

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Teacher-trainees attitudes towards physical education in Kenya

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**This study investigates the attitudes of teacher trainees towards physical education (PE). It was hypothesised that teacher-trainees have negative attitudes towards PE. A total of 132 teacher trainees were randomly selected from a teacher Training College in Kenya completed a questionnaire adapted from Wear's attitude scale with equivalent forms. Statistical analysis includes frequencies and the Chi square ( $X^2$ ) method which was used to test the hypothesis. A probability level of 0.05 or less was taken to indicate statistical significance. Findings showed that teacher trainees have positive attitudes towards PE, with non significant gender differences. It is recommended that conducive teaching and learning environment as well as resources should be provided for effective teaching of PE in educational institutions and that PE should be made an examinable subject in Kenyan secondary schools. This will facilitate compliance to statutory requirements and promote the status of PE in Kenyan education system.**

**Key words:** Attitudes, gender differences, misconceptions, teacher-trainers.

## INTRODUCTION

Physical education (PE) was introduced to Kenya by colonial administrators, settlers, teachers and Christian missionaries. Much emphasis was placed on military drills and activities which were performed in regimented movements. Perhaps the most striking element of the pre-independence PE was lack of relevance to indigenous culture and traditions (Wamukoya, 1994). After independence, PE was envisaged as contributing to healthier lifestyle, building inter-group relations and fostering integration. Amid various education commissions and changes in the education system in Kenya, PE continues to be regarded as a subject that

offers no opportunity for advancement both within and outside the formal education structure (Wamukoya, 1994). This is exemplified in the assertion that, "it takes neither brains nor committed efforts to do well in PE and sport" uttered by those who view PE at university degree level as intellectually inadequate (Njororai, 1994). However, the continued acceptance and inclusion of PE and sport in the school curriculum is in line with United Nations charter on PE and sport which was proclaimed by United Nation educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) conference on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1978 in Paris, France. It emphasized that one of the essential conditions for the effective exercise of human rights is that everyone should be free to develop and preserve his or her physical, intellectual and moral powers and access to PE and sport consequently be assured and guaranteed for every individual (UNESCO, 1980).

The presidential directive of 1980 made PE a mandatory subject in all educational institutions in Kenya.

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**Abbreviations:** PE, Physical education; UNESCO, united nation educational scientific and cultural organisation; KCSE, Kenya certificate of secondary education; PA, physical activity.

Following the introduction of the 8.4.4. Tier system of education in 1985, PE was made a compulsory non-examinable subject at primary and secondary school levels (Kenya Republic, 1984). Since then a number of studies have been carried out to evaluate the attitudes of students towards PE at different levels of Kenyan education system (Muniu, 1986; Kiganjo, 1987; Njororai, 1990; Wamukoya, 1993; Muindi, 1998), but the findings have been conflicting. Hildebrand and Johnson (2001) found that when college students take a PE class and are competent in the activity, there is greater likelihood of continued participation throughout life. Similarly, Koca et al. (2005) opined that students have positive attitudes towards physical education because of the desire to be successful or spend their time without pressure of academic success in PE lessons. This is important to Teacher-Trainees who may be having their certificate courses as terminal in formal education. Wagner and Sherwood (1969) define attitudes as a predisposition to behave in a certain way to a given object. The theory advanced by these authors' states that there is no better way to predict how a person will respond to a stimulus than to know their attitudes towards it. Positive attitude motivates students to engage in physical activities which contribute to their development, not only physically but also emotionally, socially, mentally while negative attitudes on the other hand tend to hinder such development (Shamshoum, 2003). Silverman and Subramaniam (1999) stated that attitude development is important because teachers, coaches and the society regard daily attitudes as a form of assessment for them and for assessing other peoples strengths. As a matter of fact, Mika (1980) defined an attitude as a relatively established structure of cognitive and emotional process and behaviours related to a subject or a disposition to those behaviours or a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects groups events or symbols (Hogg and Vaugan, 2005).

