

Physical Education in Tough Terrains: Unpacking Standards-Based Curriculum Implementation Challenges in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana

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Abstract

The introduction of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) in Ghana marked a significant shift in pedagogical approaches, aiming to improve the quality of teaching and learning across all subject areas, including Physical Education (PE). Yet, effective execution of the SBC PE component hinges critically on teachers' readiness and competence to enact it successfully. This study examined obstacles faced by teachers in implementing the Standards-Based PE curriculum in the Effutu Municipality's public basic schools. Utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods framework, the study gathered quantitative data via a questionnaire from 219 teachers and qualitative insights through focus group discussions. Analysis incorporated descriptive statistics alongside the thematic approach. Institutional challenges emerged as the most formidable barriers with overall ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.69$), followed by teacher-related challenges (3.72 , $SD=0.83$) and student-related challenges (3.60 , $SD=0.98$) to SBC PE implementation, reflecting strong consensus among Effutu Municipality teachers. Accordingly, the study advocates enhanced investments in teacher capacity-building, physical infrastructure and sustained stakeholder oversight, particularly for PE teachers training within Effutu Municipality to secure SBC PE delivery and optimize student physical education outcomes.

Keywords: Standards-based curriculum; physical education; implementation challenges; curriculum delivery.

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Introduction

Physical Education (PE) has long been acknowledged as a crucial element of holistic education. It plays a

central role in nurturing physical competence, promoting health-related fitness and establishing lifelong habits of physical activity. Beyond physical

development, PE contributes significantly to learners' cognitive functioning, social interaction, emotional regulation and academic achievement (Hardman & Green, 2011). In highly developed educational systems, such as those of Finland, Canada, and Australia, PE is given prominence through robust policy frameworks, adequate infrastructure and continuous professional development for teachers. These countries demonstrate that when adequately resourced, PE enhances not only physical well-being but also learners' broader developmental outcomes (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015).

Despite international advocacy, the status and quality of PE vary greatly across different global regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the delivery of PE continues to face systemic challenges. Amusa et al. (2010), and Mwinzi (2015) asserted that underfunding, limited human capacity, inadequate infrastructure, and societal undervaluation of PE are widespread. In some African countries like Namibia, Zambia and Uganda, PE is often perceived as a non-examinable subject, leading to its marginalization in school curricula. Consequently, the teaching of PE suffers from poor planning, insufficient instructional resources and inconsistent implementation, resulting in limited learner outcomes and reduced enthusiasm for the subject.

Ghana, like some other developing nations, has initiated a series of educational reforms aimed at improving teaching and learning across all levels. A major reform occurred in 2019 with the introduction of the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) for basic schools, which emphasizes learner-centred, competency-based teaching approaches (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2019). The SBC seeks to cultivate essential 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity among Ghanaian learners. Physical Education, under the SBC framework, is recognized as a core subject and is expected to play a vital role in nurturing discipline, physical fitness, teamwork and emotional resilience. The revised PE curriculum is intended to transition instruction from casual physical activity to purposeful, outcomes-based learning experiences that build motor skills and promote lifelong wellness habits.

The Standards-Based PE curriculum envisions a transformative shift in education. However, its

implementation faces numerous obstacles. Literature and evidence from practice consistently highlight key barriers to effective PE delivery, including inadequate infrastructure, equipment shortages, overcrowded classrooms, limited teacher training, reduced instructional time and minimal societal value placed on PE. These challenges, drawn from studies like Adom (2021) and Owusu-Ansah & Antwi (2020a), undermine PE implementation, particularly in resource-constrained settings, such as Ghanaian schools. These issues are compounded by persistent perceptions that PE is a non-score subject, which often leads to its exclusion from mainstream planning and resource allocation in schools. Some schools continue to operate under substandard conditions with limited or no dedicated PE spaces, poorly trained teachers and little access to teaching aids or reference materials (Kudjo & Essilfie, 2020; Owusu & Danso, 2021). Even where the infrastructure exists, the capacity of teachers to deliver effective instruction under the new standards is often limited by lack of pre-service and in-service training, low motivation and minimal institutional support. Learners also present implementation challenges ranging from disinterest in PE to cultural and gender norms that inhibit participation, particularly among girls.

