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**The Game Dominated Physical Education Curriculum for Primary Schools in Uganda**

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### The Game Dominated Physical Education Curriculum for Primary Schools in Uganda



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#### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study was to examine the nature of the learning activities of the Physical Education (P.E) Curriculum and its influence on the Pedagogy of P.E in Primary Schools in Central Uganda.

**Methodology:** The study employed the qualitative methodology and design. Maximum variation sampling was used where five Primary Schools were selected based on geographical locations and school categories in Uganda. In each school, two classes were chosen, primary three and six. The data collection methods included participatory observation, field notes, focus group discussions, Interviews and document analysis. The overall data generated was qualitative in nature and analysis was thematic.

**Findings:** It was clear that not all that was prescribed by the curriculum was always taught, but what sometimes the teachers found interesting or easy to teach or where equipment /facility was available. Most schools lacked equipment or facilities and others concentrated on the nationally examined subjects.. From the study findings, it was clear that most schools teach for exams, other than skills, competencies, etc. Thus, a need for the ministry of education /government of Uganda to come out clearly and implement the P.E pedagogy in all schools throughout the country. Besides, the P.E curriculum is masculine, dominated by games that traditionally were for boys, which put girls at a disadvantage, with boys and teachers dominating, segregating and discriminating them. Moreover, in a situation where teachers and the learners are tied up by socio-cultural stereotypes that make teachers assign most of the exciting games to boys.

#### Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:

There is need for strong gender policies to guide the process of curriculum reform, development and implementation; and all pedagogical processes in schools for equal access of boys and girls including those with special needs. In view of this, I developed a gender responsive pedagogy model-framework for primary schools in Uganda for the pedagogy of P.E and other subjects. Thereby embracing policies of equal opportunity and access for all learners in Ugandan schools. Lastly, this study was undertaken within ethical and moral boundaries.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Games, Physical Education, Primary School

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## INTRODUCTION

This article is part of a PhD research project that identified strategies for implementing gender responsive pedagogy (GRP)<sup>1</sup> in P.E Classes in Primary Schools in Central Uganda. The article looked at the content (activities) prescribed and taught to the P.E classes and how it influenced the P.E class pedagogy. Documents such as the P.E curriculum, schemes of work, lesson plans and policies, for example, the Gender in Education sector policy and the National P.E and Sports Policy were studied to ascertain the necessity of the P.E curriculum and its teaching. I studied the teaching documents such as the P.E curriculum, schemes of work, lesson plans and others in order to get familiar with the content prescribed for P.E classes and the sample classes of the study. The other dimensions of the PhD study are addressed elsewhere.

### General Background

According to “the Policy of the Government of Uganda on P.E as stated in the National P.E and Sports Policy of 2004, and the National Curriculum Development Center for primary school (NCDC), P.E was made a compulsory subject for all learners in the basic education of the Ugandan Education system” (Curriculum Development Centre, 2010, p. vii). Therefore, P.E is compulsory for all learners in primary school including children with special needs. Yet, the new and second National P.E and Sports Policy (2022) is rooted on a strong Macro Policy Framework that encompasses among others, the National Health Policy of 2010, the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) and the Government White Paper (1992) as written in the current Sports policy document:

The need to develop and maintain sound mental and physical health as a component of the specific aims and objectives of Primary Education. Physical development through games, sports and good health habits to be derived from the curriculum was recommended. The framework also lists Physical Education (P.E) as part of the overall curriculum framework. (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022, p. 8).

This implies that P.E is an important part of the Ugandan school curriculum and so should be given all the attention it deserves as a school subject.

Though the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in Uganda made P.E compulsory at both primary and secondary school levels (Curriculum Development Centre, 2010), some schools, up to now, do not teach it; and others do not give it the attention it requires as the other school subjects. The reasons for this could be diverse and similar to what has been pointed out by some scholars: poor attitude by school administrators and teachers; lack of or inadequate facilities and equipment; inappropriate dressing for both learners and teachers; lack of reference books and rest rooms after P.E classes; P.E not being examined at national level in primary school, etc. (Jepkorir & Chepyator-Thomas, 2014; Mwisukha, 2014; Nemigisha, 2021; Saito & Shiraishi, 2021). Moreover, the majority of those that offer P.E as a school subject on their timetable, may not teach it as required or as seriously as they teach other subjects. There is also lack of essential teaching aids such as facilities, equipment and textbooks that causes unpreparedness, which makes it hard for teachers to think about

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<sup>1</sup> Gender Responsive Pedagogy refers to teaching and learning processes that pay particular attention to the specific learning needs of girls and boys during learning or classroom /and laboratory set ups



contemporary issues like gender, especially in a situation where every teacher is expected to teach P.E as it is in primary schools in Uganda (Nemigisha, 2021; Nemigisha, 2013).

The Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTCs) in Uganda do not allow teachers to specialize, and gender studies seem to be under looked even when the Gender in Education Sector Policy promises to produce empowered and gender sensitive teachers (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016). Lack of sensitization on gender dynamics in Teacher Training Institutions and lack of gender neutral scholastic materials could make some teachers teach P.E the way they were taught or as they want, not minding about issues like individual learners' needs, gender, effects of stereotypes on pupils and communities, and gender relations in a class. Yet pedagogical practices bear a potential to affect learner success, achievement and engagement with schooling (Robyne et al, 2016). P.E ought to be taught like any other subject and the classroom practices should provide safe and supportive learning environments for all learners, boys and girls, young and old (Nemigisha, 2021; Sparks et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2017a).

School being an extension of a larger community, the socio-cultural stereotypes in different cultures that prevent women and girls from participating in game activities that involve climbing, jumping, carrying heavy weights' etc. that 'over stretch' their bodies make it worse for P.E where learning is through the physical. Yet the teachers may not be well equipped to deal with gender stereotypes or may not know what to do in such circumstances. Moreover, school schedules make it worse especially where P.E is seemingly taught after class or not time tabled in normal class hours where it becomes hard to distinguish between P.E and Sports. Some schools even claim to teach P.E after class during the time of games or co-curricular activities when they do not actually teach it (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). In all these circumstances, the teacher may not realise that most of the games on the curriculum culturally were for men /boys and so they favor the boys. That is to say that the boys find the games and the equipment familiar during the P.E classes. Yet most girls fear the equipment and cannot enjoy the games, and the teachers may not understand the problem of girls. Thus ignoring important aspects of schooling such as socio - cultural gender dynamics in class especially when one does not connect good gender relations with community development (Muhwezi et al., 2015; Tuyizere, 2007).

