

Challenges Affecting the Effective Delivery of Physical Education at Secondary Schools Across Education District Region 4, East Coast Demerara, Guyana

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges affecting the effective delivery of Physical Education (PE) in secondary schools in Education District Region 4, East Coast Demerara, Guyana. Although PE is endorsed nationally and is based on the UNESCO Quality Physical Education (QPE) framework, there remains a noticeable gap between policy and practice in schools. The research design is an interpretivist, qualitative multiple-case study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve participants, including head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of department, and PE teachers from three secondary schools. The results identify some of the major issues that restrain successful PE provision. These are inadequate curriculum time, poor facilities and equipment, inefficient professional development, and sporadic leadership support. These obstacles influence how educators convey lessons and often lead to a limited range of teaching strategies. Participants perceived these constraints as reducing student participation, especially among girls and less confident students. The research also reveals that the challenges differ across school settings, such as school type and location. This study offers valuable insights from the selected schools of PE delivery in Guyana. It helps fill a gap in the current literature and provides effective recommendations to enhance the quality, inclusivity, and effectiveness of PE in schools.

Keywords: Physical Education, Curriculum Marginalisation, Student Engagement, Leadership, Resources, Professional Development, Guyana

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Physical Education (PE) is a subject that receives considerable focus in most curricula, but it is often pushed aside to make way for subjects considered more academic (UNESCO, 2015). This paradox of official inclusion versus practice marginalisation is the primary contradiction in the educational systems of different countries. PE has been structurally positioned as a fundamental academic subject in most policy documents, but in reality, schools place greater emphasis on courses perceived as more important for exam performance and academic prestige (Kirk, 2010; Simmons & MacLean, 2018). The result is a long-term, disturbing discrepancy between policy rhetoric and classroom reality.

This policy-practice discrepancy is especially pronounced in developing nations, in which the absence of resources can only complicate an already difficult picture. Schools in such situations struggle with inadequate facilities, limited equipment, overpopulated classrooms, and unprepared teaching staff, all of which exacerbate the marginalisation of PE. In this way, they fail to realise the positive outcomes of Quality Physical Education (QPE), namely, enhanced cognitive development, social growth, and physical health (Bailey et al., 2009). The discrepancy between international advocacy, which has taken the form of structures such as UNESCO's QPE guidelines, and the real situation in schools is not just a failure to implement but also a missed opportunity to develop the child holistically.

1.2 The Guyanese Educational Context: Policy and Practice.

In Guyana, PE is formally encouraged by the national policy, which is the Allied Arts programme organised by the Ministry of Education (2021). Physical education is structurally integrated into this programme, alongside music, visual arts, and drama, indicating that it is officially dedicated to a well-balanced curriculum. The Education Sector Plan 2021 - 2025 articulates the vision of comprehensive student development, consistent with international guidelines that prioritise physical activity and well-being.

These policy intentions, however, have a significant gap between these intentions and local implementation. This dissertation discusses this disconnection in three of the twelve secondary schools (Grades A, B, and C) in the East Coast Demerara Education District Region Four. The initial evidence from the same study revealed extensive anxieties, such as the systematic displacement of curriculum time devoted to PE, a lack of

facilities and insufficient equipment, and insufficient teacher professional development (Hardman et al., 2014). Such difficulties are not isolated; they are connected and support one another.

Critical assessment: The persistent gap in implementation requires more than mere calls for additional funding. It involves asking why policy promises of holistic education exist in theory but are not put into practice, even in the face of formal arrangements such as the Allied Arts programme. Part of the answer can be seen in the ingrained notions of what is believed to be core education- notions that uphold cognitive growth and academic achievement at the expense of physical growth and wellbeing. These assumptions can be seen in school-level decisions regarding timetable allocation, budget allocation, and staffing priorities. Turner et al. (2017) examine the relationship between insufficient resource allocation, PE instructional time, and assessment practices. When time is limited in the curriculum, PE lessons are first rescheduled to accommodate examination catch-up. These are not simply resource pressures but indicators of even broader value judgments about what education must focus on.

Unpredictable leadership support only heightens all these systemic barriers (Leithwood et al., 2020). School leaders have a key mediating role between the national policy and classroom practice. Their views on PE, as an actual educational priority or a side-lining activity, influence the allocation of resources, scheduling choices, and professional culture in which an activity like PE is practised. When leadership support is patchy, PE teachers will receive mixed messages about the value of their subject, which can demoralise them and make it difficult to work on their practice. The aggregation of all these systemic barriers and uncertain leadership facilitation is a direct blocker of effective delivery, a barrier to student participation and engagement, and, finally, a frustration of national policy goals.

The East Coast Demerara, Region 4, is not just a convenient place for research. It is analytically significant because of its composition, which includes schools at various grade levels and can serve communities with diverse socioeconomic structures. The district includes both urban and rural schools, which provide an opportunity to investigate the impact of location on PE delivery. Gaining insight into these differences is necessary for developing nuanced recommendations that take into account local factors, rather than overlaying blanket measures.

1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study.

1.3.1 Personal Rationale

My experience as a teacher in Guyana motivated me to conduct the research. Years of experience have given me firsthand insight into the challenges of teaching Physical Education: the frustration of lost lessons, the need to improvise when equipment cannot be obtained, and the frustration of students becoming uninterested in activities they find unengaging. These experiences have contributed to my belief that, to leave the anecdotal basis behind and pursue meaningful improvement, it is necessary to conduct systematic, evidence-based research. I am a part of the system; therefore, I have contextual information that adds value to the research. As a reflexive researcher, I am aware of how this positionality influences my interpretation.

