the physical education syllabus.

#### DISCUSSION:

Results from the study seem to indicate that West Gojjam urban secondary school teachers are not affected by negative attitudes in the process of teaching physical education. Fifty percent rated their own attitude as positive. Only thirty percent confirmed that their attitude towards the subject is negative, another twenty percent rated their attitude as indifferent while the balance fifty percent rated their own attitude as positive. The fact that teachers actually included PE in their schemes of work could be an indication of their readiness to teach the subject. This implies that there could be other barriers affecting the teaching of the physical education apart from negative attitude.

On the other hand the majority of the teachers, eighty four percent indicated that the attitude of their immediate supervisors is positive. Only sixteen percent rated the heads' attitude as negative, implying that the attitudes of heads of surveyed schools were generally positive and therefore it does not contribute to the non teaching of the subject.

The results above seem to contradict with responses to the item of supervision of physical education lessons by heads of school. It would be expected that since the heads attitude is positive then they should be seen to be supervising physical education lessons more regularly. However findings from this study seem to indicate that the majority of the heads do not supervise physical education lessons regularly. The fact that heads do not supervise any PE lessons is an indication that they do not value physical education because it is not examinable. These heads seem to subscribe to the concept referred to by as Bucher Ca. (1983) scholasticism.

The responses from the teachers in this case can be regarded as unreliable, it appears the teachers tried to portray their heads of schools in good light thereby biasing their responses.

Physical education knowledge is a prerequisite in the teaching of the subject. According to the World Health Organization policy statement 1992, the increasing under-utilization of the opportunities offered by physical education is caused by several factors. The basic one being that policy makers, teachers and other professionals, parents and various other groups have no adequate knowledge of physical education and its benefits. Data collected to determine the adequacy of secondary school teachers training indicate that the teachers believe their training is inadequate. The findings from this study are in support of (Nziramanga

1999) who found out that the physical education training programmes in colleges are not comprehensive and not standardized.

This inadequacy results in teachers failing to interpret the syllabus and coming up with meaningful PE activities. Lack of training is identified by (Morgan and Hansen 2008) as one of teacher related barriers in teaching PE. In addition to the above data from this study also further show that there is very little staff development going on in the schools. This is indicated by data which reflect that forty four percent did not acquire any additional certificate after college, while thirty four percent acquired only one certificate. Sixteen percent acquired two certificates and four percent acquired three certificates while only two percent acquired three certificates similarly only two percent acquired three or more certificates. Three or more certificates would be desirable because they imply that the teacher is to teach the basics of three or more sport codes professional development research reveals is the catalyst which allows the evolutionary process to move forward less catastrophically. Indeed if up to date knowledge in physical Education and Sport is to be seen as strategically important then efforts must be made to staff develop physical education teachers on a regular basis.

Data obtained on physical educational literature/reading material indicate that the teaching and reading material in physical education are grossly inadequate in West Gojjams secondary schools. Reading materials are a prerequisite in any academic field and therefore efforts should be made to increase availability of these materials in schools.

Data obtained in this study also indicated that equipment and specific sport code facilities are generally in short supply in concurrence with (Nziramasanga 1999) and findings of the Curriculum Development Unit Survey. The Curriculum Development Unit Survey report says that both lecturers and student teachers surveyed expressed concern about the lack of basic facilities and equipment in former African schools and the deteriorating state of facilities in former European schools because of lack of care or refurbishment. The Nziramasanga Commission (1999) obtained evidence to the effect that there is no financial provision for the development of physical education and that the general purpose funds are too little to support any meaningful physical education programme.

On the design of the physical education syllabus evidence from this research reveal that twenty eight rated it as excellent in terms of interpretation and user friendliness. However the majority sixty percent rated it as poor. Sixteen percent indicated that they had never seen the syllabus and therefore did not rate it. These findings are in conformity with findings of the Curriculum Development Unit which revealed that on the issue of the

physical education syllabus the lecturers and student teachers surveyed said some schools did not have a copy of the syllabus.

Although the lecturers hailed the syllabus for being non prescriptive they criticized it for being too open and not guiding enough in terms of what to teach to whom and when, which is a source of frustration and hence lack of confidence. This could also be the reason why West Gojjam secondary school teachers find the syllabus difficult to use.

#### CONCLUSION:

It can also be concluded on the basis of the findings that West Gojjam urban secondary school teachers lack physical education knowledge related to their initial college training. The teachers get formal training at college as indicated by research. This training has been found to be inadequate. In addition, findings indicate that there is very little staff development going on in physical education in West Gojjam urban secondary schools.

The study can also lead to the conclusion that literature and reading materials are indeed a significant barrier in the teaching of physical education. It can also be concluded that equipment and sport specific facilities are generally in short supply and are indeed barriers which affect the teaching of physical education in West Gojjam urban secondary schools.

Findings from this study also lead to the conclusion that in as far as West Gojjam urban secondary schools teachers are concerned, the physical education syllabus is not easy to interpret and is not user friendly.

#### Recommendations

The findings of this study led to the following recommendations;

- ✓ Heads of schools should observe physical education lessons regularly according to the time table; and physical education teachers should influence heads towards the subject by using extracurricular sports.
- ✓ Physical education and sport resource teachers should prioritize the organization with staff development programmes;
- ✓ The ministry of Education should make physical education an examinable subject or at least the Ethiopian School Examination Council should include physical education questions on the content paper in the grade ten National examination;

- ✓ Heads of schools should also prioritize the purchase of physical education materials and equipment.
- ✓ The curriculum development unit should revise the physical education syllabus.
- ✓ Ministry of Education or regional education “beuroo” should standardize the physical education syllabus in teachers training colleges.
- ✓ Ministry of Education or regional education “beuroo” should provide in-service training for all physical education teachers.

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