In the Effutu Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana, these challenges are particularly evident. The municipality comprises both urban and peri-urban communities with considerable variation in access to educational resources. Teachers assigned to teach PE in public basic schools in this area often grapple with a lack of specialized training, time constraints in school schedules and lack of access to sports equipment and facilities. These conditions hinder their ability to implement the PE curriculum effectively and in line with national standards (Donkor & Hormenu, 2021).

Given the critical role that teachers play in curriculum delivery, it is essential to investigate the specific challenges teachers encounter in implementing the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in the Effutu Municipality. Therefore, this study investigated the challenges encountered by teachers in the delivery of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana. Examining these barriers is crucial to identifying the gap between curriculum intentions and classroom realities. Such insights will be instrumental for stakeholders, including curriculum

developers, school heads, educational policymakers and teacher training institutions to design targeted interventions that can improve the quality of PE instruction and foster inclusive, engaging and health-promoting learning environments.

Literature Review

This study adopted the Implementation Theory as developed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) as its theoretical basis. It also reviewed literature on institutional challenges, teacher-related issues and student factors that hinder effective physical education delivery.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the Implementation Theory developed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984). The theory explains how well-thought-out policies fail at the implementation level when clarity, feasibility, resources and institutional support are lacking. The theory makes clearer the difference between policy intention and implementation reality and stresses that front-line actors like teachers interpret and translate policy into practice, and this is why the theory is relevant to curriculum reforms. The theory guides this study and provides a clear explanation of how SBC design and expectations interact with the capacity of implementers, support structures and contextual conditions. As such, successful implementation is contingent on the degree to which teachers understand curriculum requirements, possess the competence to use recommended instructional strategies and receive necessary supervision or feedback (Ammah & Appiah, 2019; Obeng & Amedorme, 2020).

Drawing on Pressman and Wildavsky's (1984) Implementation Theory, this study explains how even well-designed policies often falter during execution due to extended chains of decision points in which minor deviations accumulate. These challenges are exacerbated by the absence of a clear causal theory linking policy actions to intended outcomes and by conflicting priorities among implementing actors. Applied to the Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC), the theory illuminates the gap between policy goals, specifically, improved Physical Education delivery through competency-focused approaches, and classroom-level realities. Fragmented support structures intensify institutional constraints such as resource scarcity; front-line teachers' interpretive discretion either mitigates or amplifies implementation failures,

particularly in contexts where training, supervision, and feedback mechanisms are inadequate or absent.

Institution-Related Challenges

The potential for successful implementation of policies in educational institutions partly relies on how well policies are drafted, as highlighted in the Implementation Theory, which posits that policies must be clear, feasible and causally linked to intended outcomes through precise objectives and realistic pathways; otherwise, they unravel amid interpretive ambiguities and execution gaps. Vague policies that lack connections to reality lead to a lack of effective implementation in practice (Ammah & Appiah, 2019). Institutional issues critically influence the implementation of PE in schools, where the lack of dedicated structures like playgrounds, inadequate learning environments, outdated or absent technology for instructional aids, and chronic space shortages in many districts collectively undermine teaching efficiency, exacerbate student disengagement and contribute to elevated dropout rates (Ghana Education Service, 2020; Donkor, 2024).

Persistent challenges in physical education delivery include the inadequate supply of qualified teachers, particularly in rural settings, where teaching vacancies remain critically unfilled at rates as high as 44.8% (Ghana Education Service, 2020; Donkor, 2024). Teacher shortage, compounded by the lack of effective implementation structures and accountability mechanisms, undermines overall education outcomes, as chronic underfunding fosters unsustainable, short-term approaches rather than long-term solutions (Donkor, 2024).

In the Effutu Municipality, limited infrastructure coupled with inadequate teacher preparation for the new standards-based curriculum derailed the effectiveness of its delivery. Hence, this study sought to uncover how possibly ambiguous SBC complexity affects learning institutions in relation to difficulties in supporting teachers as suggested in the literature (Ammah & Appiah, 2019). Supervision and monitoring, which are crucial for effective policy implementation of the SBC is often erratic (Tonoku-Koah & Dadzie, 2017). Besides, the lack of subject matter expertise and qualified teachers in physical education are prevalent within most basic schools in the Effutu Municipality. This inconsistency results in inadequate timely feedback for teachers, directly impeding Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) delivery

and pedagogical improvement. Moreover, the absence of robust supervisory structures disrupts continuous professional support, essential for sustaining curriculum reforms in contexts like the Effutu Municipality.