1.3.2 Academic Significance

The present research closes a gap in the literature by discussing the problem of PE delivery in several schools in Guyana. Although these issues have been reported in the literature elsewhere in the world, and a pilot study at Annandale Secondary School affirmed their presence in only one school, the study addresses a need for comparative research across schools within the district. Systemic issues require a district-level policy response, whereas the local issue can be solved by school leadership. The wide range of schools in Region 4, as shown by grade levels and geography, enables the study to examine how school type and location influence PE delivery. This can provide tendencies applicable to other areas in Guyana and other similar situations in the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

1.4 Research Aim and Questions

Aim: To conduct a qualitative investigation into the perceived barriers to effective PE delivery and their impact on student engagement across secondary schools in Education District Region 4, Guyana.

Research Questions:

- What are the perceptions and experiences of teachers and school leaders in Education District Region 4 regarding challenges in curriculum timing, infrastructure, and resources in the teaching of Physical Education?
- How do teachers and leaders perceive the adequacy of professional development and leadership support for PE in these schools?
- What are the perceived impacts of these delivery challenges on student participation and engagement in PE?
- How do the challenges and their impacts compare across the different schools within the district?

These questions are designed to move systematically from the identification of barriers (RQ1), through the examination of enabling factors (RQ2), to the exploration of consequences (RQ3), culminating in a comparative analysis that reveals patterns and variations across schools (RQ4). Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for investigating the problem from multiple angles.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter is a review of literature on Physical Education (PE) delivery in schools, including consideration of Guyana-related issues. It describes what is already known about obstacles to successful PE provision and identifies the research gap this study intends to fill. The chapter examines the international policy background, including UNESCO's Quality Physical Education framework, and the discrepancy between policy objectives and what occurs in schools. It considers David Kirk's notions to demonstrate the various positions on PE delivery. Some of the challenges discussed in the review include low priority for PE in school curricula, inadequate facilities and resources, and issues with teaching, student participation, and school leadership. It is evident in the literature that a school experiencing systemic problems, such as a lack of resources, might employ a narrow teaching approach that can lead to low student interest and engagement in PE. The chapter concludes by noting that studies are needed to understand the constraints in the Guyanese education system.

2.2 The Global Policy Context for Physical Education

2.2.1 UNESCO's Quality Physical Education Framework (2015)

The UNESCO Quality Physical Education (QPE) Framework (2015) advises that Physical Education is a fundamental right of all children. According to the framework, PE must be open and accessible to all students, regardless of gender, ability, or social background (UNESCO, 2015). It also promotes the child-centred paradigm, which emphasises personal growth rather than solely competitive performance (UNESCO, 2015). The framework notes that high-quality PE can help students acquire essential movement skills and build confidence in physical activity (UNESCO, 2015). It also strives to foster positive behaviour on physical activity and motivate people to engage in active lifestyles throughout their lives (UNESCO, 2015). Moreover, the framework notes that PE contributes to students' physical health, mental well-being, and social development (UNESCO, 2015).

The QPE model also notes that effective PE programmes require trained educators, appropriate facilities, sufficient equipment, and supportive educational policies (UNESCO, 2015). Schools are encouraged to build a learning environment that allows everyone to engage and be physically active (Zhang & Chang, 2024). Burnett's (2021) national study in South Africa documents uneven implementation of PE and constraints in resources and provision. In this context, the distinction between policy ideals and practical implementation warrants closer attention. This opens up a serious gap in implementation. The framework provides a clear vision but does not offer specific, contextualised strategies that schools, especially in developing nations, can use to navigate the intricate nature of limited resources. The implementation concern is how school leaders and teachers translate policy ideals into classroom practice under local constraints. In the case of a school short of specialist teachers, seasonally flooded, with a budget that can afford only essential equipment, the suggestions made by the framework, though well-motivated, have little to offer in the way of practical solutions. As a result, there is often a gap between the hopes of a national education policy, which often follows such international models, and the reality of how those policies operate on the ground in the day-to-day life of a school.

2.2.2 Policy Practice Gap in the International Context.

One of the most reliably recorded phenomena in PE research is the disjuncture between policy rhetoric and school-level implementation. The worldwide survey by Hardman et al. (2014) documents variation between formal PE provision and implementation across countries. It is not just a question of poor resourcing; resources are certainly significant. It shows systemic problems: other policy priorities, scrutiny, and cultural beliefs about the importance of physical activity and the Comparative Critique: Kirk (2010) vs UNESCO (2015)

In his book *Physical Education Futures*, David Kirk (2010) criticises the traditional Physical Education (PE) as being old-fashioned. He elaborates that PE is mainly based on competitive games, technicalities, and teacher-led instructional methods, which leaves out many students who may not be interested in sports. Kirk claims that this model supports inequality and diminishes the educational worth of PE. Conversely, the UNESCO Quality Physical Education framework facilitates inclusive, engaging, and developmentally appropriate PE for all students (UNESCO, 2015). Both Kirk and UNESCO believe that something is lacking in the existing methods and change is required.

