

Classroom Practices of Basic School Teachers in the Implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum in Public Basic Schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana

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Abstract

This study scrutinizes the classroom practices of public basic school teachers in implementing the Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum in public schools within the Effutu Municipality, Ghana, through the lens of Ecological Systems Theory. Employing a census approach, all teachers teaching physical education in the municipality participated, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the target population. A structured questionnaire adapted from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section A gathered biographic data, while section B included thirty statements assessing teachers' classroom practices on a 5-point Likert scale. Analysis of the data revealed a diverse range of classroom practices, with teachers scoring highest in learner planning ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.48$) and assessment ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.45$), followed closely by feedback ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.50$), motivation and discipline ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.53$), and reflection ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.63$). Notably, professional learning community/continuous professional development was identified as the least practiced area ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.94$). The overall mean for classroom practices was ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.38$). The findings highlight that while learner planning is the dominant practice among teachers, there is a significant need to enhance engagement in Professional Learning Communities to foster continuous development. The study underscores the relevance of addressing gaps in professional development to improve the implementation of physical education curricula.

Keywords

Classroom, Practices, Standards-Based Curriculum, Physical Education

1. Introduction

In the face of rapid global changes, the challenges brought about by globalization and modernization have profound implications for individuals and societies (Buchholz, Hofäcker, Mills, Blossfeld, Kurz, & Hofmeister, 2008: pp. 53-71; Donkor, 2024). Recognizing this, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has acknowledged the need for high-quality education, irrespective of individuals' socio-cultural, economic, or religious backgrounds (UNICEF, 2021). Consequently, education systems worldwide have undergone significant reforms to transform classrooms into active learning environments that equip students with lifelong cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving (Bentil, 2021: pp. 45-62; Gelmez-Burakgazi, 2020: pp. 294-314).

The government of Ghana has instituted a range of educational initiatives in accordance with the goals of Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Asamoah, 2024). The nation's commitment to ensuring inclusive and equitable access to high-quality education is demonstrated by various initiatives, including the capitation grant, school feeding program, free exercise books and uniforms, and free senior high school education. These measures also support opportunities for lifelong learning for all. A high-quality education is essential for generating human capital, which powers economic progress, and for enabling people to adjust to the changing demands of the nation. According to this viewpoint, education helps people develop the skills, dispositions, and actions that society values, so they can meet the demands of the labour market and promote social equality.

The Ghanaian government has made huge investments in education, aimed to equip its citizens with the information and skills required to contribute efficiently to national development. Through inclusive and equitable education, Ghana strives to address social inequalities, empower individuals, and promote social cohesion. Quality education also fosters creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, preparing individuals to circumnavigate the intricacies of the contemporary world and participate actively in shaping a sustainable future. As the world evolves, the importance of high-quality education becomes increasingly evident. Ghana's commitment to education reforms and interventions reflects its dedication to providing inclusive, equitable, and quality education to all its citizens. By investing in education, Ghana seeks to develop human capital, foster social progress, and drive economic growth while preparing individuals to overcome the issues and opportunities of a fluctuating world.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA, 2019) in Ghana have developed the Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum as part of their efforts to provide a well-rounded

education for the holistic development and well-being of every child. As a vital part of the curriculum, physical education aims to build a variety of abilities and qualities that support each person's entire development. This inclusive approach caters to the diverse needs of learners, including those with learning or physical disabilities, ecological or ethnic disadvantages, as well as gifted learners. The ultimate goal is to empower individuals to embrace a lifelong commitment to physical activity, fostering a culture of wellness and healthy living beyond the educational setting. Additionally, physical education plays a role in promoting increased productivity reducing healthcare costs, absenteeism, and corruption, among other benefits (NaCCA, 2019).

The Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum is grounded in a learning philosophy that adopts a social constructivist approach. It aims to help students actively construct knowledge and apply it for personal and community improvement. The curriculum emphasizes values such as respect, awareness of diversity, equity, fairness, commitment to excellence, cooperation, teamwork, truth, and honesty, which are essential for graduates of physical education programs to demonstrate (NaCCA, 2019). The Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum in Ghana, developed by the MoE and NaCCA, recognized the importance of physical education for the holistic development and well-being of learners. It caters to diverse needs and aims to instill values that promote personal growth, community engagement, and a culture of wellness.

Classroom practice refers to an array of instructional methods, strategies, and techniques that teachers deploy in the classroom to facilitate student learning. This can include the ways in which teachers deliver instruction, manage the classroom environment, assess student learning, provide feedback, and foster engagement and motivation. Investigating the nature of classroom practices among teachers teaching the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana. It is warranted to uncover progress or otherwise. Effective learner planning is a cornerstone of standards-based curricula, as it enables teachers to align their instructional objectives and strategies with the curricular standards (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005a; Shepard, 2000: pp. 4-14). This alignment is crucial for designing engaging and meaningful learning experiences that support student achievement (Marzano, 2003).