Teacher-Related Challenges

Teacher capacity emerges as a key factor for successful implementation. With a constant shortage of qualified PE teachers, especially in public basic schools, effective Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) delivery has been a significant challenge in policy implementation. In many schools, material resources, such as suitable teaching tools, sports fields and equipment remain insufficient while time allocation for PE lessons is often inadequate due to competing academic priorities, further hindering implementation. Material and human resource gaps are more serious in smaller municipalities, where funding and logistics are particularly constrained (Obeng & Amedorme, 2020).

Teacher perceptions, attitudes and commitment play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of curriculum implementation. In Ghana, many physical education teachers exhibit deficiencies in professional development, as preservice and in-service training opportunities remain inconsistently distributed across regions (Donkor, 2024; Oppong & Fofack, 2023). This shortfall fosters a lack of confidence and preparedness among educators, impeding their adoption of contemporary pedagogical approaches and, consequently, diminishing student participation and classroom engagement (Oppong & Fofack, 2023; Koomson & Adjei, 2020). Furthermore, challenges in teacher deployment coupled with elevated student-teacher ratios and reluctance to serve in remote areas exacerbate personnel strain and undermine instructional efficacy (Donkor, 2024; Ghana Education Service, 2020).

Gender stereotyping perpetuated by educators significantly constrains participation in PE, particularly among female students, whose enrollment and engagement remain persistently low due to deeply ingrained sociocultural attitudes that prioritize academic subjects over physical activity for girls (Koomson & Adjei, 2020; Owusu & Antwi, 2017). Without substantive teacher involvement in curriculum design processes or ongoing professional support, such as targeted workshops, peer mentoring and resource provision, teachers'

commitment to reforms often manifests as superficial compliance rather than deep integration, resulting in inconsistent pedagogical practices. In the Effutu Municipality, teacher-level factors, including foundational training backgrounds, infrequent and non-specialized supervision and restricted access to continuous professional development programs critically determine teachers' readiness and motivation. For instance, teachers with inadequate content knowledge struggle to adapt Standards-Based Curriculum (SBC) expectations to local contexts, while erratic monitoring fails to provide actionable feedback, ultimately eroding the capacity to foster inclusive and engaging PE environments that align with reform objectives.

Student-Related Challenges

Environmental and contextual factors profoundly influence students' involvement and performance in PE classes, particularly within resource-constrained settings like Ghanaian basic schools. Inadequate infrastructure, such as absent or dilapidated sports fields, multipurpose halls and safe play areas directly restrict the feasibility of practical activities, forcing teachers to resort to theoretical instruction or cancel sessions altogether, which diminishes student motivation and physical skill development (Baafi, 2020; Nkrumah, 2016; Donkor, 2025). Overcrowded classrooms and high student-teacher ratios exacerbate supervision challenges, limiting personalized feedback and increasing injury risks during activities while poor sanitation and water facilities further deter participation, especially among girls navigating menstrual hygiene issues. Sociocultural elements, including gender stereotypes and societal misconceptions that deprioritize PE in favor of core academics, compound these issues as rural-urban disparities amplify equipment shortages and erratic scheduling due to competing priorities like examinations. Collectively, these factors foster disengagement, lower attendance and suboptimal health outcomes, underscoring the need for context-tailored interventions (Nkrumah, 2016; Donkor, 2025).

Socioeconomic challenges, including child labor, early marriage and entrenched cultural practices, severely limit girls' involvement in both general education and PE-related activities in the Ghanaian context (Arhin, 2009; Forsgren et al., 2019; Owusu & Antwi, 2017). Child labor compels some girls to prioritize income-generating tasks, such as street vending, domestic chores or farm work over school

attendance, resulting in chronic absenteeism, fatigue and diminished capacity for active participation in PE sessions, where physical demands exacerbate exhaustion from prior labor (Ballard, 2025; Canagarajah, 1997). Early marriage, often arranged in rural and low-income communities to alleviate household financial burdens, prematurely withdraws girls from school, curtailing their exposure to PE and reinforcing gender disparities in physical activity levels, as married girls face heightened domestic responsibilities that conflict with lesson schedules. Socioeconomic challenges are experienced in circumstances where classroom environments are poor, classes are overcrowded and students have long journeys to class, which affect participation and performance (Donkor, 2024; Ghana Education Service, 2020; Koomson & Adjei, 2020). Cultural practices, including menstrual taboos and norms that assign girls disproportionate household duties like fetching water or caregiving, further deter engagement by fostering embarrassment, inadequate facilities for hygiene management during PE and societal devaluation of female athleticism, ultimately perpetuating cycles of disengagement and poorer health outcomes.

