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## The Foundation of Physical Education in Girls' Primary Schools of Iran

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the present research is to examine the condition of physical education in the girls' primary schools of Iran. The research is descriptive and the population consists of all the teachers of girls' primary schools of which 40 schools were selected using cluster sampling and the sample consists of 100 teachers in these schools. A researcher-made questionnaire has been used to collect the raw data. The validity of the questionnaire was approved by the relevant experts and its reliability was calculated to be 0.76 using Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis and all the operations were done in SPSS 19. The results showed that children have less physical activity than the past and not all of them have the ability to use the programs of sport clubs and centers. It is thus suggested that physical education teachers with high academic degrees be used in order to make the physical education course more dynamic and maintain the health of students at the first to third grade.*

**Key words:** Physical Education, Primary Schools.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Feiman-Nemser (2001), teacher quality is considered to be dependent on what teachers learn to teach and how they implement their learning into their classes across their teaching career. Responding to trends that emphasize acquisition of a certain degree of teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions that guarantee teacher quality, several sets of standards across the teaching career have been developed and implemented to put the nation on a path of improvement in teaching and learning [1]. The area of physical education is also responsible for responding to the demands of current educational issues. Physical education teacher educators have recognized the significance of adequate preparation of teachers for highly qualified teaching performance [2]. Considering these specific needs of beginning physical educators, involvement in a high-quality induction program including mentors from the same content area is important [3, 4]. The Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute report that over one-half of Canadian children and youths five to 17 years of age are not active enough for healthy growth and development [5]. The Active Healthy Kids Canada 2009 Report Card highlights that 87% of children and youth are not meeting Canada's physical activity guideline of 90 min of physical activity per day [6]. A recent study conducted in the United States, involving children between nine and 13 years of age, reported that 61.5% did not participate in any organized physical activity and 22.6% did not partake in any free-time physical activities during nonschool hours [7]. Given that inactivity is highly prevalent in school-aged children [5], the finding that the DPA initiative has been successfully implemented in all of the elementary schools surveyed in Calgary, provides evidence that government-sponsored school-based initiatives may be one means of increasing the physical activity level of

school aged children. Support for the success of such initiatives can also be found in the Annual Report on Ontario's Schools 2008 [8].