The literature has a wealth of evidence supporting the advantages of efficient learner planning. Incorporating formative and summative assessments to track student progress (Black & Wiliam, 1998: pp. 7-74), developing differentiated instructional approaches to meet the needs of each individual student (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2012: pp. 309-327), and providing timely and focused feedback to support student learning (Hattie, 2008) are all made possible when teachers engage in thorough learner planning. But, learner planning can also be difficult for instructors, especially when a standards-based curriculum is being implemented. Instructors may find it difficult to interpret the curricular standards, translate them into precise learning objectives (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), match

teaching methods and assessment procedures with the standards (Popham, 2009: pp. 4-11), and differentiate instruction to fit the needs of each student.

Notwithstanding these challenges, research suggests several best practices that can be adapted to overcome them; among them is collaborative lesson planning. Vescio et al. (2008: pp. 80-91) indicated that encouraging teachers to engage in collaborative lesson planning within professional learning communities (PLCs) can foster a shared understanding of the standards, promote the exchange of effective strategies, and support the development of differentiated instructional plans. Providing targeted professional development opportunities that focus on standards interpretation, backward design, and differentiated instruction can enhance the teachers' capacity to engage in effective learner planning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Using research-based instructional frameworks can help teachers plan for learners and ensure that objectives, assessments, and learning activities are all in alignment. Examples of such frameworks are Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) and the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Fisher & Frey, 2013).

The implementation of a standards-based curriculum is predicated on the premise that clearly articulated learning goals and expectations are essential for guiding instruction and promoting student achievement. However, the effectiveness of a standards-based curriculum is largely dependent on the implementation of robust assessment practices that align with the stated standards and objectives. One of the key arguments for the importance of assessment in a standards-based curriculum is the need to ensure that students are mastering the intended learning outcomes. Assessments, both formative and summative, provide teachers with invaluable data on student progress and understanding, allowing them to tailor their instruction to meet the specific needs of their learners (Shepard, 2000: pp. 4-14; Stiggins, 2005). Without a comprehensive assessment system, teachers may struggle to identify areas where students are excelling or struggling, making it challenging to provide the targeted support and interventions necessary for student success. Furthermore, assessment takes centre stage in validating the effectiveness of the standards-based curriculum itself. By analyzing student performance data across various assessment measures, educators and policymakers can evaluate the extent to which the curriculum is meeting its intended goals and objectives (Marzano, 2006). This information can then be used to make informed decisions about curriculum revisions, resource allocation, and professional development needs, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of the educational program.

In the standards-based physical education curriculum, assessment takes on an even greater significance. The development of motor skills, fitness, and physical literacy are at the core of physical education standards, and assessments must be designed to accurately measure students' progress in these areas (SHAPE America, 2014). Formative assessments, such as observation checklists and performance-based tasks, can provide teachers with real-time feedback on student learning, allowing them to adjust their instructional approaches accordingly. Summative

assessments, on the other hand, can help to evaluate the long-term impact of the curriculum and inform program-level decision-making.

Moreover, assessment in a standards-based physical education curriculum can foster student engagement and motivation. When students are aware of the specific learning targets and their progress towards them, they are more inclined to take responsibility for their education and make efforts to meet the objectives (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005b: pp. 11-18). This, in turn, can lead to enhanced physical activity participation, improved fitness levels, and a deeper understanding of the value of physical education. The integration of a comprehensive assessment system is crucial for the successful implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum. By aligning assessments with the stated standards and core competencies, teachers can effectively monitor student learning, evaluate the efficacy of the curriculum, and make data-driven decisions to improve the overall quality of physical education programming. This holistic approach to assessment is essential for ensuring that students develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to lead active, healthy lifestyles.

Feedback as a classroom practice is a critical component of the learning process, as it provides students with information about their performance and guides them toward improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007: pp. 81-112). Effective feedback is timely, specific, and focused on the learning task rather than the student as a person (Brookhart, 2008). Studies have shown that feedback that is constructive and promotes self-regulation can lead to significant gains in student learning (Sadler, 1989: pp. 119-144; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006: pp. 199-218). Besides, feedback supports student learning and skill development. In a standards-based physical education curriculum, the development of students' physical skills and motor competencies is of paramount importance. Effective feedback from teachers plays a crucial role in this process. Research has consistently shown that timely, specific, and constructive feedback can significantly improve student learning and skill acquisition (Hattie & Timperley, 2007: pp. 81-112; Metzler, 2017). By providing students with clear and targeted feedback on their performance, teachers can help them identify areas for improvement, reinforce successful techniques, and foster the development of essential physical skills. This feedback-driven approach aligns with the objectives of a standards-based curriculum, which aims to ensure that all students meet the expected benchmarks for physical literacy and motor skill proficiency.