The perceived lower value of physical education relative to core academic subjects has resulted in diminished class time allocations for physical activities as exam-oriented pedagogies systematically prioritize cognitive disciplines over practical instruction (Donkor, 2024). Low student participation in PE correlates directly with teachers' diminished expectations, perpetuating a vicious cycle of suboptimal curriculum implementation within educational institutions (Mensah & Asiedu, 2019a; Donkor, 2024).

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the implementation challenges of the Standards-Based Physical Education (PE) curriculum in basic schools within the Effutu Municipality, Ghana. It describes the research design, population, sampling procedures, instruments for data collection, validity and reliability, data collection procedure and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the

Standards-Based PE curriculum. The use of mixed methods was chosen for its strength in providing a more complete understanding of research problems by combining numeric trends with detailed narrative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative strand offered measurable insights into the frequency and severity of implementation challenges while the qualitative strand provided in-depth understanding of the teachers' lived experiences. This integration enabled a comprehensive analysis that supports actionable recommendations for improving PE curriculum delivery.

In adopting the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the study first collected and analyzed quantitative data via a structured questionnaire to quantify prevalent challenges in implementing the Standards-Based PE curriculum, followed by qualitative data from focus group discussions to elucidate patterns. Accordingly, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) characterize this design as one where quantitative results establish a general overview, with subsequent qualitative inquiry serving to explain, refine or contextualize the findings through deeper respondents' narratives. This approach yielded richer insights into the underlying causes of implementation barriers, bolstering interpretive depth and credibility as Johnson et al. (2007) affirm that such integration capitalizes on the complementary strengths of both paradigms to mitigate individual method limitations and enhance the overall understanding.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of public basic school teachers teaching (Basic 1-6) and school heads in the Effutu Municipality. The study surveyed a total of 232 teachers across three circuits in the Effutu Municipality: 70 from the East Circuit (8 schools), 65 from the Central Circuit (7 schools) and 97 from the West Circuit (11 schools). This sampling reflects proportional representation, with the West Circuit contributing the largest share due to its higher number of schools, ensuring coverage of diverse institutional contexts within the municipality.

A census sampling approach was utilized for the quantitative phase, encompassing all 232 eligible teachers from the 26 basic schools across Effutu Municipality's three circuits, ensuring comprehensive representation without exclusion. Of the 232 individuals in the population, 219 who responded to the quantitative data collection

instrument were used as actual respondents. To complement the qualitative data, purposive sampling targeted information-rich cases per Patton (2015), selecting three school heads and three Professional Learning Community (PLC) secretaries (who are also teachers) from each circuit for overarching insights into supervisory and collaborative dynamics. In effect, 18 teachers (six per circuit-specific session) from the sample of 219 participated in three homogeneous focus group discussions (East, Central, West), facilitating circuit-tailored deliberations on implementation barriers and yielding subtlety, contextually grounded explanations of survey patterns.

Instruments

The study employed a structured questionnaire and a focus group discussion guide as data collection instruments. The questionnaire incorporated both closed-ended items, employing a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) to quantify teachers' perceptions of implementation challenges, as Boone and Boone (2012) advocate for its reliability in measuring attitudes through ordinal data aggregation and non-parametric analysis like medians. Conversely, the focus group discussion guide facilitated in-depth exploration of contextual nuances, capturing participants' subjective experiences and rationales behind quantitative trends. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasize that such qualitative interviewing elicits lived meanings and interpretive depth, transcending measurable metrics to reveal underlying implementation dynamics.

Validity and Reliability

To maintain validity and reliability in the quantitative part, a pilot test was done in an adjacent district. To resolve emerged ambiguous items, modifications were done. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which showed good reliability with values above 0.79, as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Appropriate trustworthiness was ensured in the qualitative part through triangulation, member checks and peer debriefing as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the 219-teacher questionnaire sheets were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, via the SPSS software (version 26). Of the 232 individuals in

the population, 219 responded, yielding a strong return rate. Qualitative data from three focus group discussions underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive model: (1) familiarization through repeated reading, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Quantitative trends were interpreted alongside qualitative narratives for better clarity.

