

Attitude of Nigeria Secondary School Students towards Physical Education as a Predictor of Achievement in the Subject

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Abstract

The traditional idea about physical education as jumping and running, and had no academic value have been the opinions of Nigeria parents and public. Physical education as an academic and science subject finds its self on across road. This study ascertained the relationship between secondary school students' attitudes towards physical education and their achievement in the subject. Two instruments were used; Physical Education Achievement Test (PEAT) and Physical Education Attitude Scale (PEAS) for data collection. Three research questions guided the study. 112 physical Education students from 40 secondary schools in the South-South Geo-Political zone (Niger Delta States) of Nigeria (Rivers State, Abia State, Imo State, Akwa Ibom State, Cross River State, Delta State, Edo State and Bayelsa State). The collected data were analyzed using mean score and t-test statistics. It was found that most students exhibit negative attitudes towards physical education while positive relationship was expressed between students' attitudes and their achievement in the subject. Based on the findings, four (4) recommendations were made for an improvement. Some of the recommendations were;

- (a) students should not be forced to read subjects or courses that do not interest them.
- (b) Teachers of physical education at all levels (primary, post primary and post secondary) should direct more of their effort by developing the right attitudes towards physical education as a science subject.

Keywords: Physical Education Achievement test; Attitudes, physical education attitude scale, science subject, academic value.

1. Introduction

The Nigeria national policy on education recognize and group physical education as one of the science subjects at the primary, post primary, and post secondary school levels. To study physical education at post secondary school levels (colleges of education, polytechnics, and Universities) such student seeking admission must have a credit pass in Biology or Health Science at West African School Certificate Examination (WASC) or its equivalent. One may agree with the researcher that many students in Nigeria secondary schools have weak attitudes to all science subjects including mathematics. A good academic observer at the secondary schools in Nigeria will notice the negative attitude of students towards their acceptance of physical education as an academic and science subject.

According to the Encyclopedia Poritennica (2004) "attitude" refers to predisposition to classify objects and events, to react to them with evaluative consistency" The Encyclopedia America (2003) sees it as "a predisposition to respond in a certain way to a person, object, situation, events or idea". The response may come within conscious reflection. A person who shows a certain attitude towards something is reacting to his conception of that thing rather than to its actual state.

In Nigeria, physical education became an examinable subject at the secondary school West African Examination Council examinations in 1982 (Orunaboka, 2005). After about 2 decades today no good number of secondary school graduates have offered this course at their graduating examinations. The traditional idea about physical education as jumping and running, and had no academic value have

been the opinions of parents and public. These opinions have created negative attitudes to the minds of the students. Attitudes can also be related to prejudice. A prejudice is a rigidly fixed attitude usually unfavourable, though a favourable prejudice is also possible. An attitude becomes a prejudice when the predisposition is so strong that no attention is paid to evidence that might call for change. It is on academic records and history that physical education has called for change and has made a great change from its jumping and running to quality academic research virtuosity.

2. The Power of Attitude

Attitudes are formed by people as a result of some kinds of learning experience if the experience is favourable a positive attitude is found and vice versa. The attitudes people hold can frequently influence the way they act in person and larger situation. For this reason, administrators, psychologists and sociologists are concerned with attitude development, how they affect behavior and how they can be changed. This is the cross road physical education as an academic subject finds itself. Researches have shown that most parents are not happy to hear their children and wards talk about physical education and sports. According to Awosika (2004), Orunaboka (2004), parents are not knowledgeable enough about the academic programmes in physical education. Some non-physical education lecturers at the colleges of education, and Universities believe that physical education is not for the do well students, they saw it to be for the academic drop outs, hence parents often say "I do not send you to school to go and play sports, football or jumping and running about on the field". Young (2002) asserts that attitudes which arouse behavior and sustain or terminate an activity and progress, they regulate an organized behavior and they lead to the acquisition of motives and stable disposition to act. In support of the above Awosika (2005) opined that several attempts have been made to identify teachers or students' attitudes towards teaching and learning of physical education as a science subject but no much positive results. Allen (2004) stated that researchers should as a matter of urgency investigate some means by which desirable changes in the attitudes of teachers and students could be fostered and induced for the acceptance of physical education as an academic subject. Academic scholars may agree with the researcher that the objectives of any science curricular includes fostering favourable attitudes towards science and imparting cognitive knowledge which physical education as a science course is doing in this *millennium*. Physical education at the advance levels (under and post graduate levels) studies is housing specialization courses like "Sports Medicine; Exercise Physiology; Sports Equipment Technology; Sports Facilities Engineering; Human Anatomy and Physiology in Sports; Sports Management; Sports Psychology; Sports Marketing; Sport Law; Sport Insurance; among others. After the observation of the contents of the physical education curricular, Uduk and Orunaboka (2001) asserted that consequent upon this, considerable funds and efforts have been expended on the research and development of physical education curricular, yet the level of acceptance of physical education as an academic subject is still low.