Eighty per cent of Calgary schools offered daily physical education; whereas across Canada, only 20% of children received daily physical education in school [9]. Lee et al reported that only 3.8% of elementary schools in the United States provided daily physical education for students in all grades, and 30.7% of elementary schools did not even require physical education in the curriculum. It is also of note that Calgary elementary school children were more likely to have recess compared with children in elementary schools in the United States. 94.5% of Calgary elementary schools offered daily recess for all grades in the school, whereas only 74% of American elementary schools provided regularly scheduled recess for all grades [10]. Given the fact that more than 30 collaborating organizations, including the Canadian Pediatric Society and the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend daily physical education and physical activity from kindergarten through grade 12, it seems imperative that schools provide this to their students [11]. To improve the outcomes of school-based physical activity initiatives, areas of service provision, such as teacher training and curriculum development, need be addressed. A study by Nader found that children taught by classroom teachers spent a greater proportion of class time standing and walking than children who were taught by physical education specialists [12]. McKenzie et al reported that having a standardized physical education curriculum along with staff development resulted in students engaging in more moderate to vigorous physical activity in existing physical education classes [13]. The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends that daily physical education classes be taught by qualified, trained educators [11]. Unfortunately, only 47% of the Calgary elementary schools that participated in the related study had a physical education specialist, although this is superior to the rest of the country. Across Canada, 39% of schools report having a physical education specialist [14], whereas in Ontario, 44% of elementary schools have a physical education specialist [8]. In the United States, 85.7% of elementary physical education classes had a teacher who was licensed to teach physical education at the elementary school level, although the number of schools with a physical education teacher was not reported [10]. In the present study, the researcher has tried to analyze the demographic characteristics of the sample to examine the condition of physical education in girls' primary schools in Tehran from the viewpoint of the teachers.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present research is descriptive. The population consists of all the teachers of girls' primary schools of which 40 schools were selected using cluster sampling and the sample consists of 100 female teachers in these schools. A researcher-made questionnaire has been used to collect the raw data. The validity of the questionnaire was approved by experts in the field of sport management with knowledge of statistics and research methodology after a few modifications. Then, the internal validity of the questionnaire was calculated in a sample of 30 participants from the studied population using Cronbach's alpha and the result was 0.74. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. In the present research, the data related to the general characteristics of the respondents (age, gender, experience, education, and type of employment) are descriptively analyzed using tables and figures and in the end the items in the questionnaire are analyzed. It must be noted that all the operations are done in SPSS 19.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings of the research, 15% of the respondents were under 25 years old, 21% were in the range of 26-33 years, 33% were in the range of 34-41 years, 21% were in the range of 42-49 years, 6% were older than 50 years, and 4% did not respond to the question. 19% of the respondents had high school diploma, 33% had associate's degree, 45% had bachelor's degree, and 3% had master's degree. 63% of the respondents studied in the field of physical education (PE), 35% in fields other than PE, and 2% did not respond. As for working experience, 47% had 1-5 years of experience, 20% had 6-10 years of experience, 14% had 11-15 years of experience, 9% had 16-20 years of experience, and 8% had more than 20 years of teaching physical education in elementary schools. 2% of the participants did not respond to this question. The number of hours the participants taught in elementary schools was as follows: 31% of the respondents teach for 1-4 hours a week, 31% teach for 5-9 hours a week, 30% teach for 10-14 hours a week, and 5% teach for more than 15 hours a week; 3% of the participants did not respond to this question. 19% of the respondents had administrative responsibility in elementary schools and 79% had no such responsibility. 2% of the respondents did not answer this question. 61% of the teachers were officially recruited, 16% were contractual, 12% were tuitional, and 5% did not respond. 28% of the respondents were highly satisfied with their job, 27% had moderate levels of job satisfaction, 10% had low levels of job satisfaction, and 9% were hardly satisfied with their job. 14% of the respondents stated that they teach other courses besides physical

education, 82% only teach the course of physical education, and 4% did not respond. While 5% of the respondents stated that there are a large number of specialized human resources teaching at the elementary level, 31%, 28%, and 25% of the respondents respectively stated that there are many, few, and very few human resources specialized in the field of physical education. 10% of the participants were unaware and 1% did not respond.

**Table 1 – Specialized human resources that teach physical education**

Specialized human resources that teach physical education	Frequency	Percentage
A large number	5	5%
Many	31	31%
Few	28	28%
Very few	25	25%
No idea	10	10%
No answer	1	1%

The instruments available to the schools for the course of physical education include: different types of balls (volleyball, basketball, and handball) in 98% of the schools, shuttlecock and badminton rackets in 40% of the schools, table tennis ball and bats in 65% of the schools, tables for table tennis in 35% of the schools, sit-ups pad in 45% of the schools, cone-shaped obstacles in 55% of the schools, hula hoop in 65% of the schools, ropes in 80% of the schools, chess in 70% of the schools, pull-up bars in 30% of the schools, chronometer in 75% of the schools, handball goal in 10% of the schools, and educational CDs in 4% of the schools.

**Table 2 – Educational instruments available to schools**

Instruments	Frequency	Percentage
Different types of balls (volleyball, basketball, and handball)	98	98%
Shuttlecock and badminton rackets	43	43%
Table tennis ball and bats	65	65%
Tables for table tennis	37	37%
Sit-ups pad	46	46%
Cone-shaped obstacles	59	59%
Hula hoop	62	62%
Ropes	81	81%
Chess	72	72%
Pull-ups bar	36	36%
Chronometer	78	78%
Handball goal	13	13%
Educational CDs	44	44%

The facilities available in the schools include: small schoolyard (100%), volleyball field (60%), basketball field (45%), badminton field (10%), and gymnasium (15%).