The key distinction lies in the manner in which change ought to occur. Kirk (2010) does not think that a change has to be forced upon teachers by their superiors, but rather that teachers should influence it, their new teaching methods and beliefs, and the development of their profession. However, UNESCO (2015) focuses on government and policy advice to assist schools through resources, training, and institutional support. Chen (2022)

advocates curriculum reform that centres on physical literacy, knowledge, and the learning of relevant skills. Read alongside UNESCO's (2015) policy guidance, this suggests the importance of both institutional support and teachers' curricular engagement. Without policies, schools may lack the resources they need, and without teachers' dedication, even the best-planned policies may not work. This balance is especially important in the developing world, where schools are often understaffed in terms of resources and/or professional development (Burnett, 2021). The definition of resources used here covers a wide range; at one end could be comparatively cheap items like balls, bats, cones and skipping ropes, whose loss can abruptly limit lesson diversity and student engagement. On the opposite end are expensive, long-term investments—fields which have secured, well-drained surfaces, indoor or covered areas to shield against tropical heat and rain, changing rooms, and long-lasting gym equipment. The implementation gap widens when policies presuppose the existence of such infrastructure and ignore the financial and logistical challenges schools may encounter. Therefore, resource constraints require not only funding but also a nuanced understanding of which resources are most in demand and how to access them sustainably across various school settings.

2.3 Systemic and Resource-Based Barriers

2.3.1 Curriculum Marginalisation and Timetabling Constraints

One of the key issues facing the successful delivery of physical education (PE) is its marginalisation in the school curriculum. Despite its educational benefits (Bailey et al., 2009), PE can be marginalised when examination priorities constrain curriculum change (Simmons & MacLean, 2018). Hardman et al. (2014) document problems with PE curriculum time and implementation internationally, while Simmons and MacLean (2018) examine the constraints of a high-stakes examination climate. Such a trend is based on the disadvantaged position of PE in schools, which affects the distribution of resources, staffing, and teachers' professional identity (Richards et al., 2018). The idea of PE being a squeezed topic emphasises the conflict between the expectations of what a policy should include and what PE ought to be (high-quality, inclusive) and the actual time, resource, and support constraints. This creates even more tension in developing countries, where schools face numerous conflicting demands for scarce resources, and teachers find it hard to deliver the PE curriculum to its fullest extent.

2.3.2 Infrastructure, Facilities, and Equipment.

The second challenge to an effective Physical Education (PE) is insufficient facilities and equipment. A global survey by Hardman et al. (2014) found that, in most schools, including those in high-income countries, teachers lack the resources they are supposed to have. However, the issue is most pronounced in countries with insufficient education funding. Research on PE resourcing indicates that shortages of equipment and staffing restrict instructional provision (Hardman et al., 2014; Turner et al., 2017). These constraints can reduce lesson diversity, hinder differentiation, and restrict learners' meaningful involvement (UNESCO, 2015). Reliance on a narrow range of traditional sport activities can limit pedagogical opportunities and reinforce these problems (Kirk, 2010).

2.3.3 Contextual Challenges in Developing Countries

Developing countries face several challenges that hinder the successful delivery of Physical Education (PE). Tropical weather, characterised by high temperatures and heavy precipitation, often compels PE lessons to be cancelled or held under harsh conditions, reducing their educational value. Moreover, such climates frequently require indoor facilities to ensure safe and consistent delivery; where these are lacking or inadequate, the range of activities is severely restricted, limiting students' opportunities to engage in diverse physical experiences. The problem of resources goes beyond a lack of equipment. It includes large class sizes, a small number of specialist PE teachers, and insufficient school facilities such as changing rooms, showers, and secure storage (Burnett, 2021). These limitations limit the chances of focusing on an individual and increase the difficulty of teaching PE quality. Moreover, Ma'mun et al. (2025) emphasise that, despite countries adopting powerful PE policies, their effective implementation depends on local administrative capacity, accountability, and teacher training. The combination of these factors demonstrates that to enhance PE in developing countries such as Guyana, one should not only focus on state policy but also take into account schools' local circumstances and resources.

2.4 Human Resource and Pedagogical Issues.

2.4.1 Teacher Training and Professional Development.

Quality Physical Education (PE) depends on teacher competence and adequate initial preparation and continuing professional development (UNESCO, 2015). Freak and Miller (2017) examine Australian pre-service generalist teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach primary PE, highlighting the importance of preparation for teaching the subject. Limited specialist preparation and practical teaching opportunities can constrain teachers' confidence and pedagogical choices. These concerns warrant attention in the local secondary-school context, although evidence from primary teacher education does not establish their prevalence in Guyana. Continuing professional development (CPD) is also needed. Lorusso et al. (2025) identify time, professional learning,

confidence, and understanding of policy as barriers to PE professionals' policy capacity. Calderón and MacPhail (2023) argue for transformative approaches to initial PE teacher education, while Tannehill et al. (2021) examine the continuing professional development needed to support teachers' practice. Teacher educators also need professional learning support; an international survey identified a need for more collaborative preparation focused on pedagogic and research-related aspects of their work (Czerniawski et al., 2024). Schools and education systems that want to enhance PE should not rely on a few workshops but on structured professional development within schools at regularly scheduled times. Collaboration within and across school PE and teacher education is also emphasised by Scanlon and MacPhail (2026).