On the relationship between science teachers characteristics and students achievements and attitudes Lawrenz (2003) quoted by Awosika (2005) found that, the teacher's desire to improve himself within his profession was positively related to students' achievement, and that the teachers' attitude towards science was significantly related to students achievement and attitude. Also Campbell and Martinez Perez (1977) conducted a study on relationship between attitude and achievement in science method class and observed that the attitudes of the students' and teachers towards science was not a predictor of achievement, and that a significant positive relationship existed between teacher process skills achievement and their (students) attitudes towards science.

The researcher has observed that several attempts have been made in develop and under develop countries to identify teachers' or students' attitudes towards other science subjects, while much has not been done, if any on physical education as a science subject in Nigeria schools. It is the interest of the researcher to investigate some means by which desirable changes in the secondary school students attitudes could be foster and induce in the learning of physical education as a science subject in Nigeria.

3. Research Questions

This study had provided possible answers to the following 3 questions that guided this research:

1. To what extent does attitude vary among Nigeria secondary school students with respect to physical education as a science subject?
2. Is there any significant difference in the attitudes of secondary school students with regard to their attitudes to physical education as a science subject?
3. Is there any relationship between secondary school students' attitude and their performance in physical education as a science subject?

3.1 Method and Procedure

Population of The study; Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of this study comprised all the students and the whole secondary schools in the South-South Geo-political zone (Niger Delta States) of Nigeria. The study was delimited to 40 secondary schools in the South-South Geo-political zone (Niger Delta States) of Nigeria. (Rivers State, Abia State, Imo State, Akwa Ibom State, Cross River State, Edo State and Bayelsa State) in each of this 8 states, 5 secondary schools were randomly selected for this study. A total of 112 students (male and female) from 40 secondary schools were involved in this study.

3.2 Instrumentation

The main research instrument for the study were Physical Education Rating Scale (PERS) and Physical Education Achievement Test (PEAT) which were adopted from Haskins (1972). This two instruments were specially designed for this study which were validated by experts in the field of physical education. The reliability was established using the test-retest method. The correlation coefficient was found to be 0.88 which was considered appropriate for this study.

The PERS was arranged on a three-point likert type scale and was scored accordingly as Favourable (3), Uncertain (2), unfavourable (1). It was a 15-item instrument which indicates that any respondent could score a maximum of 45 points and the least score 15 points. The PEAT was a test comprising of short item questions and completion type test on science method courses. Each item was scored one point. The maximum scores that could be obtained by any responding student was 60 points and least was zero.

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of frequency and percentages, with inferential statistics of t-test were used to analyse the data collection.

3.4 Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented in Tables 1-3. The frequency and percentages distribution on scores achieved on attitude scale are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Scores on Attitudes Scale (SAS)	Frequency F	Percentages (%)	Cumulative frequency (f)	Cumulative percentages (%)
14-16	21	18.8	21	18.8
17-19	23	20.5	44	39.3
20-22	14	12.5	58	51.8
23-25	19	17.0	77	68.8

26-28	11	9.8	88	78.6
29-21	09	8.0	97	86.6
32-34	10	8.9	107	95.5
35-37	03	2.7	110	98.2
33-40	02	1.8	112	100.0

Mode = 18; Mean = 23.2; Median = 22; S.D. = 2.5; Range = 26

Table 1 above shows the analysis of scores obtained from the physical Education Attitude Scale. The Mean score was 23.2, while the Median was 22. It also showed that more than 52% of the sample scored below 22 points. These were considered as physical education students with negative attitude, were those who scored above 22 were adjudged students with positive attitude, since this score (23) represented the scores that showed that individual student obtained at least “favourable” responses in at least eight (8) of the items on the attitude scale.