It was prudent to establish the attitudes of teacher-trainees towards PE at college level. These trainees may carry-over their attitudes towards PE to the children who will be under their jurisdiction upon graduation from college. Negative attitudes towards PE have been reported in Kenyan primary schools (Muindi, 1998) secondary schools (Njororai, 1990; Wamukoya, 1994) and universities (Njororai, 1994). Njororai (1994) conceded that students pursuing PE programmes at the university are regarded by their peers and community at large as dull and unintelligent and that this deficiency limits their potential to pursue more "academic subjects". He also reported that teachers, students and parents also had negative attitudes towards PE (Njororai, 1990). This situation is contraindicative in that if the students have negative attitude towards PE then their participation in extracurricular activities and out-of-school sports will be

questionable. Consequently, the multiplier effect of this scenario will be a populace characterised by all the evils of leading sedentary lifestyles.

Muniu (1986) averred that students admitted into diploma colleges have a limited background in PE leading to a situation which some tutors consider as reflecting a poor attitude towards the subject. Kiganjo (1987) also asserted that majority of PE tutors indicated that in certificate awarding teachers colleges in Kenya; the teacher trainees had positive attitudes towards PE. However, the findings of these two studies (Muniu, 1986; Kiganjo, 1987) reflect the attitudes of students towards PE based on their tutors' views. It was apt to dissect the attitudes towards PE from the lenses of the teacher – trainees. Njoroge (2000) asserts that in all the teachers colleges, PE is obligatory for every teacher trainee and must be taken regardless of interest, age, gender or physical condition. Perhaps for this reason, student teachers in general seem to associate the subject with a low esteem.

They generally lack enthusiasm, fail to understand the role of PE in child development and show little knowledge about the aims and objectives of PE as a subject. With the aforementioned contrasting findings in view, this study set out to investigate the attitudes of certificate teacher trainees towards PE in Kenya. PE is a compulsory subject in Kenyan teacher training colleges. Understanding student attitudes should help PE teachers develop and use approximate teaching methods and techniques leading students to appreciate physical activity and motivating them to develop personal habits in practising them particularly after leaving their student lives. This was more apt as teachers are expected to occupy a central position in addressing and cultivating positive lifestyles of children in primary schools in Kenya. Indeed the Kenya government is concerned about the increasing levels of inactivity among children leading to increased obesity and other hypo-kinetic related diseases. In line with the above significance, the study was out to answer the following questions:

- i) What is the general attitude of teacher trainee towards PE?
- ii) Is there a gender difference in the attitudes towards PE by the teacher trainees?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Sample**

There are seventeen public and over one hundred certificate teacher training in Kenya. The ministry of education is responsible for the recruitment of teacher- trainees into the public TTC's. The recruitment is done through a competitive process so that the applicants must have the basic academic qualifications of a mean grade of "c" in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

(KCSE). The teacher's trainees must undergo the P1 teacher's certificate course (2 years) and after successfully attaining, they are employed to teach in primary schools in Kenya. During the course period, they undertake the subjects that are taught in primary schools where PE is one of the subjects. A total of 132 final year students participated in the study were randomly selected from a teachers training college. They comprised of 83 (62.9%) men and 49 (37.1%) women with a mean age of  $24 \pm 2.3$  years. They had been taught PE for two years and had conducted successful teaching practice sessions. As a matter of fact, the teacher-trainees must have taught PE in the primary schools during the teaching practice.

### Questionnaire

A questionnaire adapted from Wear's attitude scale with equivalent forms, is used to assess the attitudes of college students, and was administered to the participants two weeks before they sat for their final examination. Johnson and Nelson (1988) reported the reliability coefficients of 0.94 and 0.96 for the A and B forms of the questionnaire, respectively. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Values of the items were scaled such that more positive attitudes attracted higher scores. Consequently, a high total score indicates a favourable attitude towards PE.