2.4.2 Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum Narrowing

A lack of ongoing professional development (CPD) is one of the contributing factors to the prevailing teaching methods in PE classrooms. Kirk (2010) critiques established forms of PE centred on sport techniques and narrowly framed learning opportunities. Though the method can be effective in some goals, it restricts the curriculum when it takes over. This results in a limited PE curriculum that teaches only a few sports, such as football, cricket, and athletics. This may cause gender problems since these sports are considered masculine. Consequently, girls will feel excluded, less confident, or constrained by cultural or religious dictates of dress and involvement. This may lead them to lose passion or participate unwillingly, thereby reinforcing unequal participation even outside of school. Hordvik and Beni (2026) identify experiential, autobiographical, and professional-learning pedagogies, highlighting opportunities to broaden how PE teachers learn and develop. The problem is aggravated by the fact that teachers have few opportunities to see their colleagues, exchange ideas, or plan. Tannehill et al. (2021) emphasise the value of sharing CPD practices and developing professional networks. Such collaboration can help teachers move beyond individual experience towards shared professional knowledge.

2.4.3 Kirk's Critique of Traditional PE (2010)

David Kirk (2010) critically evaluates the traditional Physical Education (PE) and indicates that it has been confined in a model that has been archaic since the mid-20th century. This method emphasises learning sport skills through teacher demonstrations and drills, with the understanding that the skills will be applied to field games. Kirk believes this is not the way to learn sports skills in PE at school. Although it might be applicable in elite sport, school PE is time-constrained, heterogeneous in student capabilities, and not built around high performance but on life-long involvement. Consequently, excessive use of drills over inclusive and game-based learning may demotivate less confident students, hinder overall progress, and fail to meet the inclusive objectives of PE. He observes that such archaic-appearing strategies favour those students who are already talented and enthusiastic, sidelining students with other interests or talents. This conventional method, he says, can recreate gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities and does not foster a lifelong habit of physical activity. Although his vision is consistent with the model proposed by UNESCO (2015), Kirk emphasises that the change cannot be achieved solely through top-down policy; sustainable transformation demands that teachers develop new professional identities and pedagogy, a process that is slow and context-based.

2.5 Student Engagement and Participation

2.5.1 Factors Influencing Student Disengagement

Ineffective Physical Education (PE) leads to student disengagement because disengaged students are deprived of social, health, and skill development. Alayan et al. (2025) found that students are more inclined to engage when activities are made relevant and enjoyable. The curricula centred on competitive team sports may disadvantage students who choose individual activities, lack confidence, or come from other cultural backgrounds. Beni et al. (2017) identify social interaction, fun, challenge, motor competence, and personally relevant learning as features of meaningful PE experiences. Their review supports focusing on positive experiences rather than on excessive rivalry or feelings of incompetence. These aspects tend to reinforce each other in a vicious circle in which students become less competent and more marginal. To overcome this, PE teaching must rely on inclusion, personal development, and positive experiences rather than on performance and competition alone.

2.5.2 Gender and Inclusion Participation.

Gender plays a key role in attendance in Physical Education (PE) in that traditional curricula tend to push girls out. Hills and Croston (2012) examine gendered experiences in coeducational PE and strategies for challenging gender boundaries, underscoring the importance of inclusive participation. Gender will interact with other variables, such as ethnicity, class, and ability, to introduce additional barriers. Psaki et al. (2022) review gender-related barriers to girls' schooling, indicating the importance of context-sensitive responses. In PE, cultural norms about dress and modesty may create additional barriers to participation. In Region 4, East Coast Demerara, where students have different religious and cultural backgrounds, this is especially important. If schools do not provide suitable uniforms or private changing areas, girls may avoid participating, which can increase gender gaps in PE. Gender equity is one of the principles of Quality Physical Education identified by UNESCO (2015), and

the organisation demands curricula that address the needs and interests of every learner. Nonetheless, despite the policies that favour inclusion, the cultural norms and school customs tend to discriminate against girls. Ma'mun et al. (2025) illustrate how participation barriers differ across national contexts, including gender-related restrictions and competing academic priorities. This accentuates the necessity of context-sensitive methods that will make PE inclusive and equitable to every student.

2.6 The Role of Leadership in PE Delivery

Leadership is a core element in providing quality PE, as it affects the conditions under which teachers operate and learners' outcomes. The studies indicate that the influence of leadership on learning is the second only to classroom teaching (Leithwood et al., 2020). Competent leadership fosters collaboration and engagement among teachers, school leaders, and external stakeholders, helping teachers become professionally confident, satisfied, and ready to innovate (Beddoes & Jones, 2022; Simonton et al., 2021). Through effective communication of the value of PE and active support for teachers, leaders can provide an environment in which high-quality provision can flourish.

Weak or inconsistent organisational support can complicate PE teachers' professional experiences. Sakallı and Şenel (2025) examine the relationships among role stressors, marginalisation, and perceived mattering, while Westerlund and Eliasson (2022) describe novice teachers' challenges and the need for formal organisational support. This effect is especially impactful in schools where PE is already undervalued, such as in rural or resource-deprived environments. These challenges can be reduced or exacerbated by leaders' decisions regarding timetabling, resource allocation, and the symbolic recognition of PE. Feeling valued and supported, teachers can better provide varied and innovative programs with limited resources, and the absence of leadership commitment may hinder even the provision of sufficient resources (Spicer & Robinson, 2021). Leadership is a very powerful influence on quality PE. Schools with high-performing sports teams tend to allocate resources, facilities, and support to PE, as school leadership looks after the school's reputation and encourages schoolchildren. Since most emphasis is placed on elite teams, this may marginalise other students, as resources and attention are centred on a few high-profile sports. Competition and winning can shadow physical literacy, fun, and engagement, particularly among less confident students. The direction of support provided by leaders is thus vital to ensuring that PE is not only beneficial to high performers.

