



Factors affecting Non-Specialized physical education teaching activities in Universities

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore and evaluate the factors affecting non-specialized physical education activities in Vietnamese universities. Through qualitative and quantitative research, data were collected from 14 interviews with physical education experts, managers and physical education teachers, along with a survey of 155 students from different universities. The research results show that the factors that have the greatest impact on non-specialized physical education activities include: student awareness and motivation, school support, quality of teaching staff, facilities and classroom organization conditions. In addition, school culture and awareness of the importance of physical education for comprehensive development also play a certain role. The article provides an overview of the current situation and the factors that need to be intervened to improve the quality of physical activities in universities, thereby contributing to the formation of a healthy lifestyle, improving health and learning efficiency for students.

Keywords: Factors affecting, teaching activities, non-specialized physical education, universities

Introduction

In the context of current higher education, physical education plays an essential role in the comprehensive development of human beings, especially in improving health, forming a healthy lifestyle and contributing to improving the learning efficiency of students. In Vietnam, non-specialized physical education is a compulsory content in the university training program, however, this activity is still facing many challenges in terms of teaching quality, facilities, and active participation of students. The lack of attention from both learners and administrators makes the role of physical education in the university environment often underestimated or implemented in a formal way.

In fact, the strong development of digital society, the increase in passive forms of entertainment and sedentary lifestyles among university students have posed an urgent need to improve the effectiveness of non-specialized physical education activities. In recent years, domestic and foreign studies have emphasized the link between regular physical activity and academic performance, mental health, and the development of social competence. However, the implementation of non-specialized physical education activities at many universities in Vietnam still lacks flexibility and has not adapted well to the needs and actual conditions of learners.

Some causes can be identified at three levels: learner level, teaching level, and management level. At the learner level, lack of motivation, limited awareness of the role of physical education in life, along with study pressure and a tight schedule make it difficult for students to prioritize this activity. At the teaching level, many programs are still formalistic, with outdated content, and teaching methods that are not diverse and lack connection with practice. Meanwhile, at the organizational level, factors such as the lack of professional teaching staff, inadequate facilities, and inflexible learning time allocation policies have significantly affected the quality of activities.

Notably, in international studies such as Bailey (2006), Donnelly & Lambourne (2011) ^[4] or UNESCO (2021) ^[18],

school culture, the value attached to physical activities in the university environment and national physical education policies are all emphasized as variables that have a great influence on the success of physical education activities. In Vietnam, although there have been many improvements in physical education policies, such as Circular 25/2015/TT-BGDĐT on the Physical Education subject program, the transformation of these orientations into practice is still limited and inconsistent.

Some universities have had innovative initiatives such as integrating technology into teaching (using apps to track physical activity, livestreaming workouts), organizing non-professional sports clubs to attract students, or designing flexible elective credit programs. However, these models have not been summarized and effectively replicated. In addition, there have not been many in-depth studies systematically evaluating the multi-dimensional factors affecting non-professional physical education activities in the current context of Vietnamese universities.

On that basis, this article aims to identify and analyze factors affecting non-professional physical education teaching activities at universities through surveys of students, lecturers and administrators. These factors include: students' awareness and attitudes; teachers' professional competence and teaching methods; physical facilities, management policies and support from the school; as well as the influence of the school's cultural environment.

From the analysis of the current situation and identification of influencing factors, the article raises the following four research questions: What are the current awareness, attitudes and participation levels of students in non-specialized physical education activities? How do factors related to lecturers (professional competence, methods, attitudes, etc.) affect the effectiveness of physical education activities? What is the impact level of organizational conditions (facilities, time allocation policies, school support) on the quality of non-specialized physical education activities? What role do school cultural environment factors play in promoting or hindering

students' active participation in physical education activities? Answering these questions not only contributes to filling the research gap in the field of non-specialized physical education but also creates a foundation for proposing practical policy solutions, suitable to practical conditions, to improve the quality and effectiveness of physical education activities at Vietnamese universities today.

Research Objectives

Based on the fact that the implementation of non-specialized physical education activities in universities is still inadequate, the article aims to clearly identify the key factors that are affecting the effectiveness and quality of this activity. Establishing specific research objectives not only contributes to orienting the analysis in a scientific and systematic way but also creates a premise for proposing recommendations of an applicable nature in the practice of Vietnamese higher education.

First, the article aims to determine the level of awareness, attitude and participation behavior of students towards non-specialized physical education activities. This is a decisive input factor, because students are the central subjects of educational activities. When learners have the right awareness, positive attitude and voluntary participation, the effectiveness of physical activities will be fully promoted.