Undoubtedly, student motivation and engagement are critical factors for successful learning outcomes. Feedback from teachers can play a vital role in fostering intrinsic motivation and promoting a mastery-oriented learning environment (Ames, 1992: pp. 261-271; Ryan & Deci, 2000: pp. 68-78). When students receive feedback that is focused on their progress, effort, and mastery of skills, they are more likely to feel competent, autonomous, and engaged in the learning process (Ntoumanis et al., 2004: pp. 197-214). This, in turn, can lead to increased participation, persistence, and a deeper appreciation for physical education among

students. By aligning feedback with the standards-based curriculum, teachers can effectively motivate students to strive for excellence and take ownership of their learning. A standards-based curriculum, by its very nature, aims to provide all students with the opportunity to meet the same performance and learning indicators. However, students may have diverse learning needs, abilities, and preferences. Effective feedback from teachers can enable them to differentiate their instruction and provide personalized support to students (Tomlinson, 2014). By analyzing student performance data and providing targeted feedback, teachers can identify areas where students are struggling or excelling and then adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. This personalized approach, anchored in the standards-based curriculum, ensures that each student receives the necessary support and challenge to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Motivation as a classroom practice is a key factor in student engagement and academic achievement. Research suggests that intrinsic motivation, where students are motivated by their own interests and values, is more effective than extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000: pp. 68-78). Teachers can foster intrinsic motivation by creating meaningful learning experiences, providing autonomy support, and promoting a mastery-oriented classroom environment (Ames, 1992: pp. 261-271; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Student motivation is a key driver of engagement, effort, and learning outcomes. Research has consistently shown that intrinsically motivated students, who are driven by their own interests, values, and sense of competence, consistently outperform their extrinsically motivated counterparts (Ryan & Deci, 2000: pp. 68-78; Ames, 1992: pp. 261-271). When teachers prioritize the cultivation of intrinsic motivation, students are more likely to actively participate, persist in the face of challenges, and develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the content (Ntoumanis et al., 2004: pp. 197-214). This alignment between student motivation and the standards-based curriculum is crucial for ensuring that all learners meet the expected benchmarks for physical literacy and skill development.

Besides, motivation fosters lifelong physical activity and healthy behaviors in children. The ultimate goal of a standards-based physical education curriculum is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to lead active, healthy lifestyles throughout their lives. However, this objective can only be realized if students are intrinsically motivated to engage in physical activity and adopt healthy behaviors. By cultivating student motivation, teachers can instill in their students a genuine sense of enjoyment, competence, and autonomy in physical education (Deci & Ryan, 2000: pp. 227-268). This intrinsic motivation is more likely to translate into sustained physical activity participation and the adoption of healthy habits beyond the classroom, positioning students for long-term success in maintaining a physically active and healthy lifestyle.

A standards-based physical education curriculum aims to provide all students with the opportunity to meet the same learning objectives, regardless of their individual abilities, backgrounds, or previous experiences. However, this inclusive and

equitable approach can only be achieved if teachers are able to effectively motivate all students to engage in the learning process. By employing motivational strategies that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of their students, teachers can create a learning environment where every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed (Ames, 1992: pp. 261-271; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). This inclusive and motivational approach is essential for ensuring that the standards-based curriculum is accessible and meaningful for all learners, promoting the development of physical literacy and healthy behaviors across the entire student population.

Reflective practice is essential for teachers to improve their instructional effectiveness and professional growth (Schön, 1983). Reflective teachers engage in a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection, which allows them to identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions about their teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Research has shown that reflective teachers are more likely to adapt their practices to meet the diverse needs of their students (Dewey, 1933). Reflection Promotes Adaptive and Responsive Teaching Practices:

The implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum requires teachers to be continuously responsive to the diverse learning needs and progress of their students. Reflective practice is essential in this process, as it allows teachers to critically analyze their instructional approaches, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions to enhance student learning (Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Through a cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection, teachers can refine their teaching strategies, adapt their lesson plans, and differentiate their instruction to meet the specific needs of their students. This reflective process ensures that the implementation of the standards-based curriculum remains dynamic, flexible, and aligned with the evolving learning requirements of the students.

Reflection fosters professional growth and continuous improvement. Effective implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum is an ongoing process that requires teachers to engage in continuous professional development and growth. Reflective practice is a crucial component of this professional journey, as it enables teachers to identify their own strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Dewey, 1933; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). By reflecting on their teaching practices, classroom management strategies, and student learning outcomes, teachers can develop a deeper understanding of their professional practice and make informed decisions about their professional development needs. This reflective approach not only enhances the individual teacher's effectiveness but also contributes to the overall improvement of the physical education program, ensuring that it remains aligned with the evolving standards and best practices in the field.

Reflection promotes collaboration and shared best practices. The implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum is often a collaborative effort involving teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Reflective practice can play a pivotal role in fostering this collaboration and facilitating the sharing of best practices (Stoll et al., 2006: pp. 221-258). When teachers engage in

reflective discussions with their colleagues, they can share their experiences, successes, and challenges in implementing the curriculum. This exchange of ideas and insights can lead to the identification of effective teaching strategies, the development of innovative lesson plans, and the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices. By embedding reflective practices within professional learning communities, teachers can collectively contribute to the continuous improvement of the standards-based physical education curriculum, ensuring that all students have access to high-quality instruction and learning opportunities.