Ethical Clearance

This study adhered to ethical considerations outlined in the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) 2011 Code of Ethics, which mandates professional standards emphasizing voluntary informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality of participant data and equitable treatment across diverse stakeholders. AERA guidelines require researchers to secure explicit participant approval after full disclosure of study purposes, risks and benefits while minimizing coercion and ensuring anonymity through coded responses. Ethical clearance was sought from the University of Cape Coast Review Board-ID (UCCIRB/CES/2023/42) before proceeding with data collection. Research permission was obtained from the Effutu Municipal Director of Education. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents and participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured and data was stored safely and used for academic purposes only.

Results and Discussion

The findings section begins with the presentation of the demographic factors of the respondents. Thereafter, data analysis is guided by research questions.

Demographic Findings

The demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in the study provide contextual information about gender, age, teacher qualification and teaching experience. Furthermore, the demographic composition has significant implications for understanding the challenges encountered in the implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum. Factors such as age, gender, academic qualification, and teaching experience all play a role in shaping teachers' readiness, capacity and attitudes towards curriculum delivery.

A total of 219 teachers participated in the study, with the majority being female (61.2%) while males

constituted only 38.8%. This gender distribution reflects a female-dominated participation in the study. With respect to age, the data show that a bigger portion of the participants (47.9%) were between the ages of 30 and 39. This age group typically represents a relatively younger and active workforce with some professional experience, making them more likely to adapt to new curricular reforms. Additionally, 26% of the respondents were aged 20–29 while 21% were in the 40–49 age group. Only 5% were 50 years or older. The predominance of younger teachers suggests that while there is openness to innovation and policy shifts, there may

also be gaps in experience that could affect the practical implementation of a new curriculum, especially in a subject like PE that requires both theoretical understanding and applied skills.

In terms of academic qualifications, a majority of the teachers (63.9%) held bachelor's degrees, followed by 25.1% with diplomas and 10.5% with master's degrees. This qualification profile indicates that most of the teachers are professionally trained and likely have a solid foundation for interpreting and delivering curriculum content.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Sub-Scales	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	85	38.8
	Female	134	61.2
	Total	219	100.0
Age	20-29	57	26.0
	30-39	105	47.9
	40-49	46	21.0
	50+	11	5.0
	Total	219	100.0
Academic Qualification	Diploma	55	25.1
	Bachelor's Degree	140	63.9
	Masters	23	10.5
	Others	1	0.5
	Total	219	100.0
Teaching Experience	1-5	60	27.4
	6-10	43	19.6
	11 and above	116	53.0
	Total	219	100.0

Teaching experience was another key variable in the demographic profile. More than half of the respondents (53.0%) had 11 years and above of teaching experience while 27.4% had between one and five years and 19.6% had between six and ten years of experience. The high proportion of experienced teachers suggests a depth of institutional knowledge that could support the implementation of the Standards-Based PE curriculum.

Research Question: What challenges are encountered by teachers in the delivery of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in Effutu Municipality, Ghana?

This research question sought to unveil challenges teachers encounter in the implementation of the Standard-Based Physical Education Curriculum. The results in Table 2 (p. 47) present the mean scores and standard deviations of various challenges encountered in the implementation of the

Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum, categorized into institutional, teacher-related and student-related challenges.

The mean indicates the average response of participants on a 5-point Likert scale (where higher scores reflect stronger agreement that the challenge exists). The standard deviation reflects the degree of variability in responses; a higher standard deviation implies greater disagreement or agreement among the respondents. Mean scores were interpreted using a five-point scale in which values between 1.00 and 1.49 indicated strong disagreement, between 1.50 and 2.49 indicated disagreement, between 2.50 and 3.49 indicated neutrality, between 3.50 and 4.49 indicated agreement and between 4.50 and 5.00 indicated strong agreement. Standard deviation values below 0.50 reflected very high consensus, values between 0.50 and 0.99 indicated moderate consensus and values of 1.00 or more signaled low consensus among respondents.