2.7 Synthesis: Building a Conceptual Framework

2.7.1 Connecting the Themes: Systemic Constraints → Pedagogical Narrowing → Disengagement

The literature analysis in this chapter shows a clear and consistent pattern: issues concerning PE are not separate problems but integrated parts of a dependable system. The factors that influence teachers' working conditions are systemic and include curriculum marginalisation, poor facilities, insufficient resources, and unfavourable leadership (Gonçalves et al., 2022). Lack of available time on the timetable limits the scope of the curriculum that teachers can deliver, inadequate facilities and a lack of adequate equipment limit pedagogical choices, and inconsistent leadership sends conflicting messages regarding the worth of PE (Hardman et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2015). The above limitations are not background considerations; they directly affect what can be done in practice and direct teachers to well-known, manageable strategies. By so doing, pedagogical narrowing is based on systemic pressures.

Pedagogical narrowing, in turn, leads to student disengagement. Over time, with little time, resources, and support, teachers tend to resort to traditional, teacher-directed approaches, which provide a limited number of activities and emphasise control over innovation or inclusion (Kirk, 2010). Such constriction is a logical reaction to systemic limitations rather than an indicator of personal ineptitude, and it may internalise historical structures of practice. In the case of repetitive, didactic, or exclusionary curricula, students will become bored, especially girls, less confident students, and those whose cultural backgrounds do not align with the most conventional PE activities (Hills & Croston, 2012). Although the causal line is obvious, it is not determined: teachers have agency, and some of them manage to provide interesting and inclusive programmes despite adverse circumstances. To design interventions that help correct the causes of disengagement rather than its symptoms, it is important to recognise this pattern.

2.7.2 Identifying the Research Gap.

This chapter is a literature review on the provision of Physical Education (PE) in schools, with an emphasis on problems pertinent to Guyana. It examines international policy frameworks, such as UNESCO's Quality Physical Education (QPE) framework. It also contrasts them with criticisms of the conventional PE practices, particularly those conducted by David Kirk (2010). The review identifies barriers related to systems and resources. These are curriculum marginalisation, less timetabled time, inadequate facilities, and the absence of equipment. These obstacles restrict the provision of teachers. It identifies human resource issues, as well. These are a lack of teacher training, a lower chance of professional development, and a narrow teaching approach. These

are limiting the diversity and inclusivity of PE. Students' interaction is influenced. Participation is affected by gender, cultural background, and confidence. These elements tend to exacerbate the existing inequalities.

A major aspect of PE delivery is leadership. It determines the conditions of structures and the culture of schools. The supportive leaders will be able to supply resources, guard curriculum time, and promote collaboration. It assists teachers in becoming more innovative and in providing inclusive programs (Beddoes & Jones, 2022; Simonton et al., 2021). Poor or ineffective leadership is problematic. It may cause teacher stress, role conflict, and marginalisation, particularly in rural or resource-poor environments (Sakallı & Şenel, 2025; Spicer & Robinson, 2021). Systemic constraints, along with leadership gaps, bring about pedagogical narrowing. Teachers rely on the usual teacher-centred methods and a limited range of activities. Such narrowing reduces student participation, especially among girls, less confident learners, and students whose cultural or personal interests are not covered by the curriculum (Hills & Croston, 2012).

The pattern is evident in the literature. Constrained systems lead to pedagogical narrowing, which in turn results in student disengagement. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on Guyana in particular. There were related challenges in a preliminary case study in Annandale Secondary School. There was a lack of adequate facilities, professional development, and student engagement. However, this research was focused on one school. There is a clear research gap. None of the district-level studies has examined how these issues manifest across numerous schools, how they vary by context, or how teachers and leaders address them. This study fills that gap. It examines the PE teachers and leaders in three schools in Region 4. It provides evidence to support interventions at the school and district levels. By doing so, it provides viable recommendations to enhance the delivery of PE in Guyana and in other developing contexts like these.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework on which this research on the perceived obstacles in efficient delivery of Physical Education (PE) in the Education District Region 4 of Guyana is based. The chapter starts by laying the philosophical groundwork of the research, explaining and justifying the interpretivist paradigm that guides it. It outlines the qualitative multiple-case study methodology and the reasons for selecting this approach over other methods. Later sections discuss the research context, sampling plan, data-gathering methodology, and data analysis. The chapter also discusses trustworthiness and rigour, ethical issues, and researcher positionality. It concludes with a clear declaration of the analytical intent, clarifying what type of insights this methodology is meant to produce.

3.2 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

This research was situated within an interpretivist paradigm. The importance of this philosophical orientation lies in the research questions, which aimed to investigate the perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of teachers and school leaders regarding PE delivery. In interpretivism, reality is a social construction; meaning is not found but rather created through human interaction and interpretation (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is not to find a single objective truth about the problems with PE, but to comprehend the numerous subjective truths of people exposed to these problems daily.

Yin (2018) stresses that interpretivist methods are best suited to studies addressing how and why questions, i.e., questions that focus on process, meaning, and context rather than frequency or distribution. An illustration of this orientation is seen in the research questions of this study. These are questions on perceptions and experiences (RQ1), perceived adequacy (RQ2), perceived impacts (RQ3), and comparative patterns (RQ4). The questions are all aimed at gaining insight into the participants' subjective attitudes, with the realisation that their interpretations are not just views but the reality in which they operate.