Effective classroom management is crucial for creating a positive learning environment and promoting student success (Emmer & Stough, 2001: pp. 103-112). Research suggests that proactive, preventive approaches to classroom management, such as establishing clear expectations and procedures, are more effective than reactive, punitive measures (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Additionally, the use of positive reinforcement and the development of strong teacher-student relationships can contribute to effective classroom discipline (Marzano et al., 2003). The successful implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum is heavily dependent on the establishment of a well-managed and disciplined learning environment. When teachers effectively maintain discipline and classroom management, students are able to focus their attention on the learning tasks and actively engage in the development of physical skills and motor competencies (Emmer & Stough, 2001: pp. 103-112; Marzano et al., 2003). In the context of physical education, where students often participate in dynamic and collaborative activities, the ability to manage student behavior and maintain a safe and orderly classroom is crucial for ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to meet the expected standards and achieve the desired learning outcomes (SHAPE America, 2014). Effective discipline and classroom management strategies, such as establishing clear expectations, using proactive approaches, and fostering positive teacher-student relationships, create the necessary conditions for successful curriculum implementation.

Student motivation and engagement are critical factors in the successful implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum. However, these factors can be significantly undermined by disruptive behavior and a lack of classroom management. When teachers are able to maintain discipline and effectively manage their classrooms, students are more likely to feel safe, supported, and empowered to participate actively in the learning process (Ames, 1992: pp. 261-271; Ntoumanis et al., 2004: pp. 197-214). This, in turn, can lead to increased intrinsic motivation, higher levels of effort and persistence, and a greater sense of ownership over their own learning. By fostering a positive and well-managed learning environment, teachers can create the conditions necessary for students to fully engage with the standards-based curriculum and develop the physical literacy and healthy behaviors that are at the heart of the program.

A fundamental tenet of a standards-based physical education curriculum is the commitment to providing all students with the opportunity to meet the same

learning objectives, regardless of their individual abilities or backgrounds. However, this inclusive approach can only be realized if teachers are able to maintain an orderly and well-managed learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all learners (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Effective discipline and classroom management strategies, such as the use of positive reinforcement and the development of strong teacher-student relationships, can help to create a learning space where all students feel safe, respected, and empowered to participate and succeed (Marzano et al., 2003). By ensuring that the physical education classroom is a place of inclusion and equity, teachers can foster an environment that is conducive to the effective implementation of the standards-based curriculum and the holistic development of physically literate students.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been identified as an effective way for teachers to collaborate, share best practices, and engage in ongoing professional development (DuFour et al., 2016). Studies have shown that participation in PLCs can lead to improved teaching practices, increased student achievement, and enhanced teacher efficacy (Vescio et al., 2008: pp. 80-91; Stoll et al., 2006: pp. 221-258). Effective PLCs are characterized by a focus on student learning, collaborative inquiry, and a commitment to continuous improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Professional learning communities foster collective efficacy and collaborative improvement. The implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires a collective effort from teachers. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) provide a framework for teachers to collaborate, share best practices, and engage in continuous improvement (DuFour et al., 2016). Within a PLC, teachers can collectively analyze student data, identify areas of strength and weakness, and develop innovative instructional strategies to better align their teaching with the curricular standards (Vescio et al., 2008: pp. 80-91). This collaborative approach not only enhances individual teacher efficacy but also cultivates a sense of collective responsibility for student learning and the successful implementation of the standards-based curriculum (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004: pp. 189-209). By fostering a culture of collective efficacy and collaborative problem-solving, PLCs can significantly improve the effectiveness of the standards-based physical education curriculum.

Professional learning communities facilitate the sharing of expertise and best practices. The implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum requires teachers to possess a deep understanding of the content, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices aligned with the curricular standards. Professional Learning Communities provide a platform for teachers to share their expertise, exchange ideas, and learn from one another (Stoll et al., 2006: pp. 221-258). By engaging in regular PLC meetings, teachers can discuss successful lesson plans, analyze student work, and explore evidence-based instructional approaches that have proven effective in the context of the standards-based curriculum (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). This collaborative sharing of knowledge and best practices can help to ensure that all teachers have access to the necessary resources and

support to effectively implement the curriculum and meet the diverse learning needs of their students.

Professional learning communities support ongoing professional development and growth for teachers. The successful implementation of a standards-based physical education curriculum is not a static endeavor; it requires teachers to continuously engage in professional development and growth. Professional Learning Communities can play a crucial role in this process by providing a structured and supportive environment for teachers to reflect on their practice, identify areas for improvement, and access relevant and timely professional development opportunities (Stoll et al., 2006: pp. 221-258). Within the PLC, teachers can engage in peer observations, action research, and collaborative inquiry to enhance their teaching skills, stay informed about the latest trends and best practices in physical education, and ultimately improve their ability to deliver the standards-based curriculum effectively (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). This ongoing professional growth, facilitated by the PLC, ensures that teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to successfully implement the standards-based curriculum and promote student achievement.

