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## The Preliminary Measures to Improve The Quality of Physical Education in Junior High Schools in North-Central Vietnam

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### Abstract:

The main aim of this paper is to apply some measures to improve the quality of physical education (P.E.) in north-central junior high schools in Vietnam. The measures are suggested: Raising awareness of P.E. for managers, teachers, students, and parents; increasing the quantity and improving the quality of P.E. teachers; improving the facilities, sports grounds, and training equipment and tools; innovating teaching methods and promoting the extra-curricular activities of P.E.; and implementing the educational supervision. **Keywords:** P.E teachers, innovative teaching methods, educational supervision

### 1. Current state of physical education in junior high schools of North-Central Vietnam

There are six administrative units in the North-Central Vietnam, including Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, and Thua Thien Hue. Hue City and Vinh City are tier-1 cities and Thanh Hoa is a tier-2 city among five cities (Thanh Hoa City, Vinh City, Dong Hoi City, Hue City, and Ha Tinh City) in this region, up to 2017. The area of the whole region is 51511.9 km<sup>2</sup>, taking 15.6% of the whole country. The population was recorded in 2017 as 10922.7 thousand people, taking 12.6% of the whole country, with an average population density of 210 person/km<sup>2</sup>.

In the past years, with attention from the central and provincial governmental authorities, education in general and P.E in particular have made more progresses. According to the summary report on P.E of the junior high schools (JHS) in the academic year 2016 – 2017 by North-Central Vietnam of Departments of Education and Training, some shortcomings still exist. This means that quality of P.E in the JHSs is not adequate.

In September 2017, we interviewed a total of 270 people, including the principals, professional team leaders, and P.E teachers in 90 schools (six provinces, 15 schools each province, 30 mountainous schools, 30 delta schools and 30 lowland schools) in North Central Vietnam in order to understand the actual situations and causes of impacts on quality of P.E in the JHSs in North Central Vietnam. We focused on some factors that affect quality of P.E in the JHSs as follow:

The attention from schools on P.E; The staffing structure of P.E teachers (quantity and quality);

Facilities used for P.E; Innovations of teaching methods, initiatives and experience learned of P.E teachers; Extra-curricular activities for students.

The above factors are used in the questionnaire. Survey results are shown as follow:

**Table 1: Evaluation and rating of P.E in the academic year of 2016 – 2017**

Some important factors affecting quality of P.E	Results (Quantity/ rating, n = 270)			
	High concern	Low concern	Concern	No concern
School's attention on P.E	9 people (3.3%)	86 people (31.9%)	146 people (54.0%)	29 people (10.8%)
Quantity and quality of P.E teachers	Good 14 (5.2%)	Fair 46 (17.0)	Average 162 (60.0%)	Unsatisfactory 48 (17.8%)
Facilities used for P.E	Good 12 (4.4%)	Fair 38 (14.1%)	Average 143 (53%)	Unsatisfactory 77 (28.5%)
Innovation of teaching methods of P.E teachers	High concern 3 (1.1%)	Low concern 87 (32.2%)	Concern 104 (38.6%)	No concern 76 (28.1%)
Extra-curricular activities for students	High concern 22 (8.1%)	Low concern 68 (25.1%)	Concern 101 (37.4%)	No concern 79 (29.3%)
Quality of P.E	Good 16 (5.9%)	Fair 44 (16.3%)	Average 117 (44.3%)	Unsatisfactory 93 (33.5%)

Results from Table 1 and from interviews with many other managers and P.E. teachers show that the main causes of P.E in the JHSs of North Central Vietnam are:

- Some managers, P.E teachers, and parents are not concerned about the quality of P.E;
- Quantity of P.E teachers is insufficient and their qualifications are limited. Many teachers who graduated from university for a long time have not yet been upgraded for further professional development. Some new teachers lack teaching experiences;
- Facilities, sports grounds and sports tools are outdated, which do not meet requirements the of P.E;
- Several teachers and students consider P.E as a “secondary subject” due to their traditional thinking. That is why, this subject has not been paid attention on both teaching and learning. Teaching methods are little reformed. Extra-curricular activities and physical exercise movements to enhance health and protect the country are organized but of low quality. P.E lessons are formalistic and shortened. Scientific research and teaching experience compilation have not been conducted regularly.