The interpretivist paradigm also recognises the role of the researcher in the co-construction of meaning. Qualitative interviews are not neutral tools for extracting information but are interactions in which information is actively generated (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This awareness guided the reflexive approach mentioned later in this chapter, ensuring that the researcher's impact on the research process was acknowledged and critically considered.

3.3 Research Approach: Qualitative Multiple Case Study Design

The study was based on the interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative research method. The qualitative research approach is suitable when researchers need to examine complex social problems and understand people's experiences and meanings in their own words (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The research employed a multiple-case study design to investigate the factors influencing the provision of Physical Education (PE) in actual school settings. A case study examines an existing problem in its real-life context, particularly when it is not possible to distinguish the problem from the context (Yin, 2018). In this study, each school was treated as a distinct case, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how systemic and local factors interact to shape Physical Education

delivery within that setting. Education district Region 4 has 12 secondary schools. Of these, three were selected from the list of Grade A, B, and C schools, and each school was treated as an individual case with its own context and participants. This design enabled the researcher to examine issues in each school and compare trends across schools. Compared with phenomenology or ethnography, the design was selected due to the variation in experiences of PE delivery across schools and positions. Interpretive case studies have also been used to explore experiences in inclusive PE (Morrison & Gleddie, 2021), while Åsebø et al. (2020) provide a qualitative case study of contextual stressors in PE.

3.4 Sampling Strategy: Purposive Sampling.

3.4.1 School Selection (3 Schools out of 12)

Three of the twelve schools in District Region 4 were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is characterised by the ability to select information-rich and relevant cases to answer the research question (Patton, 2015). The selection criteria were developed in order to achieve a diversification of the major dimensions:

- School grade: At least one Grade A, one Grade B, and one Grade C school was selected to obtain variation on the school type.
- Location: To allow the study of location-based differences, urban and rural schools were incorporated. The exact urban-rural representation indicates the makeup of the district.
- Accessibility: The schools were required to be ready to engage and available during the fieldwork period. Practical considerations were weighed up against analytical values.

This purposive sampling method sought variation across the district's school contexts while remaining manageable within the limits of the dissertation; it did not aim to establish statistical representativeness. It enabled cross-case comparisons for Research Question 4.

3.4.2 Participant Selection (12 Participants)

Within each selected school, four participants were recruited, yielding a total sample of twelve participants. The inclusion criteria were:

- Employee of the selected school
- At least two years of experience in current role (ensuring informed perspectives)
- Willingness to participate voluntarily

Table 1: The participant roles are:

Role	Number
Head Teacher	3 (one per school)
Deputy Head Teacher (Curriculum)	3 (one per school)
Head of Allied Arts Department	3 (one per school)
Physical Education Teacher	3 (one per school)

The roles were chosen to offer varying insights into the provision of Physical Education (PE). Head Teachers clarify decisions related to leadership, including how to set priorities and allocate resources. Deputy Head Teachers (Curriculum) give some information on timetabling and the placement of PE among other subjects. Allied Arts Department heads bridge the gap between school policy and classroom practice. PE Teachers share their day-to-day experiences teaching PE and the struggles they encounter. Both male and female participants were included where possible. In the choice of schools, both urban and rural areas were represented. This enabled the research to gather opinions from diverse positions and settings, broadening the range of perspectives available for analysis.

3.5 Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Interview.

3.5.1 Interview Schedule Development.

The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews. This approach offers a sense of structure by combining methods to ensure that all participants cover the main subjects, and it is flexible enough to enable participants to share their experiences and the researcher to pose follow-up questions to gain deeper insight (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interview schedule was created in several stages. The research questions were explored first to determine the key issues to be addressed. Second, the literature review informed the development of the interview questions. Three, the questions were open-ended, allowing participants to elaborate on the details of their experiences. The interview schedule was structured towards the main themes such as systemic and resource barriers, professional development and teaching methods, student engagement and participation, and leadership support, with other probes applied to discuss answers further.

3.5.2 Pilot Interview

The pilot interview was conducted with a PE teacher at a school not included in the main sample. It aimed to test the clarity, relevance, and length of the interview schedule, practice interviewing techniques, and refine questions based on feedback. The pilot transcript was reviewed, and corrections were made to question wording, sequence, and probes prior to the start of fieldwork. This process improved the quality of the data collection and ensured that the schedule was fit for purpose.

3.5.3 Fieldwork Procedures

Fieldwork commenced after ethical approval was obtained from the University of Bedfordshire, and the Ministry of Education granted consent in Guyana, Department of Education, Region 4. The first step was to send formal letters to the Ministry to obtain permission to conduct research in schools in Region 4. School principals were contacted to participate in the study and informed of it after approval. Potential participants were identified with the assistance of the principal, and information sheets were provided to enable them to decide whether to participate. The interviews were conducted at the most convenient times, usually on non-teaching days, and took place in school rooms. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in English. The researcher provided details of the study's purpose at the beginning of every interview, confirmed consent, and reminded participants about confidentiality and their right to withdraw. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission, and where recording was not possible, detailed notes were taken. The researcher also composed field notes of observations and thoughts. The interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

3.6 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

The analysis of the interview data was carried out using the thematic analysis, which is systematised into six phases and introduced by Braun and Clarke (2022). The reason for this choice is its flexibility, accessibility, and theoretical relevance to the interpretivist paradigm. NVivo qualitative data analysis software facilitated coding, organisation, and retrieval of data and supported an auditable record of the analysis.

