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PREPARING STUDENT TEACHERS THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING: A STUDY IN ONE RURAL UNIVERSITY OF THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

The findings from this study indicated that the programmes of student teacher education are not implemented in totality as there is no module for Physical Education (PE) in the programmes of study in the Faculty of Education. This study aimed at investigating the preparation of student teachers through PE teaching and learning in one rural university of the Eastern Cape Province. PE teaching and learning for student teachers at a higher education institution means preparing future teachers in totality to acquire vibrant and active public schools. This study used a qualitative research methodology where data was collected from fifteen (15) participants composing of five (05) B Ed Foundation Phase Teaching student teachers, five (05) Postgraduate (PGCE) student teachers and five (05) lecturers from the Faculty of Education. Semi-structured interviews were used as instruments of data collection. Participants for the study were selected through purposive sampling because of their defining characteristics about the knowledge of the problem under study. The study concludes that it is awkward to train and develop student teachers for public schools without the knowledge of PE teaching and learning. There is a recommendation to infuse training of student teachers in PE, henceforth, as novice teachers get employment at schools, they are allocated among other duties, extra-mural activities such sport.

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Introduction.

The programme of developing student teachers at a higher education institution is not in totality where the students are not taught PE. Such a programme lacks to benefit student teachers as the current education system (CAPS) in South Africa calls for active teaching and learning classroom situations (Guthold, Stevens, Riley & Bull, 2020) In a system of education where a prominent belief and idea is to develop school learners skilfully, yet there is no programme of PE teaching in the preparation of student

teachers, such a programme is insufficient for teacher development (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015). In a nutshell, a programme of teacher development without physical activities lacks the inclusivity of implementation as it is biased towards theory rather than a package of preparing student teachers in totality (Sofu & Asola, 2015). This situation goes against the basis of redressing imbalances of the past in the new curriculum version known as National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (Stroebel, 2016). In this instance, Burnett (2014) describes sport in a teacher education programme as an innovative instrument within a holistic approach to facilitate progressive social change that will benefit future generations particularly in rural areas. The onus here is to think globally and acting locally to suit the needs of the society. It is for this reason that policy reforms in an underdeveloped country as South Africa calls for revised policies, introduced paradigm shifts and transformed practices as key strategies to address global and national concerns (Burnett, 2020).

Despite CAPS being a multi-activity curriculum version for public schools, PE is marginalised in higher education institutions because of its non-existence in the programmes of teacher education. Such a stance is seen by Fletcher, Lorusso and Halas (2018) in a context of inferior position of physical education stemming from broad unachievable goals, curricular constraints, poor resource provision and the limits in teacher training and professional development for non-specialist teachers. Often, constraints of this nature contribute to the lack of recognition of the value of physical education in schools as evidenced by the outdated programmes of teacher education that are one-size-fits-all approach (Richards, Templin, Woods, & Graber, 2018). Such a stance builds from the unintentionally narrowing of CAPS as a multi-activity curriculum which is supposed to link theory and practical where indoor classroom activities will lead to outdoor adventure activities. If PE was in place, it was to connect dots for best classroom teacher practices with the aim of benefiting learners.

Institutions of higher learning specializing with teacher education should note that education development initiatives should add a component of sport development that conceive ideologies and paradigms of idealized change (Burnett, 2014). This encapsulates a curriculum change development where school sport programmes look at the socio-economic imbalances in the workplace of student teachers as they undergo school-based experiences to end up being qualified teachers. To qualify this notion, Burnett (2020) also considers education policy reforms as containing PE for student teachers in response to the drive for revised policies in the education system. Such considerations lead to introduced paradigm shifts and transformed practices as key strategies to educating student teachers as a way of addressing education concerns. In other words, the design and delivery of a value-based curriculum within the local realities can never exclude PE in institutions of higher learning. It should never be the case with South African Universities to exclude PE.

Theoretical Framework.

This study adopted Sun's (2018) Game Theory. Sun postulates that Game Theory is a theory of conditioning theory abstract and summarize people's behaviour strategies in various incidents. Within this study, Game Theory relates to the field of education where student teachers are trained, mentored and professionally developed to become qualified teachers. The researcher felt that educating student teachers warrants the inclusion of PE as one of the modules in the programme of study. In other words, Game Theory has great attention in diverse fields as it involves all aspects of people's lives. It therefore becomes one of the theoretical bases of system management science.

According to Sun (2018) it has been a long time that PE occupied a negligible position in the domestic education system. The understanding is that PE at tertiary institutions exist in name only, without practicality and functionality. It is the researchers' understanding that universities are in introducing new programmes after every considerable time through the process of re-curriculation, but nothing comes out related to PE. The introduction of new programmes comes after a detailed analysis of the needs of the society and the analysis of the characteristics of student teachers to take appropriate teaching methods in fulfilling their programmes of study.

What must be understood is that student teachers should be developed as a whole and in totality. This attest to the notion that a teacher should be an all-rounder in the teaching profession where school

learners must learn every experience that the teacher possesses. Teaching learners in a school is therefore a game between the teacher and the learner. During the game period, teachers must adopt various strategies and methods related to teaching to manage and evaluate learners. In the whole course of the game, the strategies adopted by teachers can be started from the aspects of attendance, evaluation and management to evaluate learners' overall attitudes toward programmes of study. Through the successful game completion of the pre-planned teaching tasks, learner develop relevant skills to understand and master learning skills and strategies to achieve the desired outcomes in the classroom. With this manner of game playing, the entire process leads to effective teaching and learning.

