

**EXTENT OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN KENYA**

By

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**Abstract**

*Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory subject for all learners in all the public primary and secondary schools in Kenya. The curriculum for the subject is centrally developed by a panel of experts at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). However, in spite of the teaching of the subject in the school system being mandatory, it is not examinable. Due to the physical nature of the activities designed to be undertaken, coupled with the fact that the no examinations are undertaken, a number of research and scholarly works have noted that little attention tends to be directed to the subject in terms of actual teaching and resource allocation. The researchers and scholars have therefore, consistently questioned the support and status that is attached to the subject. Consequently, this study was carried out to determine the extent of public support for the subject. An exploratory survey research design was adopted for the study. The respondents included 50 teachers from public schools, 49 university PE students, 22 university non-PE students and 13 parents who were randomly selected. A questionnaire containing items that captured seven statements relating to either the importance attached to PE or measures that are crucial to promoting the status of the subject viz-a-viz other academic subjects was used to collect data. The data was analyzed descriptively and with computation of chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed significant public support for PE as a subject and on the measures that would uplift its status. Based on the findings, it is recommended that stakeholders in the teaching-learning of the subject should capitalize on the popular support that the subject commands to jointly direct their efforts towards implementing measures that are crucial to making the subject brought at par with the rest of the subjects in the School system in Kenya.*

**KEY WORDS: Physical Education, Public Support.**

## **Introduction**

The physical psycho-social and general health benefits of PE are recognized worldwide. It is on the basis of these benefits that many countries of the world have equally recognized the need of incorporating the subject in their education systems. For instance, according to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and American Heart Association (2010), the American Academy of Pediatrics, NASPE, the American Heart Association, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) all are on record as supporting the need for physical activity for youth and for quality physical education in schools. In respect to the emphasis on the need to promote quality of physical activity for the youth in the education system, various countries have therefore, consistently explored and pursued more ardent ways of promoting the status of the subject. This has included development of relevant curricular, provision of needed resources and supervision of the teaching of the subject. These measures have been geared towards promoting the quality and quantity of PE. In spite of these, some research studies have highlighted constraints to the teaching of the subject such as negative attitude towards the subject (Makokha, 2003; Mwisukha, Rintaugu, Kamenju and Mwangi, 2014), lukewarm attention and inadequate support in terms of hiring of trained PE teachers, provision of required facilities and equipment, as well as insufficient time allocation for teaching of the subject particularly in many countries of Africa (Akiiki, 2009; Kiganjo, 2003; Njorarai, Gathua and Owiye, 1997; Musangeya and Dzimba, 1997; Rintaugu and Mwisukha, 2011).

Physical Education was introduced in the School system in Kenya by the British colonialists in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Ringaugu and Mwisukha, 2011). During the colonial era, the subject was characterized by physical training that leaned towards military drills whose goal was to instill discipline and obedience amongst the colonized natives. However, after the country attained independence from colonial rule, efforts were made by the post-colonial government to re-organize the PE curriculum to meet the developmental needs of the country. Like the case of the other subjects offered in the School system at primary and secondary school levels, the PE Curriculum is centrally developed and regularly reviewed by the Kenya Institute of Education. However, given that the subject is not examinable, it tends to be given less priority as compared to the other academic subjects. For instance, according to a study by Akiiki (2009), some schools tend to use the time allocated for PE to teach other subjects that are examinable. It is against this background that this study was undertaken to determine extent of public for the subject in Kenya.

## **Methods**

The exploratory survey research design was adopted for this study. Members of the public who were the respondents in the context of this study referred to parents and teachers of public primary and secondary schools, as well as PE and non-PE students drawn from public universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. They included 50 teachers

from public schools, 49 university PE students, 22 university non-PE students and 13 parents who were randomly selected within the Nairobi County. A questionnaire containing items that captured seven statements relating to either the importance attached to PE or measures that are crucial to promoting the status of the subject viz-a-viz other academic subjects was used to collect data. The data was analyzed descriptively and with computation of chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

