

Title: Teachers' perceptions of structural factors related to teaching physical education
in primary school -analytical study-

العنوان: تصورات المعلمين حول العوامل البنيوية المتعلقة بتدريس التربية البدنية في المرحلة
الابتدائية -دراسة تحليلية-

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Abstract: There is an urgent need to examine the reality of the subject in primary schools by identifying the various structural obstacles interfering with the teaching process. This examination is conducted from the perspectives of the primary school physical education teachers themselves, aiming to answer the question of their perceptions regarding the various structural factors hindering the teaching of the subject. The goal is to understand the perceptions of physical education teachers regarding their own competence and the work environment associated with teaching the subject. This study revealed a structural deficiency in the teaching of physical education. On the one hand, there is a highly competent workforce characterized by high confidence, a belief in their abilities and competence, and a strong professional commitment. On the other hand, they suffer from a severe lack of resources and a lack of appreciation for the subject.

Keywords: physical education ; structural obstacles ; teaching ; primary school

المخلص : بالتزامن مع أدبيات القيم التعليمية والتربوية للتربية البدنية تظهر حاجة ملحة للنظر في واقع المادة في المدارس الابتدائية من خلال حصر مختلف المعوقات البنيوية المتدخلة في عملية التدريس وهذا وفق تصورات المعنيين أنفسهم وهم أساتذة التربية البدنية في المرحلة الابتدائية للاجابة على تساؤل حول تصورات معلمي التربية البدنية حول مختلف العوامل البنيوية المعيقة لعملية تدريس المادة. يهدف التعرف على تصورات معلمي التربية البدنية حول كفاءتهم الذاتية، وبيئة العمل المرتبطة بتدريس المادة. وكشفت هذه الدراسة عن وجود خلل بنيوي في تدريس التربية البدنية فمن جهة هناك كفاءة بشرية تتمتع بالثقة العالية، وتعتقد بجدارتها في العمل وكفاءتها مع التزام مهني عالٍ لكنها في المقابل تعاني من نقص حاد في الموارد وقلة التقدير للمادة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التربية البدنية؛ المعوقات الهيكلية؛ التدريس؛ المدرسة الابتدائية

Introduction

Algeria has integrated physical education into the primary education system starting from the 2023/2024 academic year, employing specialized teachers to oversee its implementation. This reflects the state's vision of national education, which is based on a comprehensive approach to all educational dimensions of the child, preparing them to be a responsible citizen in the future. The curriculum precisely defines the targeted competencies to achieve the child's educational goals, deriving the subject's aims and objectives from the educational situations of games and quasi-sports activities carried out during lessons.

There is no longer any doubt about the effectiveness of physical education in promoting various physical, psychological, and social characteristics and accompanying the child's holistic development. Fernhall and Agiovlasitis (2008), supported by Kriemler, Meyer, Martin, van Sluijs, and Anders (2011), confirm that the benefits of physical activity include numerous psychological and social advantages, such as reducing symptoms of depression, stress, and anxiety, and improving self-confidence and self-esteem, and are not limited to biological aspects alone. Furthermore, it improves academic performance. After analyzing the viewpoints of primary school teachers, (Sadouk Hamza, 2025) confirm that physical activity and sports have a positive impact on the formation of a generation of students with a high level of academic achievement, possessing integrated academic, social, and personal skills in several aspects.

However, the reality on the ground does not align with this finding, and many researchers are aware of this paradox: while countries are increasingly aware of its importance, physical education finds itself struggling to secure a respected position as a priority subject in the educational system. Studies have

frequently provided evidence of the low status of physical education in schools in general, and in primary schools in particular. Houlihan and Green (2006) argue that physical education does not enjoy a strong position compared to other core subjects such as science, mathematics, and languages. Furthermore, Hardman (2008, p. 13) reported that the legal and perceived status of physical education and its teachers, compared to other subjects and their teachers, represents a persistent problem globally.