Second, the article aims to analyze the role of physical education teaching staff in organizing, teaching and inspiring students to exercise. The teaching staff is the force that implements and transforms program goals into practice, so their professional quality, professional attitude and pedagogical methods play a core role in improving teaching quality.

Third, the article aims to evaluate the level of response and influence of organizational conditions, including facilities, time allocation policies, finance, assessment systems and support from the school, on the effectiveness of non-specialized physical education activities. These are factors that ensure the material and institutional foundation for activities to be maintained and developed sustainably.

Finally, the article also aims to clarify the role of school culture and social environment in creating motivation, maintaining interest and spreading the value of non-specialized physical education. Although this factor is difficult to measure specifically, it has a profound impact on exercise habits, sportsmanship and the formation of a healthy lifestyle in the student community.

The above four objectives will be specified through a survey of 155 students and semi-structured interviews with 14 experts to ensure the multidimensionality, practicality and reliability of the research results.

Research Method

The paper applies mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure comprehensiveness and depth in analysis. This approach helps to verify factors affecting non-specialized physical education activities from both subjective (feelings, experiences) and objective (statistical data) perspectives.

1. Quantitative research

The quantitative survey was conducted with 155 university students from many different majors, studying at public and private universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The questionnaire was built based on a synthesis of domestic and foreign documents on factors affecting physical education activities, designed on a 5-level Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 5 = completely agree). The groups of questions focus on the following areas: attitudes, perceptions, personal motivation, teaching and learning conditions, quality of lecturers, school environment and policy mechanisms.

The questionnaire was pilot tested with 20 students to adjust the language and structure of the questions. After the official survey, data were entered and processed on SPSS 26.0 software. Descriptive indicators, Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and calculation of mean scores and percentages were used to evaluate the results.

2. Qualitative research

To supplement and further explain the quantitative results, the research team conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with the subjects, including: physical education lecturers (06 people), training managers or physical activity managers at schools (04 people), and physical education research or education policy experts (04 people). The subjects were selected using the purposeful sampling method, ensuring adequate dispersion in terms of expertise and function.

Interviews were conducted in person and via an online platform for 30 to 60 minutes. The interview content was recorded and transcribed, then coded by theme using NVivo 12 software. The analysis themes revolved around perceptions, policies, teaching experiences, advantages and barriers in implementing non-specialized physical education.

3. Research ethics

The entire research process was conducted according to the principles of ensuring ethics in scientific research. All survey and interview participants were clearly informed about the objectives, rights and obligations before agreeing to participate. Personal data was anonymized and only served for research purposes. Data storage and processing complied with information security regulations in sociological research.

Research Results

1. Students' Perceptions and Attitudes towards Non-Specialist Physical Education

In the context of current higher education, Physical Education not only plays a role in improving health but also contributes to forming a healthy lifestyle, improving students' spirit, will and social skills. However, in many universities, this subject has not received due attention from students, leading to limited teaching and learning effectiveness. It is necessary to study students' perceptions and attitudes towards non-specialized physical education in order to determine the causes of this situation, and at the same time propose appropriate solutions to improve teaching quality, create interest and encourage students to actively participate in physical activities in the modern university environment.

Table 1: Students’ Assessment of Perceptions and Attitudes towards Non-Specialist Physical Education (N = 155)

Order	Survey content	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
1	Recognizing the role of physical education in learning	1	2	17	58	77	4.31
2	Regarding physical education as important as other subjects	3	7	30	63	52	3.98
3	Feeling interested in participating in physical education classes	2	6	25	67	55	4.08
4	Actively participating in physical activities outside of school hours	5	11	33	61	45	3.80
5	Agreeing on maintaining compulsory physical education	2	4	24	60	65	4.17
6	Physical education is an important factor in comprehensive development	0	2	12	56	85	4.45
7	Wanting to improve physical education programs	1	2	18	64	70	4.28

The average scores of the items ranged from 3.18 to 4.45. Among them, “Physical fitness is an important factor in comprehensive development” scored the highest (4.45), showing that students clearly recognized the core role of physical education and sports. Items such as “perception of the role of physical fitness in learning” (4.31), “desire to improve the curriculum” (4.28), and “agreement to maintain compulsory physical education” (4.17) also scored high, reflecting students’ positive attitudes towards the subject. However, the item “feeling pressured when studying physical education” had the lowest average score (3.18) with a response rate of 4 and 5 of 47.1%, showing that there was still apprehension or pressure during the learning process. Quoted from PV05: “Some female students or those with weak physical conditions felt anxious when having to complete standard physical fitness tests”. PV12 also commented: “If the program is designed more flexibly according to level and interest, it will encourage more students to be proactive”. Thus, students generally evaluate non-specialized physical education activities positively, but still need to improve the

content and organization methods to reduce pressure and increase attractiveness for learners.