- Phase 1: Familiarisation - The audio recordings were transcribed word-for-word. By listening to the audio and reading the transcripts several times, one can ensure the accuracy of the information and immerse oneself in the data. Memos were used to note initial thoughts, observations, and possible patterns.
- Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes - NVivo was used to code the whole dataset systematically. Codes were labels used to designate aspects of the data in terms of the research questions. Explicit content (captured in semantic codes) and underlying ideas, assumptions, or meanings (captured in latent codes) were both generated. It is a thorough stage that includes as many patterns as possible.
- Phase 3: Searching for Themes - Themes such as codes were grouped and put together into thematic possibilities. Themes are more general patterns of meaning that describe something significant about the data related to the research problems. This entailed reviewing coded extracts to determine how various codes can be grouped to create broad themes, and drawing up initial thematic maps.
- Phase 4: Reviewing Themes - Candidate themes were compared to the coded data as well as the entire dataset. This checks theme coherence, thematic data representation, and whether the themes should be refined, combined, segregated, or discarded. Themes were narrowed down until they gave a compelling and valid explanation of the information.
- Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes: Once the thematic map was completed, themes were defined, and each was given a name. This entailed defining the nature of each theme, its scope, and its relationship to other themes. Clear, concise names were prepared to explain the theme's overall idea.
- Phase 6: Producing the Report - The final analysis is presented in Chapter 4, by theme, with picturesque data extracts. The story shows that the analysis addresses the research questions and is grounded in the data.

The study combined inductive and deductive coding. Inductive coding allowed themes to emerge directly from participants' experiential data, while deductive coding ensured that the analysis engaged with established themes from the literature and conceptual framework. The analytic approach and coding decisions need to be made explicit and consistent with the study's theoretical position (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.7 Trustworthiness and Rigour

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is determined by the same criteria as validity and reliability in quantitative research, only in parallel. Trustworthiness in this study was addressed through the following strategies.

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility ensures that the research accurately reflects participants' views. To this end, member checking was employed, in which participants reviewed summaries of the key findings and indicated whether the interpretations reflected their experiences (Bang, 2024). This feedback was useful for improving the analysis and

ensuring that the participants' voices are faithfully represented. Critical supervisory discussion was also used, involving regular meetings with the supervisor to review coded data, emergent themes, and analytical decisions, thereby challenging assumptions and enhancing reflexivity (Maritz & Jooste, 2011). In this study, the dissertation supervisor served as the external critical evaluator. While meetings with a supervisor serve a similar function - offering an outside perspective to question interpretations and strengthen analytical rigour - it is acknowledged that true peer debriefing typically involves a colleague of equal standing rather than a supervisor. The regular supervisory discussions nonetheless contributed meaningfully to the trustworthiness of the analysis.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability is the question of whether the findings can be used elsewhere (Drisko, 2025). Rather than asserting generalisability, qualitative research seeks transferability through thick description (Geertz, 1973). This research paper has described the research setting, the subjects, and the results in detail so that the reader can assess the applicability of the findings to their own context. The purposive sampling method, in which the researcher seeks to capture variety within the district, also helps enhance transferability by illuminating contextual noise in the results. Moreover, the degree to which the emergent themes are consistent with, different from, or extend existing literature strengthens transferability, as it allows the reader to situate the results within a broader body of knowledge and assess their applicability to other contexts where such patterns are likely to be prevalent.

3.7.3 Dependability and Confirmability.

Dependability and confirmability were addressed through consistency in the research process and by grounding the findings in the data while critically examining the researcher's assumptions. An audit trail was maintained to track all research choices, such as sampling, interview schedules, coding, and analysis, and to enable others to research the process (Bingham, 2023; Gunbayi, 2024). The researcher also kept a reflexive journal documenting their thoughts, emotions, and assumptions, and analysing how their position might affect the study. The practices contribute to making the research credible and evidence-based.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the professional ethics of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018). The ethical procedures that were followed were as follows.

3.8.1 Ethical Approval and Permissions

The research ethics committee of the University of Bedfordshire approved data collection prior to its conduct. Also, the Guyana Ministry of Education approved and formally consented to the study in state schools, which is a prerequisite for research. These approvals situated the research within institutional and national ethical requirements.

3.8.2 Informed Consent

The participants were given a detailed Information sheet about the purpose of the research, the procedures, risks, and benefits, and their rights. Every interview was conducted with a written consent, whereby participants confirmed that they had read the information and that they were participating in the interview voluntarily. Permission to record audio was sought separately from consent to participate; where recording was declined, extensive notes were taken instead.

3.8.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality.

All written materials referring to the participants and schools use pseudonyms. Reporting does not contain any identifiable details such as names, particular locations, or peculiarities. Documents (recordings, transcripts, on-site notes) were stored securely on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. Participants were informed that confidentiality would be maintained as much as possible, but they were also told about the boundaries of confidentiality (e.g., reporting of harm).

3.8.4 Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw.

Participants were made aware that participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw in accordance with the consent arrangements without giving a reason or being penalised. They were also assured that there would be no negative consequences for refusing to participate or withdrawing from the study with respect to their employment or work relationships. In the case of withdrawal, already collected data would not be analysed unless the participant agreed to its use.