### **Problem Statement**

In the Education Act 13, 2008, the Uganda Government Gazette No. 44. Vol. CI, P.E was made a compulsory subject at Pre-primary, Primary and Post Primary. The ministry of Education then directed that P.E be a core school subject at the mentioned levels Prior to the Act, P.E was not nationally known to be a school subject at secondary school level in Uganda even though very few schools taught it. The primary school curriculum had a well laid out P.E syllabus long before the Act. In spite of this, a number of schools at primary level do not teach P.E while others teach it only to the lower primary or to only primary one and two without paying attention to the prescribed curriculum. Yet P.E is supposed to be taught to all learners, from primary one to seven, and the curriculum is clear on this. Even school inspectors do not seem to be interested in P.E as a school subject or they are not aware of its importance. Besides, the curriculum at upper primary is dominated by games that are traditionally known to be for boys (Curriculum Development Centre, 2010; Nemigisha, 2013, 2021), and therefore, many girls may not be interested or may not see a future in the P.E activities. Teachers too may not encourage the girls to play the 'masculine' games because of socio-cultural stereotypes that make certain activities gender specific. This then is where the gender

dynamics in curriculum implementation, femininities and masculinities become crucial and yet limiting to effective P.E pedagogy. Yet all pupils ought to have the right to acquire knowledge and skills and to enjoy physical competency.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the nature of the learning activities of the Physical Education Curriculum and its influence on the Pedagogy of P.E in Primary Schools in Central Uganda.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Perspective**

The Gender-Education Theory informed the study (Dillabough, 2001, 2006; Dillabough, 2009). The theory explains how gender as a social construction affects the pedagogical processes and the relations among the learners, girls and boys and their teachers in a class set up in school, as a community. It explains the class relations between teachers and their learners, boys and girls including same gender relations in teaching and learning (Pedagogy). In her study about school and how gender is played out in class and school environments, For example, how teachers and masculine boys and girls dominate P.E classes and fellow learners respectively. Dillabough (2001, 2006) discovered how gender as a socio-cultural construction affects teaching and learning in class settings. In a P.E class where teachers and their learners may be tied up by socio-cultural stereotypes, the teachers may segregate boys from girls basing on what culture prescribes for either hindering equal participation.

The theory further stipulates that individual learners construct gender identities in relation to current competing forms of gender (masculinities and femininities) in their class and school environment. This is because masculinities and femininities compete and contrast according to gender roles as assigned by culture. and gender is known to be negotiated continually throughout an individual's lifetime. Therefore, it is dynamic and changes with culture. For example, school as a community and the classrooms where learners spend most of their time while at school, there is a lot that goes on between learners and teachers, and between learners, boys and girls that affect their life, teaching and learning. The masculinities (socio-cultural expectations of men /boys) and femininities (socio-cultural expectations of women /girls) in school and class affect the Identity search and formation among the learners. Besides, the author, Jo-Anne Dillabough recognizes that Identity search is also affected by gender stereotypes in communities that attribute certain roles, hobbies and games/activities to men /boys and others to women /girls. Some games such as football, jumps and throws are normally attributed to boys /men and Netball, dodge ball, rope skipping and dance to girls. The teachers may end up discriminating and segregating the learners.

It is also known that, there are many forms of masculinity in schools competing and contradicting; and they shape and affect gender relations in classes especially during the teaching and learning of practical subjects like P.E.. Such masculinities include Academic masculinity where the school community and fellow learners respect and celebrate those that excel academically; sports prowess and muscle power where even girls bully boys without strong muscles; and those who excel in games in P.E classes and at school become celebrities who attract beautiful girls. On the contrary, girls /women who are good in sports are looked at as abnormal or are called men because masculinity /gender is not sex even though sport was traditionally a terrain of men and boys.

The theory also ascertains that gender involves power, which is struggled over in everyday life routines and rituals of schooling where male teachers and boys dominate female teachers and girls especially in ‘masculine subjects’ like P.E. Besides, culture in most parts of the world, especially the developing world makes men /boys believe that they are stronger and more powerful than women /girls, which causes a problem in some school subjects like P.E where some of the activities learners do in class are known traditionally to be for men /boys and others for women /girls. Gender also varies within divisions of social class, race and ethnicity where some races or ethnic groups are considered to be more superior or stronger than others. Moreover, learners in school /classes are normally from different ethnic groups and sometimes race as well as children of the poor and the rich, that is to say children of different social classes. In such a situation, children of the rich /middle-income earners dominate the P.E classes, and exercise their power over children of the poor in their classes and the school community at large.