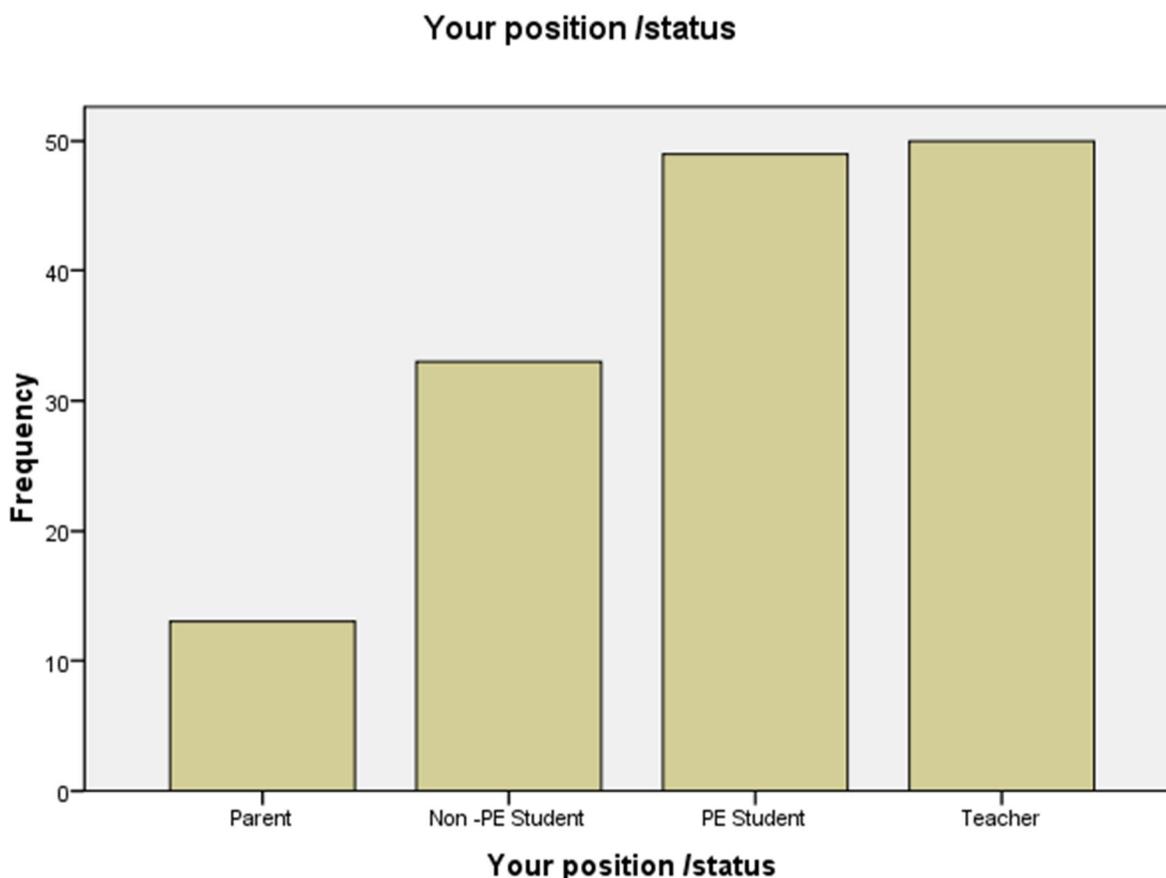
The respondents' support or lack of support for PE was determined on the basis of their responses to statements associated with either the importance/value of the subject or measures that are crucial to uplifting its status viz-a-viz other subjects in the school curriculum in Kenya. The specific statements sought the views of the respondents in the following areas:

- i. Importance attached to PE in the school curriculum
- ii. Importance attached to PE against other academic subjects offered in the school curriculum in Kenya
- iii. Contribution of PE to the intellectual development of learners viz-a viz other academic subjects
- iv. Contribution of PE to learners' performance in the other academic subjects
- v. Need for hiring of same number of PE teachers to those of each of the other academic subjects
- vi. Whether PE should be allocated annual financial budget for teaching-learning resources as that allocated to each of the other academic subjects
- vii. If PE should be allocated same number of lessons per week as those for other academic subjects PE should be made examinable as other academic subjects
- Viii. Whether PE should be made examinable as other academic subjects

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Data on Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Out of a total of 145 respondents who were randomly selected to participate in the study, a higher proportion of them were female (79, 54.5%) than the male who were 66 (45.52%). This sample of respondents comprised of parents, teachers from public primary and secondary schools, as well as PE and non-PE students drawn from public universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. A breakdown of proportions of the respondents in the specified categories are summarised in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Categories/Status of Respondents**

The data relating to the respondents' views on the importance they attached to PE as a subject in the school curriculum is summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Responses on whether PE is an Important Subject in the School Curriculum in Kenya**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	9(75.00%)	3(25.00%)	3	373.48	0.00
Non-PE student	32(96.97%)	1(3.03%)			
PE Student	46(93.88%)	3(6.12%)			
Teacher	50(100.00%)	0(0%)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>137(95.14%)</b>	<b>7(4.86%)</b>			

It is apparent that majority of the respondents (137, 95.14%) were of the view that PE is an important subject in the School Curriculum in Kenya. Only a small proportion of them (7, 4.86%) viewed it otherwise. The calculated  $X^2$  value of 373.48 (df = 6) showed significant difference

between responses that implied the respondents' support for PE as an important subject in the school curriculum than those of the contrary view. Therefore, the overall view of the respondents across their various positional status was that PE is an important subject in the School Curriculum.