Methods and Materials.

This study was conceptualised in terms of the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic and anti-positivist approach that seeks to understand phenomenon in context-specific settings. From this understanding, qualitative research helped the researchers to understand people as well as the social and cultural contexts within which they live, as asserted by Myers (2009). Through qualitative research methodology, the study directly challenges the idea of an observable, independent reality, with humans understood as responding to external and internal influences (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Once more, positioning this study within a qualitative research methodology set to understand the social phenomena and the ways in which people make sense and extract meaning from their experiences (Jones, Brown & Holloway, 2013). Qualitative research is therefore used to uncover perspectives, meaning, and understanding, specifically when a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research strives to uncover the meanings individuals construct, in addition to understanding the context that impacts upon their dispositions, perspectives and practices.

Methodological Design.

It is opined by research that some qualitative research methods assist at discovering and refining meaning from research participants. Additionally, as argued by Bandari (2022), a qualitative investigation embedded in a case study design aided towards exploring whether restructuring and curriculum revision do consider PE to be as one of the subjects that underpin curriculum across the South African schools. In line with this claim, the case study design also assisted a lot towards supplying specified outlines with regards to real life experiences encountered by recipients to teaching and learning due to limited infusion and application of PE in school environments.

Population and Sampling.

This study consisted of fifteen (15) participants composing of five (05) B Ed Foundation Phase Teaching student teachers, five (05) Postgraduate (PGCE) student teachers and five (05) lecturers from the Faculty of Education. The researchers followed all research ethical considerations by informing the participants of their rights to participate in the study (Maree, 2007). Those ethical considerations included confidentiality and anonymity among others. The researchers also clearly stated to the participants that all data and reports about the study would be given to them for member checks. Furthermore, the researchers obtained informed-written-consent forms from all participants, and appropriate human subjects' procedures were followed.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling. The researchers adopted purposive sampling as a form of sampling where deliberate selection of the sample is based on the judgement of the researcher as to which participants best fit the criteria for the study (Oliver, 2006; Tongco, 2007).

Research Instruments.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. These semi-structured interviews were adopted with the sole purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world from the participants' own perspectives with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 2007). These individual interviews were conducted face-to-face with verbal interchanges where the researchers sought to gain much deeper understanding of the student teachers, lecturers and their teaching and learning programmes. When conducting the interviews, the researchers created the reality of an interview as a conversation and the art of asking questions and listening (Punch, 2006). This interview situation is where the responses were obtained from the participants.

Discussions of Results.

This study found that teacher education programmes guide the professional practices of teachers in the classroom. This notion is conceptualised by the beliefs that teachers entail about their teaching practices. In education student teachers therefore, one cannot escape the inclusion of PE as a module to be studied because of the belief that it goes hand in hand in sharpening the skills of student teachers for their professional development.

Teacher Beliefs.

Student teachers and lecturers hold the belief that a teacher should apply teaching strategies that make their learners active in the classroom. The perspectives of student teachers indicated that a well-articulated programme of study should entail physical education as a strategy to develop the skills and prepare student teachers to fit well in the real classroom situation. According to this belief, a well guided student practice is important for learners' learning in the classroom. Within the beliefs of both participants, student teachers and lecturers, teacher education should provide a learning ground for promoting progressive social change as a new demand in the current education system.

Game Teaching Strategies.

Now that there is a neglect of PE at universities, game should be considered as teaching strategy where both student teachers and lecturers will benefit from the process. In the classroom, the game usually embodies the characteristics of comprehensiveness of both teaching and learning, as well as the function of improving learner performance. Participants take the form of games as a starting point that can help student teachers to enhance their classroom teaching practices and thereby enabling learners to quickly integrate into the teaching and learning and participate in the classroom atmosphere created by teachers. During the game, teachers use class groups to activate the classroom atmosphere where collaboration together with cooperative teaching and learning takes place. In fact, the whole classroom works as a team to effectively achieve the desired outcomes.

In the process of teaching, teachers can use a variety of strategies to provide quality education. In this instance, good teaching methods through game can make students feel happy in the learning process, enjoy the learning process, and have interest in learning.

Conclusions.

The ten (10) student teachers and five (05) lecturers selected as participants in this study felt that the programmes for preparing student teachers were not complete when there is no PE module. Even though there is a life skill and life orientation modules in the programmes, those modules are not worth the real PE modules for preparing student teachers in totality. From the participants' perspectives, the university neglects the idea of including PE as one of the modules and/or programmes for preparing student teachers that qualify to meet the demands of the current education system in South Africa. In fact, the current education system calls for active and functional schools particularly in the rural areas. When in the real classroom situation, teachers are called to use a variety of teaching strategies that will call for indoor and outdoor activities. This creates a good teaching and learning atmosphere where using good teaching methods emanating from the programmes in place allows for school learners to feel happy, as they enjoy the learning process, and thereby develop interest in the learning process.

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