### Conceptual Framework

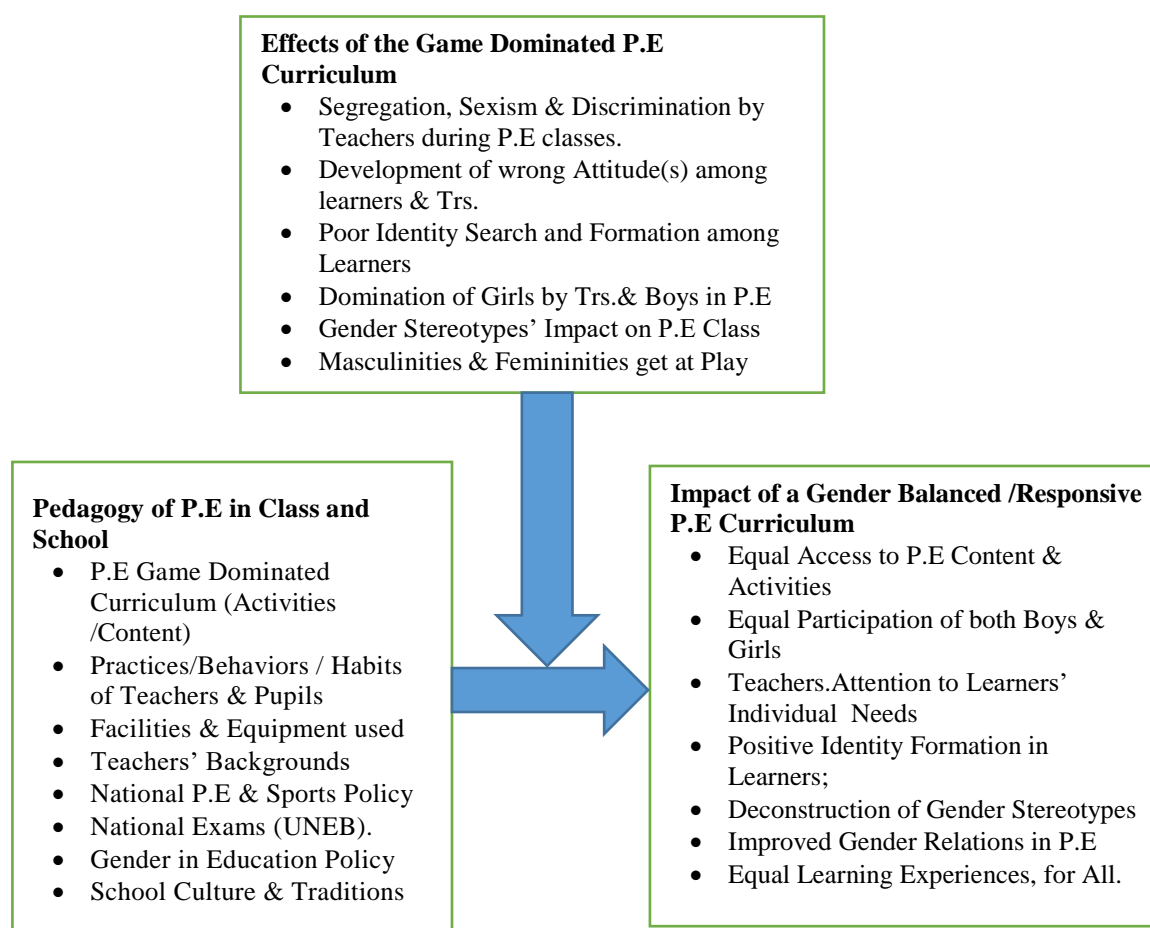


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## Literature Review of the Learning Activities (Content) and the Physical Education Curriculum

### Introduction

P.E as a school subject has been defined as a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes through the media of games, sports, gymnastics, and other recreational activities

by the Ugandan Ministry of Education and its National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC, 2010, 2008.). The P.E curriculum is dominated by games and sports activities, most of which are socio-cultural and thus gendered by nature, with some activities traditionally assigned to boys and others to girls as culture dictated. Most of the P.E teachers in Uganda still attach some games in the curriculum to girls and others to boys; and thereby segregating pupils during P.E classes especially in situations where the facilities and equipment are not enough. Yet it is critical that all pupils, boys and girls are taught similar activities and in the same classes without segregation and discrimination as the curriculum and the ministry of education demand. It is because of these gender issues that the study examined the nature of the Primary school P.E curriculum and its influence on the Pedagogy of P.E in primary schools in Central Uganda.

### **The Literature Review**

Studies by the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) show that many books and teaching aids reinforce attitudes and beliefs that men are superior to women by portraying men in lead roles and women as helpers where doctors, engineers and pilots are nearly always men, and nurses, cooks and secretaries are always women (Dorji, 2020; Mlama, 2005, 2014; Njuguna, 2016). A curriculum, should put into consideration the varied needs and interests of girls and boys coming from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds (Stride et al., 2018; Tuyizere, 2007). Penney and Evans (2005) argue that, legislating for all children to study a common subject matter does not guarantee that there will be equal opportunity for all.

A study conducted in Ugandan Primary Schools about Gender Equality and Equity in P.E classes: Girls experiences showed that some teachers of P.E did not know about the existence of a P.E curriculum, and so they taught according to how they were taught and what they were taught or any how (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021). It was thus not surprising that the content they were teaching sometimes did not match the class or it appeared obvious for the learners. Besides, sometime back there were recommendations in the western world that national P.E curriculum should include at least six activity areas: gymnastics, dance, swimming, athletics, games and some outdoor adventurous activities at key stages of schooling and child development which would ensure equal relevancy to all learners (Flintoff & Scraton, 2008; Scraton, 2018). The same authors assert that a curriculum dominated by games is unsatisfactory and particularly disadvantageous to girls because it denies the latter access to the very activities they would consider relevant in future as adults. Besides, most parents could not allow their young girls to be away from home or where they could not directly supervise them, to the games played outside school and home, which actually socialized girls into less active life styles (Nemigisha, 2013, 2021; Williams, 2017). Hence, the need for girls to be socialised into active lifestyles at home and at school through P.E class activities.

A study of participatory action research in Europe carried out by Enright and O' Sullivan (2010) about 'negotiating' a P.E Curriculum with Teenage Girls involved students contributing to, and modifying the educational Physical Education program (curriculum) to invest in both the learning and the outcome. The researchers realised that the students' voices were absent from decision making processes regarding conceptualization, implementation and evaluation of the P.E curricular experiences. The study involved teachers and learners, and targeted more the girls because they seemed to have lost interest in the subject. The study

empowered learners especially the girls who were not active before and made the classes more lively and enriching to both the teachers and the learners. Since the researcher in this study worked with teachers and their learners, it was hoped to improve the pedagogy of P.E in Central Uganda; and interest school administrators and policy makers into the subject of P.E.