The successful implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education (SBPE) curriculum in public basic schools is crucial for promoting physical activity, healthy lifestyles, and holistic student development in Ghana. However, existing research suggests that the implementation of the SBPE curriculum often faces significant challenges, particularly at the classroom level (Ofori-Amanfo & Asmah, 2019: pp. 333-342; Osei-Owusu et al., 2021: pp. 123-144). One of the key challenges identified in the literature is teachers' resistance to change and lack of ownership in the development of the SBPE curriculum (Dzogbenu & Nartey, 2020: pp. 1443-1450). Many basic school teachers in Ghana have been accustomed to traditional, content-focused physical education approaches and may be reluctant to adopt the more student-centered, standards-based pedagogies required by the SBPE curriculum (Acheampong & Essiam, 2021: pp. 98-106). Additionally, teachers' non-involvement in the curriculum development process has been highlighted as a barrier, as it can lead to a lack of buy-in and commitment to the new curricular goals and assessment methods (Ofori-Amanfo & Asmah, 2019: pp. 333-342).

Furthermore, the implementation of the SBPE curriculum has introduced new assessment modules, such as performance-based assessments and the use of student learning outcomes, which can pose challenges for teachers who are accustomed to more traditional testing approaches (Osei-Owusu et al., 2021: pp. 123-144). The lack of adequate training and support in adapting to these new assessment practices can hinder the effective implementation of the SBPE curriculum in the classroom. In the Effutu Municipality of Ghana, where the SBPE curriculum has been introduced, there is a paucity of research examining the specific classroom practices of basic school teachers in implementing this curriculum. Understanding the strategies, challenges, and facilitating factors experienced by teachers in the Effutu Municipality is crucial for identifying targeted interventions to improve the

implementation of the SBPE curriculum and, ultimately, enhance the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development of students.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the classroom practices of basic school teachers in the implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana, with a focus on their classroom practices.

2. Research Question

What is the nature of classroom practices among teachers in the implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana?

3. Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory, also known as the Bioecological Model, was developed and propounded by the renowned psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. This theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human development and behavior within the context of the various environmental systems that influence an individual. The origins of this theory can be traced back to Bronfenbrenner's earlier work in the 1970s, but the most comprehensive formulation of the Ecological Systems Theory was published in his 1979 book "The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design." (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

This theory considers the multiple levels of environmental systems that influence an individual's development and behavior. It examines how the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems (e.g., classroom, school, education system, society) interact to shape an individual's experiences and actions. This framework could be useful in analyzing the various systemic factors, from the classroom to the broader educational policies, that influence the nature of the teachers' classroom practices in the context of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum.

Literature reviews on this theory have highlighted its widespread application and influence across various fields, including psychology, education, sociology, and public health. Researchers have utilized this framework to investigate diverse topics, such as the impact of socioeconomic status on child development, the role of community resources in promoting healthy lifestyles, and the influence of educational policies on student outcomes. Furthermore, the Ecological Systems Theory has been praised for its ability to capture the nuanced and dynamic nature of human-environment interactions, allowing for a more holistic and contextual understanding of individual and societal phenomena. Its emphasis on the interconnectedness of systems has also informed the development of integrated, multi-level interventions and policies aimed at addressing complex social and developmental issues.

The application of ecological systems theory assists in determining the advantages and disadvantages of different environmental systems that affect how teachers carry out the Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum in the classroom. Addressing the unique demands and difficulties in each environmental

system, the results will guide focused interventions and policy recommendations that improve physical education quality and help students meet curricular objectives. Because it offers a thorough framework for comprehending the intricate interactions between variables that affect teaching and learning in a physical education setting, ecological systems theory is extremely important to this subject. The study can aid in the creation of successful, evidence-based interventions and policy recommendations by recognizing and resolving the issues in each environmental system.

4. Methodology

To explore the nature of classroom practices among teachers teaching the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana, using the Ecological Systems Theory as the guiding framework, the study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to appropriately capture the current state of classroom practices and their relationship with various ecological factors.

All teachers currently teaching physical education in the public basic schools within the Effutu Municipality participate in the study through a census approach to ensure a comprehensive representation of the target population. A census is not just a simple count, it often involves complex stratification and the use of more than one data source (Singh & Masuku, 2013: pp. 1-22). Therefore, this study adopted the census sampling technique to provide a historical context or perspective on issues relating to teacher classroom practices with regard to standards-based physical education. The findings could inform targeted interventions, professional development programs, and policy-level changes to support teachers in effectively implementing the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum within their unique educational contexts.

4.1. Data Collection and Analysis

A structured questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire which was adapted from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessments' Standards-Based Physical Education Curriculum, consisted of two (2) sections. Section A covered the demographic information of the respondents, while section B made up thirty (30) statements on levels of teacher classroom practices on a 5-point Likert scale. Jones and Rattray (2010: pp. 368-385) noted that the use of the questionnaire is a quick, convenient, and inexpensive method of collecting standardized information for statistical analysis. Kothari (2006) observed that the questionnaire provides an opportunity to use large samples to collect more reliable data. Therefore, the use of the questionnaire is economical for expending resources in a study.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data in order to determine the distribution and properties of the variables. Correlation analysis to look at the connections between the various ecological elements and the instructional strategies

used by the teachers. Informed consent was required from participants in order to protect their welfare and integrity, which was highly ethical. Giving prospective participants thorough information about the goals, methods, risks, and advantages of the study will enable them to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. This is known as informed consent. The ability to leave the study at any moment without facing any repercussions is granted to participants. Two hundred nineteen (219) of the two hundred and thirty-two (232) questionnaires that were sent were included in the analysis, yielding a response rate of 94.4%. This response rate was reached in part because some respondents did not complete their questionnaires and, in other cases, because some respondents provided incorrect information that could not be used for analysis. Because academics like [Babbie \(2008\)](#) and [Mugenda and Mugenda \(2009\)](#) claimed that at least 50% of respondents are appropriate in online surveys, this response rate was deemed appropriate.