The respondents' views on whether PE is as important as other academic subjects are summarized in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Responses on whether PE is as Important as Other Academic Subjects**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	10(76.92%)	3(23.08%)	3	244.15	0.00
Non-PE Student	32(96.97%)	1(3.03%)			
PE Student	46(93.88%)	3(6.12%)			
Teacher	49(98.00%)	1(2.00%)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>137(94.48%)</b>	<b>8(5.52%)</b>			

From the above table, it is evident that majority of the respondents, 137(94.48%), indicated that PE is an important subject as other academic subjects but a smaller proportion, 8(5.52%) disagreed. To determine if there was any significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents on whether or not PE enjoys equal status with the other academic subjects, Chi-square was computed; the analysis showed significant difference ( $X^2 = 244.15$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between the views of the respondents who supported this position and those who did not. This implies that the respondents were in agreement on their perception of PE being an important subject as other academic subjects. Similarly, a related study by National Association for Sport and Physical Education & American Heart Association (2010) found that the majority of parents believed that physical education is at least as important as other academic subjects; the percentages ranged from 54% to 84%, depending on the subject being compared. The respondents were further asked to avail their opinions on the question of whether PE makes any contribution to the intellectual development of the learners, and their responses are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Summary of Responses on whether PE Contributes to Intellectual Development of Learners like other Subjects**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	12(92.30%)	1(7.69%)	3	244.15	0.00
Non-PE Student	29(87.88%)	4(12.12%)			
PE Student	49(100.00%)	0(0%)			
Teacher	47(94.00%)	3(6.00%)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>137(94.48%)</b>	<b>8(5.52%)</b>			

Most of the respondents, 137(94.48%), were of the opinion that PE contributes to intellectual development of learners just like other subjects in the school curriculum. Those who differed with this view were minority, that is, 8(5.52%). Chi-square computation showed significant difference

between responses of those respondents who supported the view that PE contributes to intellectual development of the learners and those who indicate the reverse ( $X^2 = 244.15$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). It is evident that majority of the respondents appreciated the relevance of PE to intellectual development of the learners in Kenya' schools.

The data relating to responses on whether PE contributes to learner's better in other academic subjects is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: PE Contributes to Learners' Better Performance in Other Academic Subjects**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	8(61.54%)	5(38.46%)	3	168.92	0.00
Non-PE Student	24(72.73%)	9(27.27%)			
PE Student	48(97.96%)	1(2.04%)			
Teacher	42(84.00%)	8(16.00%)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>122(84.14%)</b>	<b>23(15.86%)</b>			

The highest proportion of the respondents (122, 84.14%) was in agreement with the view that PE contributes to learners' better performance in other academic subjects. Only 23(15.86%) disagreed with this view. Chi-square analysis revealed significant difference between the divergent views ( $X^2 = 168.92$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); a much higher number of the respondents supported the perception that PE contributes to the learners' better performance in other subjects than the ones who held the contrary view. This finding is in tandem with a 2007-08 study of more than 2.4 million Texas students that found that students who were physically fit were more likely to do well on the state's standardized tests than students who were not physically fit (National Association for Sport and Physical Education & American Heart Association, 2010). Hence, the need to encourage managers of schools to avail opportunities for their learners to participate in PE. The respondents were further asked for their perception relating to the question of whether PE needs same number of teachers as those for each of the other academic subjects, and their responses are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: PE Needs same Number of Teachers as those for each of the Other Academic Subjects**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	9(69.23%)	4(30.77%)	3	197.06	0.00
Non-PE Student	28(84.85%)	5(15.15%)			
PE Student	47(95.92%)	2(4.08%)			
Teacher	44(88.00%)	6(12.00%)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>128(88.27%)</b>	<b>17(11.72%)</b>			

Majority of the respondents, 128(88.27%), indicated their perception that PE needs the same number of teachers as other subjects, while 10(6.89%) were of a contrary view. However, the positive and negative responses on the question at hand differed significantly ( $X^2 = 197.06$ ,  $df = 3$ ,

$p < 0.05$ ); there was overwhelming support for the need for hiring of same number of teachers for PE and each of the academic subjects.