In reality, the situation primarily reflects structural obstacles that impact the quality of physical education programs in schools. Tinning (2012) argues that there is no ideal pedagogical practice and that the teaching of physical education will depend on the reality of school facilities and classroom sizes. A growing consensus in related studies acknowledges the complexity of the pedagogical environment within the daily realities of physical education in primary schools. While there is near-unanimity regarding the lack of facilities and resources, there are also obstacles related to the teachers themselves. The literature indicates that the quality of physical education depends on highly qualified teachers. For a long time, it has been documented that general physical education teachers have received only limited training and, consequently, often feel inadequately qualified to teach physical education (Faulkner, Dwyer, Allison, Adlaf, & Goodman, 2008). A study in this area by Sloan confirms that a lack of subject-matter knowledge and limited training opportunities continue to affect the quality of instruction.

The quality of physical education programs in primary schools has been a subject of debate in the academic literature due to the difficulties faced by classroom teachers in teaching physical education. The aspirations of physical education teachers may be limited. The desired benefits appear to be diminished by various internal and external factors affecting schools, including, but not

limited to, a lack of facilities and limited access to them, a dense curriculum, inadequate teacher training, limited time allocated to the curriculum, a shortage of qualified physical education teachers, and the suitability and quality of the physical education curriculum (Kohl & Cook, 2013). Although decisions have supported the idea of mainstreaming physical education since the early years and have contributed to the integration of many graduates into the workforce, it is clear that they have encountered a reality that has led to frustrations related to the institutional messages they receive about the nature and status of physical education as a subject.

In conjunction with the literature on the educational and pedagogical values of physical education, there is a pressing need to examine the reality of the subject in primary schools by identifying the various structural obstacles interfering with the teaching process. This examination should be based on the perceptions of the primary school physical education teachers themselves, in order to answer the following questions:

What are the perceptions of physical education teachers regarding the various structural factors hindering the teaching of the subject?

- What are the perceptions of physical education teachers regarding their own competence in teaching the subject?
- What are the perceptions of physical education teachers regarding the work environment associated with teaching the subject?

1- Followed Methodologies : This study adopted a quantitative approach, relying primarily on the descriptive survey method as the most suitable for guiding the research process in this type of problem. As Qaddous (1995, p. 417) stated, the descriptive method "describes everything that exists, focusing on identifying conditions and relationships between facts, as well as identifying

common practices and understanding the beliefs and attitudes of groups and individuals."

Data Collection Tools: The questionnaire was chosen as the data collection tool because it is "a useful tool within scientific research methodologies for obtaining facts, reaching conclusions, identifying conditions and circumstances, and studying attitudes, trends, and opinions. It assists and complements observation and is sometimes the only practical means of conducting a scientific study" (Dweidri, 2000, p. 329). The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale, with the average score for each level.

It also includes multiple-choice questions to ascertain the respondents' direct perspective on the challenges that physical education teachers in primary schools may face.

Study Population and Sample: This study targeted physical education teachers in selected primary schools in the provinces of Annaba, Kalma, and Mila. The sample consisted of 74 participants, including 63 male and 11 female teachers, roughly corresponding to the original research population. The distribution is as follows:

Table 01: Distribution of Sample Members

	Frequency	Percentage
Males	63	85%
Females	11	%15
Total	74	100%

2- Exposure , analyses and result exam :

Table 1. Table 02) teachers' answers regarding structural obstacles related to subjective factors

level Items	strongly Agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	value
I don't feel confident teaching physical education because I lack the necessary skills.							
My experience in physical education during my studies influenced my teaching of physical education content.							
The quality of the training I received was suitable for my professional duties.							
My constant commitment to physical activity and sports in general in my daily life has influenced my teaching responsibilities.							
For me, dealing with students of this age is challenging.							