Institutional-Related Challenges

The quantitative results show that institutional barriers were the most severe, with lack of facilities and equipment emerging as the highest-rated challenge ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.94$). Teachers consistently indicated that schools lacked even basic instructional resources. This numerical pattern corresponds with qualitative narratives, in which some respondents described relying on improvised materials during routine instruction due to the absence of standard equipment. One teacher

reported: “After training students with socks and rubber balls, a leather ball was brought for competition. This is frustrating”. Adding his voice, another teacher lamented: “I also use improvised sticks as batons only to face real batons during inter-schools sports competitions.” Clearly, these instances may create a stark mismatch between practice conditions and performance expectations of learners. Another teacher explained: “We don’t have any materials for PE except two footballs, which were donated by a philanthropist.”

Table 2: Challenges affecting the Delivery of Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum

S/N	Institutional Related Challenges	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
1.	Lack of facilities and equipment/infrastructure	4.57	0.94	Strong Agreement
2.	Budget constraints and funding to run the unit.	4.47	0.93	Agreement
3.	Insufficient number of Physical Education staff	4.47	0.94	Agreement
4.	Quality of facilities/ substandard facilities in schools	4.33	1.01	Agreement
5.	Large class sizes leading to overcrowding	4.16	1.18	Agreement
6.	PE/sport not priorities in school	4.16	1.09	Agreement
7.	Lack of performance measures for PE	4.09	1.07	Agreement
8.	Support from other staff and administration	3.94	1.04	Agreement
9.	Access to professional development	3.90	1.11	Agreement
10.	Crowded or overloaded content in the curriculum	3.80	1.21	Agreement
Overall Institutional Related Challenges		4.19	0.69	Agreement
Teacher Related Challenges		Mean	Std. Dev	
11.	Expertise/qualifications	3.99	1.02	Agreement
12.	Difficulty of providing safely planned and structured lessons	3.77	1.15	Agreement
13.	Attitudes/perception toward PE	3.75	1.16	Agreement
14.	Interest in/enthusiasm for PE	3.67	1.25	Agreement
15.	Personal school experiences in PE	3.51	1.22	Agreement
16.	Confidence in teaching Physical education	3.51	1.19	Agreement
17.	Gender stereotyping of activities	3.40	1.18	Neutral
Overall, Teacher Related Challenges		3.72	0.83	Agreement
Student Related Challenges		Mean	Std. Dev	
18.	Lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	3.82	1.27	Agreement
19.	Lack of interest in the subject	3.77	1.38	Agreement
20.	Intrapersonal barriers	3.63	1.16	Agreement
21.	Expressed dislike for activity	3.42	1.26	Neutral
22.	Lack of student engagement	3.38	1.19	Neutral
Overall Student Related Challenges		3.60	0.98	Agreement

These narratives reinforce the strong quantitative consensus that physical resource gaps undermine instructional quality. This anecdote exemplifies a critical mismatch between training regimens reliant on improvised materials and the rigors of standardized competition, fostering frustration and suboptimal skill transfer among learners. Research corroborates that such discrepancies impair motor skill acquisition and performance, as improvised substitutes like socks fail to replicate the weight, bounce and control dynamics of regulation equipment, leading to technique inconsistencies under pressure (Méndez-Giménez et al., 2023).

Budgetary constraints and inadequate PE staffing (both $M = 4.47$) further illustrate systemic deficits. Teachers attributed these shortcomings to insufficient government commitment, noting “the absence of capitation grants and lack of financial support for PE initiatives.” The quantitative consensus on financial inadequacy is substantiated by qualitative evidence pointing to erratic funding and the absence of deliberate resource allocation. Studies in Ghana consistently highlight resource scarcity, limited government investment and infrastructural decay as core barriers to effective PE delivery (Mensah & Ofori, 2019; Akpalu & Osei-

Tutu, 2020; Adu-Gyamfi & Asare, 2021; Donkor, 2024), aligning closely with the study findings.

The insufficient number of qualified PE staff ($M = 4.47$) was also emphasized in a focus group discussion. A teacher admitted, "I am not a trained physical educationist... there are certain technical things I cannot teach." A head teacher also added that no PE teacher has ever been posted to her school since she became the head: "I always appoint one of the young men to help with PE activities." This finding reflects broader evidence that unqualified or underprepared teachers compromise instructional standards and reduce academic learning time (Lund & Tannehill, 2010).