### Data analysis

Responses from the questionnaire were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics. The Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test of independence was used to test the hypothesis ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

## RESULTS

Results on the general attitude of teacher trainee towards PE reveals that the computed  $X^2$  of 48.48 is greater than the table value of 3.84 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This is because a significant percentage of respondents, that is, 106 (80.30%) had positive attitudes in contrast to the few participants who showed negative attitudes towards the subject (26 or 19.70%). Thus the hypothesis that teacher trainees would have negative attitude towards PE is rejected. Conversely, when the attitudes of men and women were compared the findings showed that the computed  $X^2$  of 0.471 is less than the table value of 3.84, thus indicating that there is no significant gender difference in the attitudes of trainee teachers towards PE ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are in agreement with those of Kiganjo (1987) where it was reported that teacher-trainees had positive attitudes towards PE. Indeed, the positive attitudes expressed towards PE at certificate college level can be associated with two major factors. First, despite that the teacher-trainees admitted having

had poor background and negative attitudes towards the subject in secondary school, their attitude was positively influenced by the two years certificate course of intensive PE teaching by specialists. This is buttressed by Katzenellenbogen's (1994) assertion that a PE learning environment should encourage the mastery and refinement of performance, acquisition and application of knowledge and development of values and beliefs. Koca et al. (2005) opined that students have positive attitude towards PE because of their desire to be successful or spend their time without pressure of academic success in PE lessons. Similarly, Walter (1994) observed that pupils' attitudes will change if PE activities are enjoyable, well organised and relevant to lifetime recreational pursuits. In the same vein, Njororai (1994) reiterated that for PE to be an effective medium of learning and expression, it has to be well taught.

Secondly, the teacher trainees might have developed positive attitudes towards PE due to the fact that it is an examinable subject in the college. Mahlmann et al. (1993) stated that PE lags behind in Kenyan secondary school because it is neither examinable nor required for promotion to the next class. This view corroborates Wamukoya's (1994) regret that, "one wonders then the motive of making PE mandatory in the 8.4.4 education system, when it remains a non-examinable subject in schools." In teachers colleges, students will not show negative attitudes to a subject which is obligatory and examinable. Also the student teachers have to pass PE examination for them to qualify as teachers. The findings of the study do not reflect any differences in attitudes towards PE based on gender. These findings contradict the results of previous studies which reported that males show more positive attitude towards PE than females (Eagly, 1987; Shamshoum, 2003; Arabaci, 2009). Thus, the assertion by Njoroje (2000) that women show less interest in PE and sport than their male peers in teachers' colleges. However, it is evident that gender stereotypes, myths and misconceptions concerning masculine and feminine tasks have been perpetuated through physical activity and sport. Since these reflect societal and cultural norms, findings of this study negate the existence of such stereotypes among the trainee PE teachers studied. However, the fact that the female teacher trainees had positive attitudes towards PE may not necessarily translate into active participation in physical activities. Indeed, Ntoumanis (2001) observed that children with a positive attitude towards PE or physical activity (PA) are more likely to regularly exercise in the future. According to Wagner and Sherwood (1969), attitudes consist of affective, cognitive and behavioural components.

The present study was however, mainly concerned with assessment of the affective and cognitive components of student teachers' attitudes towards PE. Moreover, positive attitude motivate students to engage in physical activities contributing to their development not only physically but emotionally, socially and mentally, while

negative attitudes on the other hand tend to hinder such development (Godin and Shepherd, 1990).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was carried out to assess the attitudes of teacher trainees towards PE. The findings showed that the “vicious cycle” characterised by negative attitude towards PE cannot be generalised. The conducive teaching and learning environment for PE coupled with the fact that it examinable promotes a positive image for the discipline in the college. Thus, it is important that conditions for PE teaching and learning in teachers colleges are conducive in order to reverse the negativism towards the subject albeit its rampant negative attitude in Kenyan primary and secondary schools. Based on the findings of the study and bearing in mind its limitations, it is recommended that: 1) The Kenyan ministry of education (MoE) through its inspectorate department should ensure that PE is adequately taught and assessed in primary and secondary schools. This will possibly ensure that children do not develop negative attitude towards PE; 2) There is need to change from the competitive PE course model to a model that encompasses life time sport, health and well being; 3) Physical education course curriculum at all levels of education should be re arranged to enable students obtain necessary knowledge and attitude for healthy and happy daily life; 4) Further studies involving larger samples in both certificate and diploma colleges in Kenya should be undertaken. This would be helpful to evaluate the extent to which the validity of the present findings can be confirmed.

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