## **2. Some solutions to improve the quality of P.E in the JHSs of North Central Vietnam**

The above mentioned basic shortcomings result in low quality of P.E in the JHSs in North Central Vietnam. Based on the actual state and causes stated above, we would like to propose some solutions to improve the quality of P.E in the JHSs of North Central Vietnam.

### ***Enhancing awareness of managers, teachers, students and parents***

This is highly important. Thus, the principals of the JHSs must closely follow objectives, contents and curriculum of P.E introduced by the Ministry of Education & Training; comply with planning and supervising implementation of progress and quality in the academic year (through meetings with the school leaders about P.E in the JHSs held by the Department of Education & Training (every 3 months). Principals of the schools must thoroughly grasp and disseminate contents of the levels pertaining to education in general and P.E in particular to all teachers and students to learn about the meanings of P.E activities for health and comprehensive development of the youth as well as create strict, but comfortable learning atmosphere in schools. Therefore, it is required to regularly launch emulation movement titled “good teaching, good learning and good practicing”, in which P.E activities are a “*basic factor*” to create eventful atmosphere to push up movements. It is also required to strengthen propaganda of P.E on local mass media and in sports festivals in schools, districts, towns and cities levels and in preparation for Phu Dong Sport Festivals in the whole province.

### ***Strengthening quality and improving quality of P.E teachers in the JHSs***

The task of organizing, training and fostering is quite complicated and difficult in practice, in selection and administration of the schools and Education Departments. Unbalanced numbers of *teachers* between the subjects as stipulated by the education sector (currently surplus of cultural teachers but shortage of P.E teachers), sufficient or excessive in quantity of permanent teachers compared with the limit for a school are the largest obstacles in providing P.E teachers for the JHSs. Although young teachers who graduated from colleges and universities and currently have no jobs are abundant and eager for teaching career. To gradually deal with these problems, we propose proper solutions to the related agencies (leaders of the Departments of Education and Training and Interior Offices of the provincial People's Committees) to guarantee the interests of the teachers when changing their careers or early retiring (for reason of poor health and low qualifications) in accordance with the State's regulations of selection and recruitment of P.E teachers. It is required to gradually reduce and remedy situation that non-P.E. teachers must teach P.E lessons at present in Ly Tu Trong JHS, Thanh Hoa City, Thanh Hoa Province; Dong Le JHS, Tuyen Hoa District, Quang Binh Province; and Huong Tho JHS, Huong Tra District, Thua Thien – Hue Province, etc.)

Regarding the qualifications of physical education teachers, the Departments of Education and Training and Department of Internal Affairs should provide professional advice for the provincial People's Committees to set up the procedures and standards of recruiting P.E teachers to ensure good quality. Besides, it is required to encourage and create favorable conditions for P.E teachers of *unsatisfied qualifications* to attend the training courses by Sports Universities or other upgraded programs, and help them "both study and work." Importance must be attached to training and fostering P.E teachers in summer to update sports scientific information and reform teaching methods. This is an opportunity to access to exchange and directly discuss with other teachers about P.E. and between P.E teachers in schools, helping them improve their qualifications.

### ***Reinforcing facilities, sports grounds, equipment and tools***

Regarding sports grounds of the JHSs in North Central Vietnam, it is required to satisfy requirements of qualifications for designing the school facilities under standards, providing advice for the Departments of Education and Training and Department of Planning and reporting to the province on alternatives (both present and long-term future) to meet scope and area of the schools and standard sports ground quality, which serves for teaching and studying physical education subject following the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Training. All schools must have sports ground of 3.5m-4m/student. This is a very difficult task for the schools with narrow areas. Thus, expanding area and campus of the school to meet educational requirement is an inter-sectorial task. This requires principals of the JHSs to proactively propose measures of high feasibility and efficiency with help of the ward and sports event halls of the district, town and province to provide sport ground and sports tools.