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This sub-strand of the study examined the demographic characteristics of the participants. The distribution of the participants based on sex, age, academic qualification, and experience was investigated, and the results are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants.

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

Source: Fieldwork Data, 2023.

As indicated in [Table 1](#), the data show that out of 219 teachers, 134 (61.2%) were females, while 85 (38.8%) were males. With regards to the age category of

the participants who took part in this study, 105 (47.9%) teachers were within the age bracket of 30 - 39 years, 57 (26.0%) teachers were within the age group of 20 - 29 years; 46 (21.0%) teachers fell within the age group of 40 - 49 years while those who were 50 years and above were 11 accounting for 5.0%. It could be seen that the majority of the respondents fell with 30 - 39 years, which is an indication of a youthful teacher population.

In terms of academic qualification teachers who participated in the study, the data showed that 140 (63.9%) teachers had bachelor's degrees, 55 (25.1%) teachers had diplomas, 23 (10.5%) teachers had master's degrees, while the remaining respondents 1 (0.5%) had other degrees. The composition of the respondents by years of teaching experience showed that most of the 116 teachers, representing 53.0%, had 11 years and above teaching experience; 60 teachers, representing 27.4%, had 1 - 5 years of teaching experience and 43 teachers, representing 19.6% have had 6 - 10 years of teaching experience.

The demographic characteristics were important to the study for two reasons. Firstly, they provided proof that data were collected from teachers who had diverse backgrounds and, therefore, provided rich data devoid of bias. Secondly, the demographic factors were used as the basis for the comparison of participants on their classroom practices and attainment of curriculum goals. The next section presents the results of the analysis of the rest of the data.

4.3. Discussion of the Participant Demographics

The data presented indicate that the majority of the physical education teachers in the public basic schools of the Effutu Municipality, Ghana, are females, representing 61.2% of the sample. This finding aligns with the broader trend in the teaching profession, where women tend to be overrepresented, particularly in the primary and elementary school levels (Drudy, 2008).

The age distribution of the participants further reveals that the teacher population is relatively young, with the majority (47.9%) falling within the 30 - 39 years age bracket. This is consistent with the literature on the age profile of teachers in developing countries, where the teaching workforce is often characterized by a younger demographic (UNESCO, 2020). The predominance of younger teachers in the sample can be interpreted as both a strength and a potential challenge. On the one hand, younger teachers may bring enthusiasm, energy, and fresh perspectives to the implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011: pp. 201-233). Their relative youth may also indicate a recent entry into the profession, potentially suggesting a higher level of exposure to contemporary teaching methodologies and assessment practices. However, the lack of seasoned, experienced teachers in the sample may also pose some challenges. Veteran teachers often possess a deeper understanding of the local context, accumulated knowledge of effective classroom practices, and well-developed professional networks that can facilitate the successful implementation of curriculum reforms (Opfer & Pedder, 2011: pp. 273-287). The relative inexperience of the teacher

population may require targeted professional development and mentorship programs to support their growth and development.

In this context, the literature emphasizes the importance of providing sustained and high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers, particularly those who are relatively new to the profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This can help bridge the gap between the teachers' initial preparation and the ongoing demands of implementing standards-based curricula, such as the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in the Effutu Municipality. Additionally, fostering collaborative learning communities among the teachers, where they can share best practices, engage in peer-to-peer mentoring, and collectively problem-solve, can be a valuable strategy to leverage the strengths of the younger teacher population and support their professional development (Vescio et al., 2008: pp. 80-91).

The data on the academic qualifications of the physical education teachers in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana, reveal that the majority (63.9%) hold bachelor's degrees, followed by those with diplomas (25.1%) and master's degrees (10.5%). This distribution of academic qualifications among the teacher population is consistent with the general trends in the education sector, particularly in developing countries, where bachelor's degrees are often the minimum requirement for teaching positions (Banerjee & Duflou, 2006). The predominance of teachers with bachelor's degrees in the sample suggests that the majority of the physical education teachers have met the basic academic requirements for their roles. However, the relatively low percentage of teachers with master's degrees (10.5%) may indicate a need for further professional development and advanced training opportunities to enhance the teachers' pedagogical expertise and subject-specific knowledge.

The body of research emphasizes the significance of teacher credentials and their bearing on the calibre of instruction and learning outcomes for students. Higher education levels among teachers, especially in the subjects they teach, have been linked to improved student accomplishment, according to studies (Darling-Hammond, 2000: pp. 1-44; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000: pp. 49-74). This is especially important when considering the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum, which calls on instructors to have a thorough grasp of the subject and the capacity to successfully adapt the curriculum to create memorable and stimulating learning opportunities for students.