Table 2: Mean Score and Standard Deviation Score on physical Education Attitude Scale (PEAS) according to Students Attitudes Towards Physical Education

Students Assumed Attitudes Towards PE	N	(X) Means Score	Score S.D
Negative attitude	58	17.6	2.56
Positive attitude	54	24.2	3.57

This table 2 revealed that 58% of the respondents were adjudged to possess a negative attitude towards Physical Education as a science subject. This analysis also showed that the mean scores of individual students with positive attitudes were found to be greater (24.2) than that of students with negative attitudes of 17.6. This evidence shows a direct relationship between students assumed attitudes and their scores on the physical education attitude scale.

Table 3: Mean Score, Standard Deviation and t-value on PEAT for students with positive and those with negative attitudes towards physical education as a science subject.

Sub Group	N	(X)	S.D	Cal. t.value	Critical value
Students with negative attitude	58	19.03	1.56	1.08 *S	1.96
Students with positive attitude	54	34.2	2.01		

*S-Significant at = .05, df = 110

Table 3 shows the calculated t-value of 10.8 was higher than the critical t-value of 1.96%. this result showed that there exists a significant difference between the physical education achievement of students with positive attitudes and those with negative attitudes towards the subject.

4. Discussion of Findings

This study was carried out mainly to find out the attitudes of students towards the study of physical education as a science subject as a predictor of their achievement. Majority of the respondents(students)for this study were found to have possessed negative attitudes towards physical education as a science subject despite the fact that they offer the subject. This is in line with Orunaboka (2004) in his study on colleges of education students’ attitudes towards physical education. It also corroborates with the finding of Babatunde (2002) when he observed that attitudes of students was negative to Biology and that no significant difference exist between students attitudes towards biology based on their sex. The mean score (23) on the attitude test was not encouraging.

The result also showed a very wide gap in the attitudes of students with regard to the subject under study. It was observed that a significant difference exists between the physical education achievement of the individuals with positive attitudes and those with negative attitudes towards the subject. The study revealed that students' achievement in science is highly related to their attitudes towards such subject. Other studies by researchers (Awosika 2004; Arken and Dreger 1961; Brown and Holtzman 1955; Jordan 1941) have seriously reported weak relationships existing between students attitudes towards specific academic subjects and cognitive achievement.

4.1 Educational Implication of the Study

It is believed that most students that read and graduated in physical education will take a teaching job either in primary or post primary schools. Hence, students of this department are future teachers of physical education. Their negative attitudes to physical education have serious implication as they may be reluctant to teach the course if they eventually find their ways into the classrooms of our public or private schools. One wonders what this category of teachers will impart on to the pupils and its resultant negative effects on the pupils' foundation in physical education as a science subject and in the nation sports world.

The difference that exists between physical education achievement test of the students with positive attitudes and those with negative attitudes towards the subject was unexpected, because interest, personality traits and feelings of individuals towards a particular thing would likely affect the individual's performance in them. The implication of these negative attitudes at this present time will cause hell to the students and the nation at large, mostly now that the Nigeria government is struggling to meet up with the developed nations on scientific and technological advancement in all field of academics through UBE (Universal Basic Education). Something drastic has to be done in order to bridge and reduce the gap between the two groups. It should be understood that the teaching and learning of physical education at the secondary schools encourages student's participation in sports. The primary and post primary schools are the bed rock of grass root sport training and identification of the future sportsmen and women of any nation that is interested in sports development all over the world.

5. Conclusion

In line with the findings and observations made during the study, it was concluded that:

1. Physical education Achievement of students was found to be highly related to their attitudes to the subject.
2. The variation in the attitudes of the students towards the subject was enormous going by the range score.
3. A sizeable number of physical education students were found to have possessed negative attitudes towards the subject.
4. Despite the fact that all the respondents were prospective physical education students, their negative attitudes were also confirmed by the low mean attitudes score.
5. Students have over the years exhibited negative attitudes towards all science subjects, not only in physical education, but there seems to be parental and peer influences on the negative attitudes towards physical education as a subject.

6. Recommendation

1. Students should not be forced to read subjects or courses that do not interest them.
2. Ministry of education (both Federal and States) should organize seminars, workshops through the school authorities on the values of physical education as a science subject.

3. Teachers of physical education at all levels (primary, post primary and post secondary) should direct more of their effort by developing the right attitudes towards physical education as a science subject.
4. Government should make physical education at primary and post primary schools a compulsory subject.
5. Government should implement a good fiscal policies for physical education and sports throughout the nation.
6. NAPHER-SD should direct their efforts on addressing the negative issues (public opinions) facing physical education as a science subject in Nigeria.

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