Regarding teaching aids for physical education subject, schools must proactively make requests with the Departments and People's Committees of the provinces to purchase sports tools. On the other hand, it is required to strengthen support of the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) and social organizations to reinforce facilities and sports equipment and tools for the schools.

### ***Reforming teaching methods and strengthening extra-curricular sports activities***

Reform of teaching method to prompt initiative and creativeness of students in learning is the most important task in schools. Therefore, physical education teachers must thoroughly grasp theory and practice to reform teaching method accordingly; select and use active teaching methods in the most effective manner. Teachers must know how to apply information technology in teaching physical education in schools, using teaching software and specialized websites as references or illustration to make the lessons more joyful and interesting. To fulfill this task, schools must encourage subject teachers to enhance awareness of self-learning and qualifications (informatics and foreign language), have appropriate reward mechanism for teachers who actively reform teaching method and excellent classes (at school and provincial levels) and obtain useful initiatives and other upgraded qualifications.

It is also required to strengthen extra-curricular activities and organize sports events between the schools. To do this, schools must establish extra-curricular sports plan to improve skills and develop talent of students. In the academic year 2014-2015, 68% of the schools had students participate in extra-curricular activities and practice twice a week. In the academic year 2017-2018, it is required to encourage 95% of the schools to organize extra-curricular sports activities.

### **Carrying out professional inspection and enhancing quality of physical education**

The Departments of Education and Training must carry out professional inspection and require the JHSs to strictly comply with professional regulations, regularly check, attend classes and evaluate classes as set by the Ministry of Education and Training. It is required to group, zone and establish cross professional inspection plan between the JHSs to create emulation atmosphere of good teaching and good learning all over the region. To create favorable conditions for regular inspection of the Departments of Education and Training, principals of the JHSs must execute educational management closely following profession, inspect and attend classes, require regular update of professional documents in schools.

### **3. Results of applying methods to improve quality of physical education in the JHSs of North Central Vietnam**

To verify efficiency of the above methods, after one-year implementation in 90 JHSs of North Central Vietnam, in September 2012, we conducted the second survey and collected their opinions from 90 secondary schools (30 mountainous schools, 30 delta schools and 30 lowland schools). We selected 180 people (three people per school). The results are as follows

**Table 2: Evaluation and rating of physical education in academic year of 2016-2017**

Some important factors affecting quality of physical education	Results (Quantity; rating, n = 270)			
	High concern	Low concern	Concern	No concern
School's attention on P.E.	107 people (39.6%)	132 people (48.9%)	31 people (11.5%)	0 people (%)
Quantity and quality of P.E. teachers	Good 98 (36.3%)	Fair 106 (39.3%)	Average 66 (24.4%)	Unsatisfactory (%)
Facilities used for P.E.	Good 97 (35.9%)	Fair 95 (35.2%)	Average 78 (28.9%)	Unsatisfactory (%)
Reform of teaching methods of P.E. teachers	High concern 111. (41.1%)	Low concern 99. (36.7%)	Concern 60 (22.2%)	No concern (%)
Extra-curricular activities for students	High concern 129 (47.8%)	Low concern 98 (36.3%)	Concern 43 (15.9%)	No concern (%)
Quality of P.E.	Good 107 (39.6%)	Fair 109 (40.4%)	Average 54 (20%)	Unsatisfactory (%)

According to *Table 2*, quality of physical education has been clearly improved (good rating from 7.2% to 38.5%; fair rating of 19.8% → 38.9%, a decrease in average rating from 53.7% to 20.5% and no unsatisfactory rating recorded. In general, components of P.E quality after one-year implementation of reformed methods in the JHSs of North Central Vietnam have actively changed.

P.E in schools in general and JHSs in particular is an important task for comprehensive development of young generation. P.E must be in line with each student. This is a highly theoretical and practical matter. It is required to realize in line with purposes, requirements, contents, programs and specific conditions in the locality. The above-mentioned P.E measures may not be completely new to many managers, principals and physical education teachers in the JHSs. The point here is how to access such measures to apply in practice. It is the key to require to promote the awareness, responsibility and enthusiasm of each member in the school, including the school principal, to promote collective strength to gradually meet increasing requirements of educational career in general and physical education in particular.



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