Overcrowded classes ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.18$) and poor-quality facilities ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.01$) critically impede PE lesson delivery, aligning with prior research linking large enrolments and substandard environments to heightened safety risks, diminished supervision and suboptimal instructional efficacy (Owusu-Ansah & Antwi, 2020b). Both datasets corroborate that institutional constraints, including resource scarcity, staffing deficits, funding shortfalls and infrastructure decay constitute the paramount barriers to Standards-Based P E curriculum rollout (Akpalu et al., 2025a). A participant reported: "Our school playground is overgrown with weeds and floods during rains, forcing us to cancel PE lessons entirely. In collaboration, another added: "We don't have a gym. We plead with authorities to build one for us. Our classrooms are also not good. We need help."

Sub-standard facilities represent the most pressing institutional barrier to Standards-Based PE curriculum implementation, with a mean score of 4.33 ($SD = 1.01$), indicating near-universal agreement among Effutu Municipality teachers that poor-quality infrastructure such as dilapidated fields and absent multipurpose spaces severely affects practical instruction. These accounts underscore how dilapidated infrastructure forces lesson cancellations and reliance on unsuitable spaces, mirroring Ghanaian studies where facility deficits hinder psychomotor learning and teacher morale (Akpalu et al., 2025b; Baba, 2012).

Large class sizes ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.18$) and PE's reprioritization in schools ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.09$) tie as a key obstacles, where overcrowding hampers individualized supervision and risk management while administrative bias toward examinable subjects erodes allocated time and resources. In this

regard, a teacher lamented, "PE is not on the school timetable and so we don't teach it. The focus is on subjects that are examinable. With over 65 students per class, it's impossible to monitor everyone during activities, leading to frequent injuries." Overcrowding compromises safety and personalization while timetable exclusions reflect administrative bias toward examinable subjects, perpetuating a cycle of neglect as documented in the SBC implementation analyses (Donkor, 2024).

Lack of performance measures ($M = 4.09$) underscores evaluative deficits, as the absence of clear assessment metrics diminishes accountability and teacher motivation compared to core examinable subjects. A teacher remarked: "No one assesses PE teaching quality unlike Math or English, so there is less pressure to improve our teaching of PE." This evaluative void erodes accountability, contrasting PE with prioritized disciplines and aligning with critiques of unmeasured outcomes undermining reform fidelity (Mensah & Asiedu, 2019a).

Lower-rated yet significant issues include limited support from staff/administration ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.04$), inadequate professional development access ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.11$) and curriculum overload ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.21$), collectively signaling systemic under-investment that perpetuates implementation gaps, consistent with Pressman and Wildavsky's findings on resource-policy misalignment. Limited administrative backing and scarce professional development affect the implementation of the SBC in PE. In alignment with this shortcoming, a participant commented, "We haven't had any SBC training workshops in PE since the implementation of the new curriculum." This signals systemic neglect, echoing Pressman and Wildavsky's (1984) warnings on feasibility-policy disconnects.

Teacher-Related Challenges

The quantitative data shows that teacher-related challenges were also substantial (overall $M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.83$), though less severe than institutional constraints. Lack of expertise or qualification ranked highest ($M = 3.99$), indicating widespread gaps in content knowledge and pedagogical skill. Interview responses reinforced this trend, with teachers openly acknowledging limited confidence, lack of training and difficulty planning PE lessons. A participant admitted, "I lack confidence and interest... the activities are too stressful. I tell the learners to go out and play while I sit to supervise

them.” Another respondent reported, “I am not too familiar with the terminologies and so I find it difficult to plan lessons.” These narratives align with research showing that inadequate teacher preparation directly lowers instructional quality and compromises student engagement (Mensah & Asiedu, 2019b; Koomson & Adjei, 2020; Donkor, 2024).

The quantitative findings on negative attitudes ($M = 3.75$), lack of enthusiasm ($M = 3.67$) and low confidence ($M = 3.51$) are corroborated by comments reflecting fear of embarrassment and perceived irrelevance of the subject. A participant remarked, “The students have been playing already... Why should I be teaching them what they know to do better than I do?” This belief signals low professional self-efficacy and misperceptions regarding the purpose of PE, both identified in literature as major predictors of poor instructional practice (Wallhead & Ntoumanis, 2004). The combination of insufficient training, negative attitudes and limited pedagogical competence produces inconsistent instructional practices. The relatively high SD values reflect varying levels of preparation among teachers, which were also evident in the qualitative narratives. Both data strands confirm that teacher-related barriers stem largely from inadequate professional grounding and affective dispositions, requiring targeted CPD, mentoring and stronger pre-service preparation.