The studied group demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to teach physical education, despite potential limitations. 88% of the teachers surveyed rejected the notion that they were incompetent. There was also a strong consensus that prior experience, training, and a physically active lifestyle influence teaching practice and the perceived ability to work with

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students at this stage. Previous teaching experiences in physical education (most likely during their school or university studies) positively contribute to shaping their current teaching methods. The results show that teachers generally consider their initial professional training to be adequate for their roles. However, the variability in responses (only 39% agree, and 20% disagree) suggests that while the training may be adequate, it may not be optimal overall or fully responsive to the realities of fieldwork. A majority (46%) agreed that their experience in physical education during their academic careers influenced their approach to teaching physical education content. The response regarding the adequacy of their training was generally positive (58%). Furthermore, the professors demonstrated a strong commitment to physical activity in their daily lives (53% strongly agreed), which helped them perform their duties. Here, the sample's results were divided. While 50% of participants rejected the notion that dealing with students was difficult, 35% acknowledged that it was.

Table 3): Teachers' Responses Regarding Challenges Faced by Physical Education Teachers in Primary Schools

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Over crowded calssrooms	48	65%
Insufficient Lesson Time	12	16%
Administrative Staff Cooperation	13	18%
Personnel Discipline and Lesson Management	35	47%
Lack of Equipment and Facilities	64	86%
Parental Cooperation	29	39%

65% of teachers consider large class sizes a major challenge. Nearly half of teachers (47%) reported difficulty in managing students and running classrooms. Lack of equipment and facilities (86%): This is the most significant obstacle, reflecting both institutional and contextual shortcomings. Administrative cooperation (18%) and insufficient time (16%) were reported less frequently but are still important. 39% reported insufficient parental cooperation.

Table 04): teaches' answers regarding structural obstacles related to external factors and the work environment

level Items	strongly Agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	value
As a physical education teacher, you feel less important than other teachers at your school	%1	%5	%8	%15	%70	1,53	Strongly Disagree
the physical education teacher receives the same amount of time in administrative meetings as any other teacher	%36	%36	%15	%5	%7	3,91	agree
There is coordination between you and the other teachers regarding student monitoring and evaluation.	%30	%28	%19	%19	%4	3,61	agree
Parents facilitate your work by being comprehensive toward the subject matter and its characteristics.	18%	39%	15%	18%	9%	3,38	Neutral

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Physical education is not properly scheduled in the weekly program.	%43	%34	%9	%12	%1	4,05	agree
The time allotted for the physical education class is not suitable for the content of the class.	%16	%36	%12	%27	%8	3,26	Neutral
The physical education curriculum does not provide sufficient guidance for performing the tasks.	%16	%28	%26	%23	%7	3,24	Neutral
The physical education facilities available at your school are suitable for your tasks.	%5	%9	%12	%41	%32	2,15	disagre
The physical education equipment available at your school is sufficient for your tasks.	%4	%18	%22	%26	%31	2,38	disagre

The table shows that 70% disagree that they feel inferior to other teachers. 72% reported equal time allotted for staff meetings. 58% confirmed coordination with other teachers. 57% reported support from parents. 77% agreed that physical education is scheduled correctly on a weekly basis, but only 16% reported insufficient time. Only 52% agreed that the allocated time meets the content requirements. Only 44% agreed that the curriculum provides adequate guidance (16% strongly agree, 28% agree), with 26% neutral and 30% negative (23% disagree + 7% strongly disagree). facilities and equipment, a significant deficiency was identified, with a slight majority expressing this concern, while the remainder declined to take a position.

Discussion

Subjective Structural Barriers and Teacher Effectiveness in Primary Schools

This section focuses on internal structural factors, primarily encompassing a teacher's background in sports and specialized training, as well as their subjective sense of competence. These internal factors are shaped by past experiences, such as sports practice and training, and continue to develop during initial training and professional appointments. They contribute to shaping a teacher's vision and teaching practice in physical education. For example, Morgan & Bourke (2008) highlighted that inadequate training and a lack of confidence constitute significant barriers to effective physical education teaching. In this context, training courses and personal experiences become dominant and problematic components of teaching practice.