2. Teachers' capacity and teaching methods

The capacity of lecturers and teaching methods are two key factors that determine the quality and effectiveness of the educational process in general, especially in the field of Physical Education. Lecturers are not only the ones who impart knowledge and motor skills, but also play a role in guiding, inspiring students' interest in learning and building positive attitudes towards physical training. In the context of current educational innovation, improving professional capacity, pedagogical skills, the ability to apply technology, along with the selection and flexible application of modern teaching methods are urgent requirements. Research on lecturer capacity and teaching methods helps to identify factors that directly affect the effectiveness of class hours, thereby proposing solutions to develop a team of physical education lecturers to meet the requirements of higher education in the new period.

Table 2: Students' assessment of physical education teachers' capacity and teaching methods (N = 155)

Order	Survey content	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
1	Teachers with solid professional knowledge	0	3	18	60	74	4.32
2	Teachers use easy-to-understand teaching methods	1	4	23	66	61	4.17
3	Teachers are able to inspire movement	3	6	28	65	53	4.02
4	Teachers adjust learning content to suit students' levels	2	7	33	66	47	3.94
5	Teachers support weaker students during their studies	4	8	29	65	49	3.93
6	Teachers flexibly combine theory and practice	2	5	22	69	57	4.12
7	Teachers create a positive, stress-free learning environment	1	4	25	68	57	4.13
8	Teachers stay up-to-date with modern training trends	3	9	30	67	46	3.89

Students rated the teachers' abilities and teaching methods relatively highly. The average score ranged from 3.89 to 4.32, with the most prominent being “solid professional knowledge” (4.32) and “flexible combination of theory and practice” (4.12). This shows that professional background and lesson organization skills are the strengths of the physical education teaching staff. However, the content related to “ability to inspire exercise” (4.02) and “updating modern training trends” (3.89) had lower scores. According to PV03: “Many lecturers still teach traditionally, with little application of technology or exercises close to young people”. PV11 also emphasized: “Using health monitoring applications, personalized exercises or organizing online competitions will help students feel closer to the subject”. This result requires regular training on teaching methods and modern sports trends, while encouraging creativity in lesson design to increase the attractiveness and initiative of learners.

3. Organizational conditions and support from the school

Organizational conditions and support from the school are an important foundation to ensure that teaching and learning activities, especially in the field of physical education, are implemented effectively and sustainably. An educational environment with scientific organization, adequate facilities, modern equipment, along with a flexible management mechanism and appropriate incentive policies will create favorable conditions for lecturers and students to maximize their capacity. The school's attention and investment are not only reflected in material resources but also in strategic orientation, professional support and motivation for the physical education teaching staff. Researching organizational conditions and support from the school helps clarify the role of management factors in improving the quality of teaching and learning physical education, contributing to the comprehensive development of students in the modern university environment.

Table 3: Students' assessment of organizational conditions and support from the school (N = 155)

Order	Survey content	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
1	Facilities, playgrounds, and training equipment are complete	7	12	36	60	40	3.66
2	Physical training schedules are arranged reasonably	6	11	31	61	46	3.77
3	There are policies to support students with difficulties in participating in physical training	10	18	42	55	30	3.45
4	The school regularly invests in physical training activities	8	16	38	58	35	3.58
5	The physical training registration system is convenient	5	9	28	63	50	3.94
6	There are supplementary sports extracurricular activities	4	10	26	66	49	3.94
7	Fair physical training testing and assessment activities	3	8	23	69	52	4.01
8	The school encourages physical training and sports movements	2	7	24	70	52	4.05

The survey results show that the average score ranges from 3.45 to 4.05. The highest rating belongs to the content of “encouraging physical education and sports” (4.05) and “fair testing and assessment” (4.01), demonstrating the positive role of the school in encouraging and properly assessing physical activities. Contents such as “subject registration system” (3.94) and “organizing extracurricular activities” (3.94) also scored high, reflecting the convenience in organization.

However, “support policy for students with difficulties” (3.45) and “facilities” (3.66) are the two contents with the lowest scores, showing the gap between student needs and the school’s ability to meet them. According to PV07: “Although facilities exist, they are not uniform among facilities, and exercise equipment is not enough for large groups”. PV13 also added: “Some poor students are not eligible to take part in elective classes with higher tuition fees or do not have suitable personal sports equipment”.

The results show that although the school has made many efforts to organize and support, there is still a need for further investment in terms of material, financial and fair policies to ensure comprehensive access and improve the effectiveness of non-specialized physical education.

Discussion

The research results show some notable trends, while reinforcing and expanding the arguments of previous studies on the role and practice of non-specialized physical education in the context of higher education reform.