There is a literature gap about P.E in Africa, which implies that less research activity has been done in this area especially on gender and physical education. Even gender studies are still limited in many ways because most Africans do not believe that boys /men should have equal rights and opportunities or responsibilities with girls /women. In the same way many P.E teachers still do not believe that boys and girls should play /study same games or P.E activities. This implies that there is need for more empirical studies about P.E and especially on Gender and Physical Education. Last but not least, I could not get literature on Action Research and P.E or on Gender, P.E and Action Research in Africa. This shows that there was need for Participatory Action Research on Gender and P.E involving teachers and learners as co-researchers to address issues that affect them and learners in their practices as teachers and learners of P.E.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was qualitative in nature as is normally preferred whenever a social practice is the focus of research activity and, it is the only approach by which the purpose of the study could be achieved (Mohajan, 2018; Patton, 2015; Smith & Sparkes, 2014). . Data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the pupils and some teachers, semi-structured qualitative interviews with most of the P.E teachers, analysing documents such as the P.E curriculum, P.E and Sports Policy, Schemes of work, Lesson plans, etc. and participatory observations of the P, E classes. Sampling was purposive (Harsh, 2011; Palinkas et al., 2015; Shaleen et al., 2019), and the study involved five primary schools and in each school pupils of two classes, primary three and six were selected for the study with their P.E teachers basing on the nature of the schools we have in Uganda. The P.E classes in the chosen schools were observed for a period of eight weeks, assessing the content taught (curriculum), and the Pedagogical Practices and methods used in the P.E classes<sup>2</sup>.

Data analysis in a qualitative research like this one is the process of organizing, analyzing and interpreting data, normally non-numeric conceptual information to capture themes and patterns that lead to answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2013, 2014). I prepared and organized data by reading through right from observations /field notes, and documents, transcribing interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Then I read the data many times, as I reflected on it to get familiar with it. I started structuring the data into categories according to my research questions as I engaged more with the data, describing and labelling according to the different forms and categories /themes that were emerging. The latter made more sense as I represented the themes and descriptions from the findings, seeking more interpretation and meanings as I read through the data and the steps more times to refine the data and the process. The themes and the generated descriptions then began to form narratives, interpretations and revelations /meanings as I engaged more with the data listening and reading the various categories. The more I engaged with the categories of data, the more I captured meanings and interpretations

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<sup>2</sup> This data collection was part of my PhD study at Makerere University, School of Education in Kampala, Uganda.



of the respondents (Creswell, 2013, 2014). Lastly, this study was undertaken within ethical and moral boundaries because ethics play a major role in a study like this.

## **FINDINGS**

The chapter presents the study findings from the five primary schools in Central Uganda where the study was conducted by open observation of the P.E classes; taking field notes: conducting deep qualitative interviews with P.E teachers; and focus group discussions with pupils and some teachers. Then, analysis of documents such as the P.E and Sports Policy, the P.E primary school curriculum, schemes of work, lesson plans, etc.

The study looked at the P.E curriculum (Learning Activities /Content) for the pedagogy of Physical Education (P.E) in Primary Schools in Central Uganda, and the . This is because Uganda as a Country has a national curriculum for primary and secondary school implying that at each of the levels, there is only one curriculum for the whole country. The researcher looked at both the prescribed and the actual Curriculum for P.E. The former is well outlined in the syllabus books for each class with teaching methods, competences and the learning outcomes. There are also some other activities that the researcher observed being taught to classes that were not prescribed to the classes in the study. Some teachers taught them due to various reasons such as lack of equipment and facilities, poor technical know-how, demand from the pupils for certain games, etc.

### **Learning Activities (Content) as prescribed for the Pedagogy of P.E in the National Curriculum for Primary Schools in Uganda**

The organization of the primary school curriculum including Physical Education falls into three cycles:

Cycle 1, (Primary one to three, 1-3) and their learning is more about basic skills.

Cycle 2, (Primary four. 4) which is an intermediary /transitional class /year.

Cycle 3, (Primary five to seven, 5 - 7) where there is subject-based development.

The thematic approach especially at cycle one (P.1-3) is the organising principle for arranging the competences and knowledge content; the selected themes and activities (content) are in line with the children's needs at this level and according to national goals and objectives (NCDC, 2008). From primary one to three, the language of instruction is the local language of the area; primary four being an intermediary class is where English begins as the medium of instruction but both local and English language are used; and from primary five to seven, the language of instruction is English. From primary one to three,

P.E has five (5) periods per week; and from primary four to seven, they all have three periods of P.E per week. It is important to note that P.E is not organised under the thematic curriculum themes but rather grouped under CAPE (Creative Arts and Physical Education) in the entire primary school curriculum (Curriculum Development Centre, 2009). The same curriculum ascertain that the P.E framework from volume two, Uganda primary school curriculum of 1999 was retained because it is the best for the organisation of the pedagogy of Physical Education and Creative Arts in primary schools in Uganda.

The P.E content as prescribed by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), right from primary one to primary three, the curriculum starts from Games of low organization to Reaction games, Gymnastics, Simple games and Athletics for lower primary. Athletics at this level includes walking and running experiences e.g. racing, cat and mouse races, hide and seek,

wheel barrow, bottle filing etc. Primary four being an intermediary class, its content starts with Athletics for lower primary, then Batting and Fielding games (baseball, rounders' and soft balls), Traditional and water games, Educational Gymnastics, Rhythm and movement patterns. At primary five, P.E is also under Creative arts; and it is meant to further consolidate the achievements of the earlier classes i.e. from primary one to four. Primary five has Athletics that go on advancing up to primary seven with Educational Gymnastics, mini Cricket or Swimming, Football, Netball, Volleyball, Handball, Basketball, etc. The upper primary school, from primary five to seven is generally dominated by the ball games, which may not favor the girls because most of them are traditionally games for boys, for example, soccer /football, basketball, volleyball, badminton, handball, bat games, etc. This means that many girls look at these as boys' games apart from Netball. Yet jumps, throws and long races are traditionally known to be for boys as well; and so, some teachers do not encourage girls to do /play them.

When asked whether P.E was an important school subject or not during interviews, all the teachers agreed that it was because of its benefits to the learners as given by teachers of the single sex boarding primary school for boys in a focus group discussion:

It makes the children's minds and body fit and healthy; learning about and through the games, sports and other recreational activities; learning to be democratic through fair play, accepting defeat or losses makes them humble and just; and celebrating victory motivates them; they keep joyful thru fair play. Finally, they learn to handle their emotions without necessarily quarrelling or fighting each other. (Focus group of male teachers of the boys' school)

On the other hand, when pupils were asked of what they thought were the benefits of P.E during the focus group discussions, many of them looked at it in terms of future careers unlike their teachers as in the following:

Becoming a games couch or P.E teacher, being a famous sportsman or footballer like Ronaldo, Messi, developing talent, etc." while others gave benefits similar to what their teachers listed namely: "proper growth, physical fitness, sharpening the brain, boosting immunity, emotional stability, socialisation, teamwork, body refreshing, strength, brain activation, getting skills, becoming healthy, facilitating excretion, being active and strong. (Primary six boys of the City Primary School).