**Table 3 – The available facilities**

Facilities	Frequency	Percentage
Small schoolyard	100	15%
Volleyball field	60	23%
Basketball field	45	18%
Badminton field	10	26%
Gymnasium	15	18%

23% of the teachers reported that each student receives less than half a square meter as per capita outdoor space, while 22% reported half to one square meter, 10% reported 1 to 1.5 square meters, 12% reported 1.5 to 2 square meters, and 28% reported that each student receives a 2-square-meter outdoor space. 5% of the teachers did not respond to this question.

**Table 4 –Per capita outdoor space**

Per capita outdoor space	Frequency	Percentage
Less than half a square meter	23	23%
0.5-1 square meter	22	22%
1-1.5 square meters	10	10%
1.5-2 square meters	12	12%
More than 2 square meters	28	28%
No response	5	5%

71% of the teachers reported that there is no indoor space for sport and the course of physical education in schools. 11% reported that each student receives less than half a square meter, 5% reported a 0.5-1 square meter of indoor space per capita, and 8% reported that each student receives more than 1 square meter of indoor space. 5% of the teachers did not respond to this question.

**Table 5 – Per capita indoor space**

Per capita indoor space	Frequency	Percentage
Zero	71	71%
Half a square meter	11	11%
0.5-1 square meter	5	5%
More than 1 square meter	8	8%
No response	5	5%

### CONCLUSION

Measures must be taken to train and supply teachers of physical education in order to increase the dynamics of the course, maintain the health of first to third grade students, and increase their physical abilities; teachers who are not only interested in the course and familiar with the physical and mental characteristics of students, but also have enough mastery over the theories of motion and sport sciences. Unfortunately today's children are less physically active and not all of them can afford to use the sport programs of sport clubs and sport centers. Further, they are not nutritionally healthy and consume foods high in fat, salt, and sugar [15]. Thus, they will face a lot of health problems in the future unless this trend is modified with the help of parents, teachers, policy-makers, and health experts. Considering the current condition of sport in schools and the measures taken in this regard, and taking into account the problems, challenges, the outlook of sports, and the necessity of meeting the requirements of Iran's 20-Year Outlook, a solution must be found for the current predicament and strategies must be provided for achieving the ultimate goals of physical education. Thus, the purpose of this report is to notify the officials and representatives of the parliament regarding the importance of sport at the elementary level and also to provide suggestions that may contribute to the growth and development of sport in schools.

1. Formulation of the course of physical education and sports and revision in the current course along with needs assessment for course hours.
2. Arrangement of extracurricular programs with certain purposes for different educational, skill, and developmental dimensions and creating motivation among students to participate in such programs.
3. Training sport teachers, resolving the shortcomings in knowledge, expertise, and skills of present teachers, and supplying the teachers with respect to the advances in the contemporary sport programs around the world.
4. Paying fundamental attention to sport and physical education at the elementary level and meeting the needs of sport teachers at this level.
5. Making proper use of sporting spaces in schools at extracurricular hours for recreation as well as education.
6. Coordination among public organizations for providing sport facilities for students at school hours.
7. Formulation of a sport system specific to schoolgirls that will use sports appropriate for them in order to promote physical development and health.
8. Reinforcing the public aspect of sport along with a scouting system for identifying and developing talents.
9. Creating a system that will guide talented student athletes toward championship at the national level and will resolve the current shortcomings in sports.
10. Paying attention to the need of adolescents for finding physical identity at educational and championship levels.
11. Reinforcing research on sports in schoolchildren and applying the scientific findings of such research in development and modification of administrative plans.

12. Supporting the intramural, intermural, local, and regional tournaments that will lead students to national and international tournaments.
13. Formulation of a system that will revive local and traditional games in schools with respect to the motivation and interest of students.
14. Laying the ground for coordination between educational and sport courses in order to improve the quality of learning.
15. Preventing the excessive development of student championship institutions that distracts the attention of officials from sport and physical education in schools to international tournaments.
16. Assessment of the actual budget necessary for administering sport programs in schools and creating an annual budget that is commensurate to the expectations of schools.

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