First of all, students have a fairly positive perception of the role of physical education in comprehensive development. The high level of agreement with statements such as “physical fitness is important for learning” and “physical education should be maintained as a compulsory subject” reflects a shift in students’ thinking, from underestimating physical exercise to recognizing the value of health and a healthy lifestyle. Compared to studies by Bailey (2006) and WHO (2018)^[19], this result shows that Vietnamese students are integrating into the international trend of school physical education, where physical fitness is seen as an essential part of academic and personality development.

However, this positivity has not yet fully translated into regular behavior, as only about 61% of students said they actively participate in physical activities outside of class. Similar results were mentioned in the study by Donnelly & Lambourne (2011),^[4] indicating that despite high awareness, students are still influenced by tight schedules, lack of exercise space and other social pressures.

In terms of teaching, the results show the professional strengths of physical education teachers, but also show the gap in innovation in teaching methods. Many students want teachers to update modern, flexible methods, closer to youth culture. Compared to the recommendation of UNESCO

(2021)^[18], university physical education should shift from the direction of “technical transmission” to “enhancing comprehensive movement experience”, this research result has provided practical evidence that Vietnam needs to invest in retraining and developing physical education pedagogical capacity in that direction.

In terms of organization, although some educational institutions have implemented flexible registration systems, organized supplementary extracurricular activities, and fair assessment, limitations in facilities, financial support policies and uniformity between institutions are still significant. This is similar to the research of Joseph E Donnelly *et al.* (2013)^[5] and Bartholomew (2011)^[1] found that resource constraints are a common barrier to expanding universal physical education in developing countries.

In addition, qualitative data from interviews also emphasized that school culture factors, specifically the priority level of the school board, the activity level of the unions and the sportsmanship of students, play a significant role in maintaining the interest in physical activity. Schools with policies to reward physical activities, organize regular internal tournaments and build dynamic student sports communities have significantly higher rates of participation in physical education.

In summary, the discussion shows that the factors affecting non-specialized physical education are complex, requiring an integrated approach from individuals, Lecturers, organizations. The research results have theoretical value in affirming the multidimensional role of physical activities for university students, and at the same time provide practical evidence for designing physical education reform policies in Vietnam in the context of comprehensive educational innovation and international integration.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

The research results on “Factors affecting non-specialized Physical Education teaching activities in universities” have shown that the quality and effectiveness of Physical Education teaching activities depend on the combined impact of many factors, including: (1) the capacity and professional qualities of lecturers; (2) students' awareness, attitude and motivation to learn; (3) facilities and equipment for teaching and learning; (4) content, curriculum and teaching methods; (5) management work, school policies and mechanisms; and (6) cultural and social environmental factors in universities.

First of all, the professional capacity, pedagogical skills and sense of responsibility of lecturers play a key role, directly determining the quality of teaching and students' interest in learning. In addition, students' motivation, positive learning attitude and correct awareness of the role of physical education in health, learning and personal development are

necessary conditions to improve the effectiveness of learning hours.

Although sports facilities and equipment are supporting factors, they have a significant impact on the quality of organizing activities. Many universities still have limitations in terms of playgrounds, tools and training space, making it difficult to implement physical education programs. At the same time, the content and physical education programs in many places are still traditional, lacking innovation, and failing to meet the needs, interests and psychological characteristics of new generation students.

In addition, the school's management and policy mechanisms also directly affect the investment, organization and evaluation of physical education activities. Schools with clear orientations and strategies for physical development for students often achieve higher results. Finally, the cultural and social environment in universities, the interest of the academic community and society in Physical Education also contributes to forming active and healthy habits and lifestyles for students.

The synthesis of research results shows that improving the quality of non-specialized physical education teaching needs to be approached comprehensively, in which people, specifically lecturers and students, are the center, supported by a system of policies, facilities and a suitable educational environment.

Recommendations

From the above results, the study would like to make the following recommendations:

For educational management agencies: There should be a synchronous investment policy on facilities, playgrounds, tools and equipment for Physical Education at universities; promulgate specific output standards on physical strength and motor skills for non-specialized students.

For universities: Strengthen training, foster professional capacity and pedagogical skills for physical education lecturers; innovate programs and teaching methods towards capacity development, student-centered and applying technology in teaching.

For lecturers: It is necessary to proactively update knowledge, innovate teaching methods, diversify classroom organization forms, increase attractiveness and interaction during class hours

For students: It is necessary to raise awareness, build a positive attitude towards physical education, and proactively participate in physical training outside of class hours to form a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

Thus, for non-specialized physical education teaching activities in universities to be highly effective, there needs to be close coordination between schools, lecturers, students and management agencies, towards the goal of comprehensive development of Vietnamese people in the context of modern higher education.

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