This submission from the learners shows that they know that P.E is important as a school subject. The teachers and learners submission of the benefits of learning P.E are similar to those the primary school curriculum reveals, which includes: developing and maintaining sound mental and physical health, gaining movement skills, teamwork and leadership skills: decision-making, gaining adequate practical skills, good values, motor readiness, creativity, fitness and other health related values (Curriculum Development Centre, 2009).

When pupils of primary three girls of the city school were asked about the activities they normally engage in during P.E classes, they cited "Running, racing, jumping, cat and mouse race, hide and seek, rope skipping, wheel barrow and bottle filing". On the other hand, the primary six pupils of the same school when asked the same question, they cited many games such as "football, netball, basketball, running /sprinting, long jump, high jump and sometimes throwing Javelin and Discuss". Ball games dominate the top primary school curriculum and the lower classes it is the games of low organization. All these games /activities are prescribed on their P.E curriculum. The only problem here is that some classes at upper primary school

stop P.E in first term; and instead the nationally examined school subjects substitute the P.E classes.

The schools that allowed me to observe the P.E classes in primary six continued teaching it though sometimes they would complain. The pupils of primary six told me this themselves during class observations and interviews that the days I did not go there, they would not have P.E classes. This implies that most school administrators did not care whether P.E was taught or not; and in such situations classroom teachers could not do otherwise. In this case, the teachers could teach what they wanted or what the pupils could demand; and issues of gender relations, segregations, discrimination and individual learners' needs may not be attended to in such circumstances.

### **The Actual Learning Activities (Content) of Physical Education in Primary Schools in Central Uganda**

This section includes learning activities that were taught to the classes of P.E in the study whether they were prescribed or not, or those that were on demand by the learners. Beside the prescribed content in the curriculum, the teachers and the learners had their own preferences and suggestions. However, most of the games and activities on the P.E curriculum were the same as those listed by the pupils during the interviews, only that some could not be taught; and others were taught to wrong classes. For example, a situation where a primary six class is engaged in games of low organization like 'mummy and Dad /family', 'a cat chasing a rat', hide and seek, etc. Some of the activities taught here were also sometimes according to teachers' preferences.

Many of the activities that were taught in the schools where I observed the P.E classes were majorly the traditional ones. These included Hide and Seek, Cat and Mouse, Races, Wheel Burrow, Bottle Filling, 'Stealing balls', etc. for lower and sometimes upper classes; and Football, Netball, Athletics - High Jump, Shot put, Discuss, running over huddles, etc. for upper classes because these did not need complicated and rare facilitates or equipment. Most teachers could comfortably teach these and most schools could afford them or at least had playgrounds. Besides, the teachers could teach these traditional activities without having to use reference books or any other references, as most schools did not have any. Due to lack of references and the required attention from the school administrators, other teachers taught in whichever way and whatever they wanted because their supervisors or most of their school administrators were not interested in P.E as a school subject.

During the interviews, when teachers from the rural primary school were asked as to whether there were some learning activities they wanted to teach but could not; they gave a number of them including swimming, but when there were no swimming pools. Besides, one would not be enough for the Muslim school community, which would not allow mixing boys and girls in the same pool. They also cited dance but there was no equipment or tools to use, basketball and volleyball too were listed, yet without courts and equipment, etc. The point here is that some activities on the curriculum could not be taught mainly because of lack of equipment and /or facilities in the schools for such mentioned activities as the following response from the girls of the rural school shows:

We want to learn swimming but we have nowhere to learn it from but some schools in town have swimming pools and so can learn how to swim; we have no Basketball court and so we cannot learn it. Even when we want to play netball, there are no balls; and the boys do not have balls for football. (Girls of the Rural Coeducational School)

The statement shows how the scarcity of equipment and facilities affected the girls.

Other learners were also demanding for new games from their teachers that could excite them more during the P.E classes as the above quotation also shows. One other example is from the Boys' Boarding primary school where they told me that they wanted to do cycling, swimming /water games, aerobics, basketball, which the school could not afford or allow. The primary six boys during a focus group discussion had this to say:

They should allow us to bring our bicycles so that we can do cycling around the school compound because many of us are not interested in other games; they do not even allow us to bring our jerseys for sports (Primary six boys from the single sex school).

Schools in Uganda normally have uniform for sports and that is what they use for P.E. Because of this, they cannot allow the boys to bring a different uniform for sports. These boys think that, some teachers do not teach them certain activities or games because they do not know the games; and this is what they said:

Some teachers do not know some games, yet they want us to be perfect; and they punish us for not doing well certain skills or getting tired while running and sometimes when we knock each other while running or playing. (Primary three boys, from the single sex school).

The boys' major complaint here was that teachers occupy them with one activity for long in the P.E classes; and they get tired, and the teachers do not seem to understand. They instead punish them 'for getting tired' or for colliding or knocking each other during the games /activities.

Both boys and girls from almost all the schools complained of being denied access to the playground many times and teachers refusing to give them balls or other equipment as reflected in the following:

These days the teachers do not allow us to go for P.E or to the field to play even when the field is not occupied; they refuse us because we are about to do exams and they do not give us balls or any other equipment. Sometimes they have promised to teach us cycling and they say next time, but they never do it. Some teachers allow only those boys who excel in class work to go and kick ball in the field while others take us for a very short time and before some of us kick the ball, teachers say bring the balls and the class session is over (Primary six boys of the boys' boarding school).

In some cases, children negotiated with the teachers to take them for P.E classes. The primary three girls of the rural co-educational school reported that 'there is when we stay in class instead of going for P.E even when it has not rained especially third term, and we learn other things'. This shows that the teachers are at liberty to teach P.E or not: and the learners do not understand why. The pupils know very well that P.E is a school subject and that they are supposed to learn it like any other subject; but they do not understand why teachers do not teach it regularly like the other school subjects. The pupils were actually angry with their teachers knowing that it is the teachers who choose to take them for P.E or not because the school administration could also prefer that classes were engaged in more 'academic stuff' than P.E. Third term is for serious academic work in Uganda because of the competition for grades and class promotions. Most schools stop teaching subjects like P.E that are not nationally examined; and teachers are normally required to have covered more content of examinable subjects before the end of year



exams. It also became clear that teachers could not teach some topics/ activities on the P.E curriculum because of limited or lack of equipment /facilities for such activities.