Overall, the study showed that primary school physical education teachers have a positive perception of their self-efficacy and generally believe that this protects them from any negative impact on their job performance. They reject the notion that they lack the necessary competence to teach. This finding indicates confidence in their own abilities regarding their subject matter knowledge. Bandura explains that self-efficacy is one of the strongest motivating indicators of how well a person will perform in almost any endeavor. He defines it as a person's belief in their ability to successfully complete a given task (Bandura, Self-efficacy, 2007, p. 705). Because self-efficacy is linked to specific tasks, such as teaching, it can negatively impact teacher effectiveness and the flow of the lesson. Starc & Strel (2012, p. 5) assert that teachers' high competence in planning and delivering physical education lessons contributes positively to learners' physical fitness, but not to their physical development. The authors also suggest that specialized physical education teachers deliver more effective lessons, seemingly of higher intensity, which would have a stronger

positive impact on learners' motor development. The results show that teachers generally perceive their initial professional training as adequate for their jobs. However, the variability in responses indicates that while the training may be adequate, it may not be optimally suited to the realities of fieldwork, meaning it does not fully meet the demands of practical work.

The consensus among the surveyed teachers regarding the impact of school experience in physical education and the influence of personal athletic commitment underscores the significant role of a teacher's background and attitudes toward sports in their professional practice. These findings align with research by Webster (2011), which demonstrates that positive experiences in physical education during youth and consistent participation in physical activity positively impact teachers' attitudes, motivations, and teaching practices. Furthermore, the study by Salin, Huhtiniemi, Watt, Sääkslahti, and Jaakkola (2025) revealed indirect links between years of study, teaching experience, and all other dimensions of teaching competence. This suggests that received training is beneficial for professional tasks, and adequate training can compensate for a lack of resources or institutional support.

The study also highlights the impact of a teacher's personal lifestyle (physical activity) and professional engagement. Athletic identity and commitment to an active lifestyle are reflected in the quality of their professional performance. Individual commitment to sports and physical activity was linked to teachers' personal experiences during their studies. Therefore, primary school teachers who were more active and engaged in their own childhood are more likely to possess greater confidence and a better approach to teaching the subject (Petrie, 2010). Physical education teachers likely derive their understanding of the essence of physical education from a daily philosophy shaped by established themes such as sport, their own participation in sport, and physical activity.

Regardless of the proposed curriculum framework, it is the physical education teacher who determines the physical education activities by making valuable judgments about the content and teaching methods (Pill & Stolz, 2017).

Structural Factors Related to teaching Conditions and the School Environment

This section focuses on the "external" material and organizational factors that appeared in Tables 2 and 3. The inadequacy of the infrastructure is evident, with a shortage of playgrounds, suitable spaces, and necessary sports equipment. The lack of equipment and facilities is the biggest obstacle and has been consistently cited in international studies, such as Pickup (2012), as the main "structural obstacle" to physical education, affecting the quality of teaching and learning that can be achieved. This was confirmed by the teachers interviewed, who generally felt that it negatively impacted their performance and lesson management. This demonstrates that the environment is not consistently equipped to meet the demands of the curriculum. One of the main findings of the study by Abdelkarim & Soufiane (2024) aligns with our findings regarding the lack of sports equipment and infrastructure, especially when physical education classes are too short or scheduled late.

There is broad agreement among teachers that the physical education timetable is inadequate. This aligns with the findings of Toufik (2023), which revealed a consensus among physical education teachers regarding the current state of physical education classes in achieving the dimensions of general education through sports activities, the allocated time, and the challenging circumstances surrounding the subject. This is a recurring indicator of "structural marginalization," where physical education is viewed as a "break" or "a way to fill time" rather than a core academic subject with priority in the timetable, resulting

in less time and haphazard scheduling. The direct impact of the declining status of physical education lies in its implementation in terms of time, facilities, and budgets (Pickup, 2012).