Table 6 shows a summary of the responses to the need for PE to be allocated annual financial budget for teaching-learning resources as that allocated to each of the other academic subjects.

**Table 6: PE should be Allocated Annual Financial Budget for Teaching-Learning Resources as that Allocated to each of the other Academic Subjects**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	9(69.23%)	4(30.77%)	3	163.91	0.00
Non-PE Student	27(81.82%)	6(18.18%)			
PE Student	43(87.76%)	6(12.24%)			
Teacher	42(84.00%)	8(16.00%)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>121(83.45%)</b>	<b>24(16.55%)</b>			

Table 6 shows that most of the respondents, 121(83.44%), agreed that PE should be allocated as much annual financial budget for teaching-learning as other academic subjects, while 11(7.58%) disagreed. The Chi-square analysis revealed significant difference between responses that favored equitable allocation of annual financial budget for teaching-learning resources for PE and the other academic subjects against those of the opposing view ( $X^2 = 163.91$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that there was overwhelming acceptance by most of the respondents that PE needed same treatment in terms of financial support as the one accorded each of the other subjects in the schools.

The respondents' views on the question of whether PE should be allocated same number of lessons per week as those for other academic subjects are descriptively presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: PE should be Allocated Same Number of Lessons per Week as those for other Academic Subjects**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	7(53.85%)	6(46.15%)	3	64.97	0.00
Non-PE Student	23(69.70%)	10(30.30%)			
PE Student	35(71.43%)	14(28.57%)			
Teacher	29(58.00%)	21(42.00%)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>94(64.83%)</b>	<b>51(35.17%)</b>			

Given that PE is allocated fewer lessons than other academic subjects in Kenya, the respondents' views were sought on whether they would support allocation of same number of lessons to PE to those for the other subjects. From the results presented in Table 7, 94(64.82%) of the respondents agreed that PE should be allocated the same number of lessons per week to those allocated to the other subjects, but 51(35.17%) were of the contrary view. Statistically, the responses differed significantly ( $X^2 = 64.97$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); most of the respondents supported equal number of lessons for PE and other academic subjects.

PE is not an examinable subject in primary and secondary schools in Kenya except at teacher training colleges and universities where the subject is offered. Since the education system in the country tends to be more inclined towards learners' success in examinations, subjects that are not examinable tend to receive marginal attention in terms allocation of resources and actual teaching. In view of this background, the respondents in this study were asked to give their opinion on whether PE should be made an examinable subject in schools. A summary of the results are presented in Table 8 below.

**Table 8: PE should be Made Examinable as other Academic Subjects**

Position/Status	Agree	Disagree	df	Chi-square	Sig.
Parent	8(61.54%)	5(38.46%)	3	149.20	0.00
Non-PE Student	26(78.79%)	7(21.21%)			
PE Student	37(75.51%)	12(24.49%)			
Teacher	27(54.00%)	23(46.00%)			
<b>Totals</b>	<b>98(67.59%)</b>	<b>47(32.41%)</b>			

It is evident that more half of the respondents, that is, 98(67.59%) supported the need for making PE examinable, while 47(32.41%) disagreed that PE should be examined.  $X^2$  value of 149.20 df = 6 showed that there was significant difference in the opinions of different respondents in support and against the suggestion to make PE examinable; there was a wide gap between those who favored the need to make the subject examinable and those who did not.

## Conclusions

Arising from the findings, it can be concluded as follows:

- i. PE is perceived as to be an important subject as other academic subjects in the school system in Kenya
- ii. PE makes positive contribution not only to the physical and health wellbeing of the youth in schools but also to their mental and intellectual development.
- iii. The Kenyan public supports the need for PE to be at par with other academic subjects in terms of being provided with requisite resources such as adequate trained teaching personnel, budgetary allocation, as well as time and lessons allotment on the school timetable.
- iv. In order to determine the progress achieved in teaching the subject, various mechanisms should be explored of assessing the learners.

## Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Since PE is recognized by the public as crucial to the health and intellectual development of learners, the government ministry responsible for matters of education and school

management should continually explore ways of creating a conducive environment for the teaching-learning of the subject. This includes provision of relevant adequate resources for teaching and learning of the subject.

- ii. The government ministry incharge of education as well as headteachers of schools should put in place mechanisms for enforcing regular supervision of the teaching of the subject in schools.
- iii. Measures for upgrading the status of the subject to the level of the other academic subjects in terms of ensuring parity in hiring of trained teaching personnel, budgetary allocation and time allotment for the teaching of the subject should be explored and implemented.
- iv. School management and authorities should capitalize on the popular public support for PE to involve community members to lend their material support as well as advocate for a higher status for the subject.

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