The primary six girls of the Kampala suburb co-educational school show how the issue of limited equipment limits the number of activities (content) that they and teachers would be able to engage in during the P.E classes: “we do not have enough things to play with, like ropes, balls and other materials; and we have no sports attires. Can you tell the school to buy for us more things to play with during P.E? ”. Even the primary three girls and the boys of the same school complained about the same. The teachers also emphasized the scarcity or lack of equipment and facilities for P.E. This could cause confusion especially when the learners do not understand why they are denied access to certain games especially what they know that they were supposed to learn or access like scholastic materials, playgrounds, courts, balls etc.

The activities that most schools could not dare to teach due to lack of facility or /and skilled man power included swimming, dancing, vaulting, golf, tennis, rugby, bat games, etc., most of which were on their curriculum and others on demand by the pupils. The teachers and the pupils named most of these during the interviews and focus group discussions when they were asked as to what games they would want to teach or learn but could not respectively. Even those that did not require expensive equipment like most ball games whose equipment could be improvised, some teachers could not teach them because of negative attitude and / gender stereotypes especially in the schools that were single sex.

Lastly, during the P.E classes, I noticed that different teachers of the same classes were teaching different activities at the same time in different schools. When I asked them for the teaching syllabus, others did not have it, they simply taught according to the available facilities and equipment or what they were taught while at school or at the Teacher Training Colleges. This state of affairs affects learners negatively and denies them the physical competences and other benefits from physical education.

## **Discussion**

The chapter discusses the results presented in chapter four, bringing out the theoretical perspectives. The prescribed P.E. curriculum is the written and published curriculum by the Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDCC) under the Ministry of Education. The actual curriculum is the curriculum in use, what the teachers teach to the learners, some of which may not be in the curriculum

The P.E curriculum is well laid out at primary school level in three cycles mentioned already. “Physical Education (PE) in the Thematic Curriculum is taught as an independent learning area (subject) and without organising it under themes and sub-themes” (NCDCC, 2008, p. 86) as the other subjects of study at this level. This means that P.E is not organised under themes like the other subjects from primary one to three and in all primary schools in Uganda. It was argued that the P.E framework of volume II Uganda primary school curriculum of 1999 be retained because it was found best for the pedagogical organization of Creative Arts and P,E (CAPE) in primary schools in Uganda (Curriculum Development Centre, 2008, 2010; Curriculum Development Centre, 2009). This kind of arrangement could have also made teachers and school administrators to relax as far as P.E planning and teaching was concerned because P.E appears as an odd man out in the thematic curriculum where all the other subject content /activities at the lower level of primary school are organised under themes and so, the name, thematic curriculum. This implies that the entire P.E curriculum for primary school is not organised under themes, and besides, like the other school subjects it is not taught seriously.

However, the major reason here is not that P.E is not organized under themes but the attitude of the teachers and school administrators who think that because P.E is not nationally examined, it is not as important as the other school subjects are. In Uganda when the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) releases results for primary leaving exams, the schools that perform well get recognized and the schools subjects that are done well. But P.E cannot be among them at the primary level because it is not nationally examined, and this is one major reason why schools and teachers do not teach P.E seriously (Nemigisha, 2021). This also affects the attitude of the learners and leaves them with unanswered questions.

All the P.E teachers and their pupils confirmed that when they are about to do exams, and especially in third term when they do national exams (UNEB) and local promotional exams, they suspend the teaching of P.E long before they stop teaching other subjects and they use that time for teaching and revising other subjects. Yet the P.E curriculum warns teachers about giving P.E less attention as far as teaching and learning are concerned because of not being nationally examined and the poor attitude towards the subject (Curriculum Development Centre, 2010). This is the same reason why teachers /schools use the P.E classes /timetable to teach other subjects that are considered important especially during third term when they are about to do UNEB exams.

The issue of exams and standards affect the teaching of some subjects like P.E., which is not examined especially at the national level in primary schools in Uganda. Some of the schools and their teachers claimed that they taught P.E after classes in the evenings which was unfortunate because the normal practice in Ugandan schools is that the after class period is normally for games and sports. Schools cannot have real P.E classes after class in the evening when the learners and their teachers know that they are supposed to be free or to do what they please. Moreover, by the end of classes, the teachers are also tired, and may not really teach the subject or may abandon learners at the playground or may completely call off the classes. This could confuse the pupils and eventually lose interest in the subject or take P.E as less important and start dodging it. With this confusion, the P.E classes become segregation zones where teachers give girls netballs and /ropes to skip and boys footballs or any other masculine games. Thereby telling girls that this is for boys, and boys, that this is for girls which can influence them negatively in their career choices (Jo-Anne, 2009; Nemigisha, 2021; Scraton, 2018; Williams, 2017).

This vague status of P.E. as a school subject also opened up for teachers engaging in tasks found easy to teach, either because the equipment /facility was available or could be improvised; and these included the traditional games such as football, netball, running, dodge ball, rope skipping, racing games /games of low organization, etc. Unfortunately, some of these games were sometimes taught to wrong classes according to the formal curriculum, for example, teaching games of low organization to primary six, instead of primary three and other lower classes as the curriculum stipulates (Curriculum Development Centre, 2008).

Teachers sometimes taught the games that children of their classes requested or liked especially when they wanted to leave them in the field and go to the staffroom and mark books or do anything else they considered more important. The games that required facilities or /and equipment that were not in school were never taught by the teachers even when they were on their curriculum and these included basketball, bat games, volleyball, cycling, swimming or water games, dance, etc. Some teachers also confessed that they did not have enough skills to teach some of these games. This is attributed to poor training and gender biases in the Teacher

Training Colleges that do not allow the female teachers to freely learn and even specialise in subjects like P.E and other ‘masculine’ school subjects (Dillabough, 2001, 2006; Nemigisha, 2021; UNESCO, 2017a).