Student-Related Challenges

Student-related challenges were rated moderately high (overall $M = 3.60$), with lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation topping the list ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.27$). Teachers described learners as disengaged, uncertain and discouraged, especially when they lacked early exposure to structured PE. A head teacher observed, “the catch-them-young concept has not been developed,” resulting in misconceptions and poor attitudes. Other highlighted intrapersonal barrier was that students “feel inadequate and lack confidence... their preconception of their inabilities has a big role.” These qualitative insights strongly support the quantitative evidence of low interest ($M = 3.77$) and intrapersonal challenges ($M = 3.63$).

The findings were in tandem with Bailey et al.’s (2009) findings that early positive experiences shape attitudes and long-term participation in physical activity. In other words, when learners lack such exposure, disengagement increases and this is

consistent with the current findings. High SD values suggest variation across schools, which is reflected qualitatively in differing teacher accounts of student attitudes. Teachers also expressed safety concerns, with one noting that certain activities were risky and, therefore, motivation was withheld. This highlights the interplay between safety, instructional design and student motivation. Research reinforces that motivation, perceived competence and a sense of safety are critical determinants of active engagement in PE (Bandura, 1997; Hardman, 2011). Although student-related challenges ranked lowest among the three categories, they remain influential, particularly in relation to psychological barriers and early exposure deficits.

Generally, both quantitative and qualitative strands converge on the conclusion that institutional constraints represent the dominant barrier, driven by acute shortages in facilities, equipment, staffing, and funding. Teacher-related challenges are also significant and largely rooted in limited expertise, low confidence and negative attitudes. Student-related challenges, though comparatively lower, reflect issues of motivation, self-efficacy, safety concerns and weak early engagement. The combined evidence demonstrates that the implementation of the Standards-Based PE curriculum is hampered by a multi-layered challenge structure, where institutional deficits amplify teacher weaknesses and, in turn, affect learner motivation and participation. Therefore, a strategic, system-wide response is required to strengthen resource provision, improve professional capacity and foster positive student attitudes through meaningful early experiences and safe, well-designed lessons.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The findings of this study reaffirm the challenges outlined in existing literature regarding the implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in basic schools. It became evident that the effective delivery of this curriculum is significantly impeded by a range of institutional, teacher-related and student-related challenges. Among the most critical institutional challenges identified were the lack of adequate facilities, equipment and infrastructure, overcrowded classes, limited budgets and an insufficient number of qualified PE staff. These constraints hinder the ability of schools to provide a conducive

environment for practical, engaging and safe PE lessons.

Teacher-related challenges were also found to be substantial. These included inadequate professional training and expertise, which affects teachers' capacity to deliver structured and safe PE sessions. Additionally, negative perceptions of PE, lack of confidence and issues related to gender stereotyping in teaching practices further constrained teachers' effectiveness. These factors suggest that even when resources are made available, if teachers lack the necessary skills, motivation and inclusive practices, curriculum goals may still not be achieved. On the part of students, the major barriers included low intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, limited interest in PE as a subject and poor levels of engagement during lessons. These challenges are often linked to broader social attitudes and institutional neglect of PE as a core academic component. The students' lack of enthusiasm can reduce participation and learning outcomes, thereby undermining the goals of the Standards-Based PE curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is required to address the challenges. It is recommended that the Effutu Municipal Directorate of Education and school leadership prioritize investment in physical infrastructure and sports equipment and allocate sufficient budgetary resources specifically for PE. Additionally, teacher training programs should be intensified to equip PE instructors with up-to-date pedagogical and safety skills while also addressing negative attitudes and stereotypes surrounding the subject. Moreover, interventions should be designed to enhance student motivation through inclusive and engaging PE activities. Awareness campaigns, peer-led activities and diversified lesson formats may help increase interest and participation. Addressing institutional, teacher and student-related challenges holistically will lead to the successful implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum, ensuring that learners benefit fully in a structured and supportive school environment.

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