Many of the teachers interviewed affirm that physical education curriculum does not provide sufficient guidance for performing the tasks. Given its importance, the Algerian educational curriculum like those in other countries mandates the teaching of physical education and sports to all students from the beginning of primary school through the end of secondary education. This reflects the fundamental role of education in creating the conditions that allow for the harmonious physical development of students and the enhancement of their physical (Jaballah, Mziane Cherif, Addar, & Bournan, 2023).

Most teachers indicated that large class sizes present a challenge. Academically, large classrooms have been shown to reduce student interaction, increase the difficulty of managing students, and raise potential risks. While the results show a neutral stance on the "difficulty" of dealing with students, the majority acknowledged that they struggle with "controlling and managing" them. This, when considered alongside other findings, suggests that the difficulty lies not in a lack of pedagogical skills, but rather in a situational challenge stemming from high student numbers and limited space. A study by Mokhtar (2019) revealed significant teacher concern about overcrowded classrooms and their impact on pedagogical duties. Most participants reported being unable to cope with overcrowded classrooms. They cited several psychological and professional problems that disrupt the teaching and learning environment, thus preventing teachers from delivering high-quality education. Tinning (2012) argues that there is no ideal pedagogical practice and that physical education instruction will depend on the realities of school facilities and classroom sizes. A growing awareness of the complex environment of educational practices and knowledge

construction within the daily realities of primary physical education is emerging in the research literature.

The study's findings indicate that coordination with administrative staff and parents remains a challenge for some teachers, although some reported generally positive coordination and cooperation. Social and administrative support was cited as a less significant factor than material barriers by the teachers surveyed, but the high level of attention given to it suggests its importance, and that a lack of support may hinder educational innovation and the implementation of effective physical education programs.

While less common than physical barriers, parental influence represents a structural social obstacle, as parents are educators in their own right and important social references for all children (Raudsepp, 2006). Parental perceptions of physical education are widely believed to be crucial. Research indicates that parents often do not believe in the importance of physical education and tend to prioritize academic subjects over physical activity. In (Makrem, 2023) research parents of primary school students have a negative perception of school sports in terms of its impact on their children's academic achievement. A study by Sheehy (2006) revealed that parents did not attempt to contact the physical education teacher directly to obtain more accurate information about their children's physical education program. Parental knowledge of their children's physical education program was found to be minimal, and what they did know was often inaccurate. These factors create a less conducive work environment, which can negatively impact the morale and motivation of even the most enthusiastic teachers in the long term.

Conclusion

This study reveals a structural flaw in physical education teaching. On the one hand, there is a highly competent and confident workforce, demonstrating strong professional commitment. On the other hand, there is a severe lack of resources and a lack of appreciation for the subject. It can be said that physical education in primary schools still suffers from a marginal and undervalued position within the curriculum. Under these circumstances, teacher competence has not been able to develop, which negatively impacts the achievement of educational goals.

The structural status of the subject is low, and even highly motivated and confident physical education teachers face significant structural obstacles. The lack of equipment, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient time, and poor scheduling are among the most prominent of these obstacles, directly affecting classroom management and the quality of teaching. Administrative and parental support were less problematic and can be categorized as socio-communicative factors. However, they also represent important structural factors. A lack of administrative support can negatively impact the educational process and hinder the effective implementation of physical education programs. Similarly, parental apathy can diminish students' engagement with and understanding of the importance of physical education, as parents often undervalue it compared to "academic" subjects. These factors create a less-than-ideal working environment that is less conducive to effective pedagogical performance.

This study reveals that this lack of resources reflects a subtle marginalization of the subject, manifested through material deprivation without diminishing the profession's prestige. Despite structural constraints, teachers maintain a strong professional identity and high confidence in their abilities, often rooted in their personal experiences and training. This resilience facilitates

adaptation to challenging working conditions but does not negate the need to address structural deficiencies. This subtle marginalization can be considered highly detrimental because it allows systemic deficiencies to persist while outwardly maintaining professional well-being.

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