Although the curriculum for primary school goes up to primary seven, most schools do not teach P.E to primary six and seven or even upper primary here in Uganda, and the reason is that they are preparing them for Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) exams. It took me time to get schools that could allow me to involve primary six in the study and I had to try a number of schools before I got my sample schools. Some studies explain this by looking at the role of market forces in regulating education in relation to instituted market policies such as examination performance, school choice, achievements and standards (Dillabough, 2001, 2006). The issue of exams and standards influence greatly the teaching of subjects like P.E, music, dance and drama, which are not nationally examined, and graded, at the end of primary school level in Uganda. Schools’ performance in final exams market the schools that perform well, the reason why many schools may not pay attention to the school subjects like P.E that are not nationally examined (Dillabough, 2001, 2006; Nemigisha, 2021).

According to the P.E curriculum, from primary one to primary three, P.E has five periods per week and each of them is 30 minutes. However, while in the field, I discovered that most schools and teachers do not teach all the five periods, instead they occupy the learners in one or two periods per week. The content (learning activities) here start from games of low organization to reaction games. For primary six, P.E activities generally include athletics, swimming /cricket and gymnastics in first term and during second and third term, ball games, football, netball, handball and volleyball. Most of these games favour boys because most of them traditionally are known to be masculine games or games for boys (Connell, 2008; Nemigisha, 2013, 2021; Williams, 2017). The upper primary curriculum is dominated by games that have been a domain of boys /men and so putting girls at a disadvantage. Moreover, in a situation where there are gender segregation in the P.E classes by some teachers (as evidenced in the interviews) giving girls feminine activities like skipping ropes and dodge ball that cannot socialise girls into future active sport; and boys given football, the most popular game world over. This becomes more limiting to the girls and some can lose interest in P.E as a school subject. Segregation of pupils during P.E by teachers into appropriate feminine and masculine games for girls and boys respectively shows that both the teachers and pupils are tied up by the socio-cultural gender stereotypes, with femininities and masculinities competing and contradicting (Dillabough, 2001, 2006; Nemigisha, 2021; Scraton, 2018; Williams, 2017).

It is also unjust and undemocratic to segregate learners, when the curriculum warns teachers and schools against gender segregation and bias in teaching, “e.g. denying girls to play football or boys to play netball” (Curriculum Development Centre, 2010, p. 129). Schooling ought to be a democratic process and should involve pedagogical processes that put into consideration individual learners’ needs for all to obtain the same learning outcomes, skills and values that come against gender segregation and sexist tendencies especially among teachers (Dillabough, 2001, 2006; Nemigisha, 2013; Scraton, 2018).

The P.E curriculum in Uganda activates important learning outcomes such as appreciation of culture and the role pupils can play in their communities /society; performing basic motor skills of movement including manipulative skills; and key life skills such as leadership /decision making, critical thinking, problem solving, assertiveness, effective communication, coping with emotion, etc. These life skills and others: such as teamwork, self-esteem, negotiation: and

values such as endurance, patience, honesty, trustworthiness, cooperation, sharing, respect for one another, self-reliance, appreciation, care, etc. cut across lower and upper primary according to the P.E curriculum and others (Curriculum Development Centre, 2008, 2010; Curriculum Development Centre, 2009; Freeman, 2011). Looking at the outcomes, skills, values and benefits stipulated of P.E at primary level, one would not understand why the subject is not given the attention it deserves. There are also cross cutting issues clearly stipulated in the primary six P.E curriculum such as democracy, ethics and integrity, reproductive health, environment, child labour, peace education; and lastly, gender and learners' rights where it is said that "all learners have a right to play" and "therefore, they should not be denied an opportunity" (Curriculum Development Centre, 2010, p. 129).

The expected learning outcomes at both primary and upper primary are key for the all-round growth and development of the school-going children especially at the primary school level. Some of the outcomes cut across, for example, to demonstrate improved physical qualities in various games, apply rules, show positive attitude, organize and enjoy games, perform basic motor skills of movement involving the whole body and manipulative skills, etc. There are also life skills and values that cut across the entire P.E curriculum such as self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, honesty, trustworthiness, communicative skills, critical thinking, endurance, co-operation, determination, confidence, sharing, patience, decision-making, honesty, coping with emotions and stress, etc. (Curriculum Development Centre, 2008, 2010). These cannot be achieved when P.E as a subject is not taught or taught well or as required. Yet, the same curriculum, in its aims and objectives, aims "to develop and maintain sound mental and physical health among learners" and "to acquire a variety of practical skills for enabling one to make a living in a multi skilled manner" (NCDC, 2008, p. 2). Besides, the National P.E and Sports Policy (2022) defines P.E as "a school subject that entails active, inclusive, peer-led learning to develop physical, social and emotional skills" (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022, p. 10). All these show that P.E is a very important subject and should be taught seriously like other school subjects irrespective of whether it is nationally examined or not. This is again reflected in the Education White paper, which highlights, "the need to develop and maintain sound, mental and physical health as one of the specific aims and objectives of primary education"; and "physical development through games, sports and good health habits" (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022, p. 13) to be derived from the school curriculum. Even the National Health Policy of 2010 stresses the same need to promote a healthy and active life style (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022). All these emphasize the teaching of P.E at both primary and secondary school level. However, my study findings show that in spite of the valued learning outcomes and other benefits, the teaching of P.E. is still under-prioritised, moreover at the primary level of Education in Uganda.

Lastly, P.E at primary school level has a Curriculum outlining the content /learning activities, methods, objectives and guidelines for teaching but basing on my study, many schools did not have the P.E syllabus books or the curriculum. The problem was that it used to be one book in the old Ugandan Primary school curriculum, volume II with all the subjects taught at primary school level. The Head teachers would only need to buy one huge book, which was inevitable. Now each subject has its syllabus books and at least three per subject, which makes it expensive, and because most schools do not value P.E, they do not buy the syllabus books. Thus, some of the primary schools do not have the P.E syllabus books. It is no wonder that some teachers did not want to teach P. E and yet every primary teacher in the Ugandan primary schools is expected to teach P. E to his /her class.