Regarding the years of teaching experience, the data indicate that the majority of the teachers teaching physical education (53.0%) have 11 years or more of teaching experience, while a smaller proportion (27.4%) have 1 - 5 years of experience and 19.6% have 6 - 10 years of experience. This distribution suggests a relatively experienced teacher population, with the majority having a substantial number of years in the profession. The literature emphasizes the positive relationship between teacher experience and instructional effectiveness. Experienced teachers often develop a more nuanced understanding of their students' needs, effective classroom management strategies, and the ability to adapt their teaching practices to meet the diverse learning requirements of their students (Rockoff, 2004: pp.

247-252; Rivkin et al., 2005: pp. 135-162). This accumulated experience can be particularly valuable in the context of implementing a standards-based curriculum, which may require teachers to navigate complex curricular and assessment demands. Yet, it is important to note that the presence of a significant proportion of relatively inexperienced teachers (27.4% with 1 - 5 years of experience) also presents both challenges and opportunities. While these teachers may bring enthusiasm and a fresh perspective, they may require more targeted support, mentoring, and professional development to effectively implement the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011: pp. 201-233).

The demographic data presented provide important insights into the characteristics of the physical education teachers in the Effutu Municipality, which can inform the development of targeted interventions, professional development programs, and policies to support the effective implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum. The data on the teachers' academic qualifications and years of teaching experience provide a comprehensive understanding of the human resources available within the Effutu Municipality to implement the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum. This information can inform the design of professional development programmes, mentorship initiatives, and other support structures to enhance the teachers' capacity and ensure the successful implementation of the curriculum.

Research Question One: What is the nature of classroom practices among teachers in the implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana?

The aim of this research question was to investigate the nature of classroom practices among teachers teaching Physical Education relative to the implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum in public basic schools in the Effutu Municipality. Six classroom practices were identified in the study. These included motivation and discipline, feedback, assessment, learner plan, reflection, and professional learning community. The results of the analysis have been presented in **Table 2**.

It is observed from **Table 2** that the teachers exhibited a diversity of classroom practices in their schools. However, the data revealed that the teachers recorded the highest on learner plan ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.48$), followed by assessment ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.45$), feedback ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.50$), motivation and discipline ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.53$), reflection ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.63$) while professional learning community/continuous professional development was the least classroom practices among the teachers ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.094$) with the overall classroom practices recording ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.38$). Therefore, it was evident that learner plan was the dominant classroom practice while the professional learning community/continuous professional development was least practiced by the teachers. All teacher classroom practices described in the study were scored above average, according to the 5-point Likert scale employed in the questionnaire, whose mean score is 3.0 ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5/5$). This suggested that all of the classroom procedures were standard in the institutions and were thus implemented by the teachers.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on the nature of teacher classroom practices.

Nature of Classroom Practices	Response					
	Items	AU (%)	S (%)	SN (%)	M	SD
Learner Plan	1	208 (94.9)	10 (4.6)	11 (9.6)	4.69	0.58
	2	193 (88.1)	26 (11.9)	0 (0)	4.43	0.70
	3	142 (64.8)	61 (27.9)	16 (7.3)	3.77	0.85
	4	217 (99.1)	2 (0.9)	0 (0)	4.59	0.51
	5	173 (79.0)	43 (19.6)	3 (1.4)	4.22	0.86
SM (SSD)					4.34	0.45
Assessment	6	175 (79.9)	36 (16.4)	8 (3.7)	4.16	0.86
	7	170 (77.6)	48 (21.9)	1 (0.5)	4.19	0.80
	8	215 (98.2)	4 (1.8)	0 (0)	4.72	0.49
	9	173 (79.0)	42 (19.2)	4 (1.9)	4.16	0.81
	10	199 (90.9)	18 (8.2)	2 (0.9)	4.48	0.69
SM (SSD)					4.34	0.48
Feedback	11	815 (84.5)	30 (13.7)	4 (1.8)	4.21	0.74
	12	178 (81.2)	35 (16.0)	6 (2.8)	4.2	0.82
	13	196 (89.5)	22 (10.0)	1 (0.5)	4.42	0.71
	14	203 (92.7)	15 (6.8)	1 (0.5)	4.58	0.64
	15	169 (77.2)	46 (21.0)	4 (1.8)	4.13	0.80
SM (SSD)					4.31	0.50
Motivation	16	155 (70.8)	45 (20.5)	19 (8.7)	3.93	1.07
	17	161 (73.5)	48 (21.9)	10 (4.6)	4.04	0.90
	18	185 (84.5)	31 (14.2)	3 (1.4)	4.36	0.77
	19	212 (96.8)	7 (3.2)	0 (0)	4.62	0.55
	20	192 (87.7)	24 (11.0)	3 (1.4)	4.39	0.74
SM (SSD)					4.27	0.53
Reflection and Discipline	21	72 (32.8)	114 (52.1)	33 (15.1)	3.22	0.88
	22	127 (58)	85 (38.8)	7 (3.2)	3.79	0.86
	23	54 (24.7)	116 (53.0)	49 (22.4)	3.02	0.98
	24	65 (29.7)	56 (25.6)	98 (44.8)	2.68	1.41
	25	175 (79.9)	33 (15.1)	11 (5.0)	4.17	0.90
SM (SSD)					3.38	0.63
Professional Learning Communities	26	77 (35.2)	55 (25.1)	87 (39.7)	2.84	1.38
	27	84 (38.3)	70 (32.0)	65 (29.6)	3.04	1.33
	28	91 (41.5)	69 (31.5)	59 (27.0)	3.14	1.27
	29	109 (49.8)	67 (30.6)	43 (19.6)	3.37	1.13
	30	94 (42.9)	69 (31.5)	56 (25.5)	3.2	1.21
SM (SSD)					3.12	0.94
Overall Classroom Practices					3.93	0.38

Source: Fieldwork Data, 2023.

4.4. Discussion of the Teachers' Classroom Practices

The data presented in the study reveal that the physical education teachers in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana, exhibited a variety of classroom practices, with some practices being more prevalent than others. The findings indicate that the teachers recorded the highest mean scores on learner planning, assessment, and feedback, suggesting that these practices are the most commonly employed in their classrooms. The emphasis on learner planning, assessment, and feedback aligns with the principles of effective teaching and the implementation of standards-based curricula. Careful planning and preparation for student learning, coupled with the use of targeted assessment strategies and timely feedback, are critical components of quality instruction (Hattie, 2008; Black & Wiliam, 1998: pp. 7-74).

In the context of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum, the strong focus on learner planning, assessment, and feedback is particularly important. These practices enable teachers to align their instructional objectives with the curricular standards, design learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of students, and provide meaningful feedback to support student progress and achievement (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005b; Shepard, 2000: pp. 4-14). The data also indicate that the teachers reported relatively high scores on motivation and discipline, as well as reflection on their teaching practices. These findings suggest that the teachers are attentive to creating a positive and engaging learning environment, as well as engaging in self-assessment and professional reflection to continuously improve their classroom practices.

The literature emphasizes the importance of these aspects of teaching, as they contribute to student engagement, behavior management, and teachers' own professional growth and development (Brophy, 2004: pp. 3601-3605; Schön, 1983). Integrating reflection and self-assessment into their classroom practices can help teachers identify areas for improvement, adapt their instructional approaches, and enhance their responsiveness to the needs of their students. However, the data also reveal that the teachers reported the lowest mean score on professional learning community/continuous professional development. This finding suggests that the teachers may not be engaging in collaborative learning opportunities or actively seeking out professional development experiences to enhance their pedagogical skills and subject-matter knowledge.

The research emphasizes the advantages of continuing professional development and professional learning communities for educators, especially when it comes to curriculum implementation and revision (Vescio et al., 2008: pp. 80-91; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Collaborative learning spaces and access to top-notch professional development can help educators get a deeper comprehension of the curriculum, create a common vision for successful teaching, and work together to solve problems that may come up during implementation. The Effutu Municipality's teachers' comparatively low participation in professional learning communities and ongoing professional development may be an issue that needs to be addressed and carefully managed in order to build their capacity and guarantee

the successful implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum.

The results on the classroom practices of the teachers offer insightful information about the areas of the teaching community that could use development as well as its strengths. In order to improve teachers' knowledge, abilities, and collaborative practices and ultimately support the successful implementation of the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum, insights can be used to inform the design of focused professional development programs, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and other support structures.

5. Conclusion

The teachers teaching physical education in the Effutu Municipality exhibited a variety of classroom practices, with learner planning, assessment, and feedback being the most predominant. The teachers reported relatively high scores on motivation and discipline, as well as reflection on their teaching practices, indicating their attention to creating a positive learning environment and engaging in self-assessment. However, the teachers' engagement in professional learning communities and continuous professional development was found to be the least common among the reported classroom practices. Above all, the teachers' classroom practices were rated above average, suggesting that the practices were commonly carried out in the schools.

6. Recommendations

1) Encourage the establishment and active participation of physical education teachers in professional learning communities (PLCs) to facilitate regular collaboration, sharing of best practices, and collective problem-solving. Provide structured opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, and coaching to support the professional growth of both experienced and novice teachers.

2) Develop and implement a comprehensive professional development program that addresses the specific needs and gaps identified in the teachers' classroom practices, such as instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and the integration of technology. Collaborate with local universities, teacher training institutions, and physical education experts to design and deliver high-quality, contextualized professional development opportunities.

3) Encourage teachers to engage in regular self-reflection, both individually and within the PLC, to identify areas for improvement and develop targeted action plans. Provide structured frameworks and tools to support the teachers' reflective practices, such as lesson observation protocols, reflective journals, and structured feedback sessions.

Implementing these recommendations, the physical education teachers in the Effutu Municipality can strengthen their classroom practices, enhance their professional competencies, and effectively deliver the Standards-Based Physical Education curriculum, ultimately supporting the holistic development and well-being

of the students they serve.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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