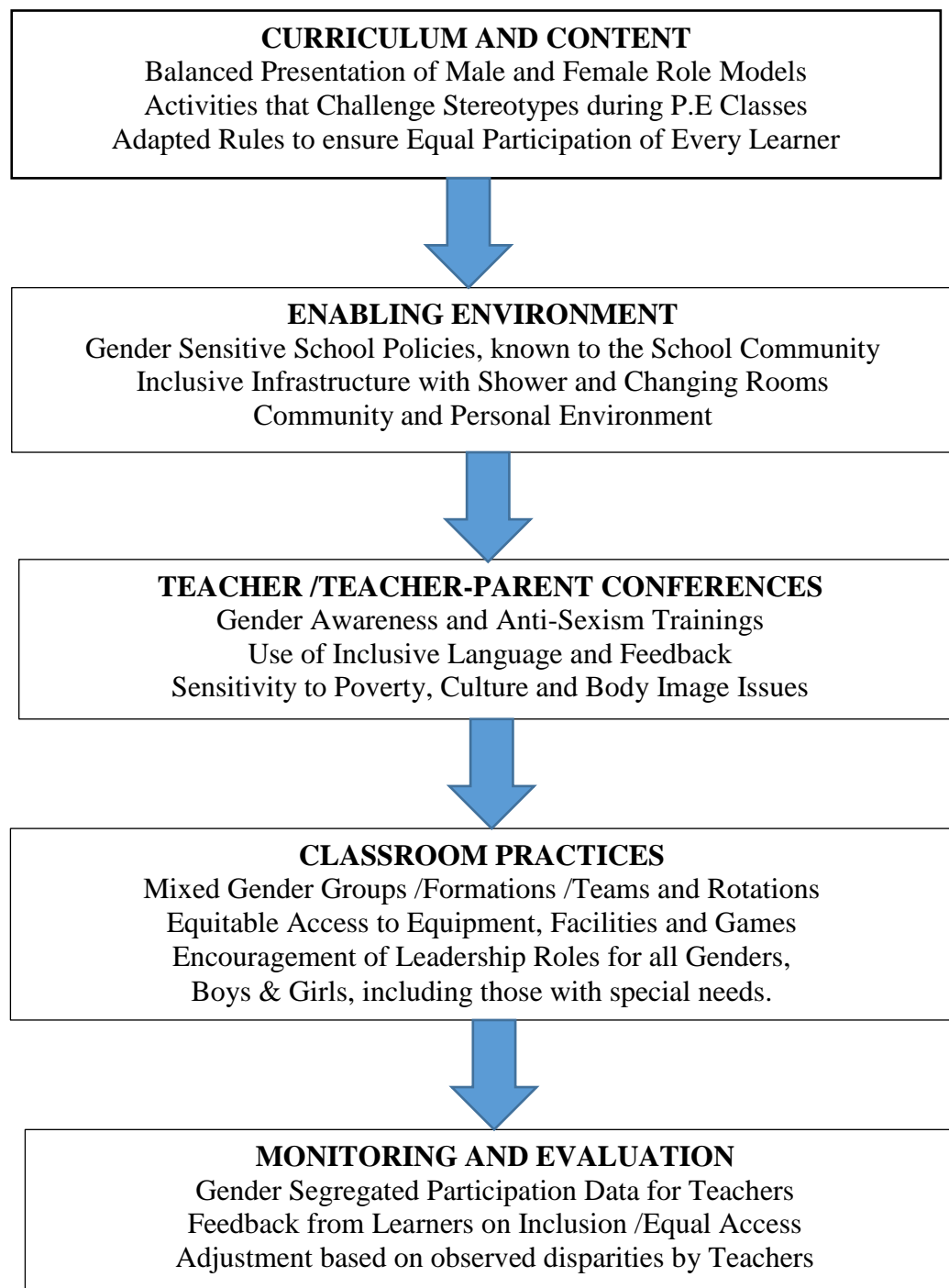
## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study, it is clear that not all that is prescribed by the curriculum is always taught or learnt, but what some teachers find interesting or easy to teach or that whose equipment and facility or facilities are readily available especially for practical subjects like P.E. The Ministry of Education and the Government of Uganda need to come out clearly to implement and boost the teaching of P.E in all schools in Uganda for the good of the citizens of its Country, and for the proper growth of its children.

The game dominated curriculum is a masculine one that puts most girls at a disadvantage with boys and male teachers dominating the P.E classes and so the activities (content). The boys who are less interested in masculine games or who do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity or exhibit alternative masculinities find the class environment hostile to them too especially where the teachers and learners are all tied up by socio-cultural stereotypes. Therefore, the curriculum should be diversified with other games that are not or are less gendered to benefit equally all the children regardless of gender, race, colour, etc. Teachers need to be re-equipped with current gender dynamics to be able to deal away with discrimination, segregation, and sexism issues for better delivery in P.E classes and elsewhere in the school community. This is also for all learners to get good and enriching experiences in P.E classes: and the overall impact would be good class gender relations, better learning experiences, skills acquisition, empowerment and enjoyment of the P.E classes by both teachers and learners. Therefore, teachers need to know how to encourage girls, and the boys who do not conform to ideal forms of masculinity right from the teacher training colleges. The reason why I have developed a Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) Framework Model at the end of this section, which teachers and Primary Schools in Uganda can use to address gender issues.

Lastly, there is need for the policy makers /ministry of Education and the curriculum developers to distinguish between P.E and sports or school sport so that the pupils and some teachers do not take them to be synonymous. It is dangerous for the two, P.E and Sports to be taken to mean the same thing because then the educational values and objectives of P.E disappear. The critical and enduring focus in P.E is on a child, a learner, which is never the case with sports. Real sports has no educational value and it is for the interested, done in a demarcated / restricted area with strict rules and regulations. On the other hand, P.E is for all learners, interested or not and it is the teacher to interest the learners into the subject of P.E. The latter has physical, health, social, emotional /psychological and spiritual benefits. A good P.E curriculum and its teaching brings about normal and all round growth of a child /person (Curriculum Development Centre, 2008, 2010; Freeman, 2011; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022). Let school inspectors do their work by making sure that primary schools do not only timetable P.E but also teach it regularly like any other school subject. Failure to treat and teach P.E as other school subjects should be penalised by the ministry of Education or the Government of Uganda.

**Nemigisha Leonidah Musoke's Gender Responsive Pedagogy Model Framework For Primary Schools in Uganda, 2025:**



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