3.8.5 Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Being a teacher in the Guyanese education system, I am an insider to this study (Bourke, 2014). This positionality has the following benefits: contextual knowledge, relationships, and accessibility. It has its

challenges, however: assumptions are made based on previous experience, there is a risk of bias towards certain interpretations, and participants may make common assumptions that must be explicitly stated.

To overcome these concerns, a reflexive journal was kept throughout the research, covering the design, fieldwork, and analysis, in which critical considerations were made regarding the role of positionality in relationships with participants and in data interpretation. An external perspective was sought through regular critical discussions with the supervisor. The analysis puts participants' voices first by making heavy use of verbatim quotes and ensuring that the findings are grounded in what participants say rather than what the researcher thinks.

The research involved neither pupils nor other vulnerable groups. All participants were adult professionals interviewed as such. Their work experiences and perception are the matter of the research, but not any personal or sensitive issues.

3.9 Analytical Intent: Identifying Systemic vs School-Specific Challenges

This research design enabled the study to identify common systemic constraints and school-based problems in the delivery of PE. The cross-case analysis enabled the study to isolate problems shared by the selected schools, rather than those that emerge in specific schools (Yin, 2018). The schools were considered unique situations, and this emphasises their unique arrangement of difficulties. The comparison of results across schools shows patterns that point either to the systemic nature of problems or to local factors.

This difference has significant practical consequences for the finding application. Systemic issues, including poor policy enforcement or a lack of resources, need to be addressed by the Ministry of Education or district authorities. School-specific issues, such as specific leadership dynamics or the impact of the local community, should receive school-specific interventions. The separation of systemic and local challenges is clear in the research and thus provides a more accurate and practical evidence base for enhancing PE delivery.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the results of the semi-structured interviews with twelve participants in three secondary schools in Education District Region 4, Guyana. The sample included three Head Teachers, three Deputy Head Teachers (Curriculum), three Heads of Allied Arts Departments, and three Physical Education teachers, one from each of grades A, B, and C, respectively. The discussion was conducted in accordance with the six-step thematic analysis model outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022), resulting in seven broader themes that address the four research questions underpinning this study.

The results are organised by theme based on the research questions, and word-for-word quotes from the participants support each theme. All participants and schools have been given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, as specified in the ethical protocol. A summary of the codes, their positions, and grades in the participants' schools is given in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Participant Coding Framework

Participant Code	Role	School Grade
HT-A	Head Teacher	Grade A
DHT-A	Deputy Head Teacher (Curriculum)	Grade A
HOD-A	Head of Allied Arts Department	Grade A
PET-A	Physical Education Teacher	Grade A
HT-B	Head Teacher	Grade B
DHT-B	Deputy Head Teacher (Curriculum)	Grade B
HOD-B	Head of Allied Arts Department	Grade B
PET-B	Physical Education Teacher	Grade B
HT-C	Head Teacher	Grade C
DHT-C	Deputy Head Teacher (Curriculum)	Grade C
HOD-C	Head of Allied Arts Department	Grade C
PET-C	Physical Education Teacher	Grade C

4.2 Theme 1: Systemic Marginalisation of Physical Education

4.2.1 Curriculum Positioning and Priority Status

The first major theme that emerged across all the interviews was the peripheral status of Physical Education within the overall school curriculum. Although formally acknowledged under the Allied Arts programme (Ministry of Education, 2021), participants consistently reported that PE ranked lower than the core academic subjects. This perception was identified across all three school grades, but at different levels.

The Head Teacher of the Grade C school articulated this tension explicitly:

"Parents do not emphasise sports. The school has now become academically focused rather than multicultural. Sometimes you find that they pay little to no interest in certain sports, or unless the Ministry

of Education is sending a letter that says that this has to be done, that is the only way the sport will be executed." (HT-C)

This statement reveals a fundamental contradiction between policy rhetoric and school-level practice. The Head Teacher admits that external forces from the Ministry are necessary to drive the process and states that without this pressure, PE would receive even less attention. The mention of the school becoming academically based, rather than multicultural, signifies a deliberate shift towards prioritising examination subjects over holistic development. This observation aligns with the examination-related constraints on changes to the PE curriculum discussed by Simmons and MacLean (2018).

The Deputy Head Teacher of Curriculum at the Grade A school offered a more nuanced perspective, acknowledging the theoretical value of PE while simultaneously revealing its practical subordination:

"While they do recognise the importance of physical education, there are times when academic subjects are more prioritised than physical education. However, I can say that I do get support from the leadership of my school." (DHT-A)

This response reflects the reality of competing national priorities within the education system. Even though the Deputy Head Teacher confirms having been offered some leadership, the quote also shows that academic attainment remains a priority and often takes precedence over PE when the going gets tough. Where there is more than one policy goal, holistic student development versus examination performance, the latter is likely to have a stronger impact on school-level decision-making. This observation suggests that even with the allegedly better resources of a Grade A school, PE is still likely to be sidelined where it comes up against academic subjects. These findings support the argument of Richards et al. (2018) that PE marginalisation is institutional and not necessarily tied to resource availability.

4.2.2 Timetabling and Curriculum Time Allocation

Inadequate curriculum time was a major limitation as seen across all twelve interviews. The respondents consistently indicated that the time allocated to PE was insufficient to ensure significant skill development, especially when the theoretical and practical elements were balanced. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade B school expressed this frustration vividly:

"The allocated time is often too short for full development of skills and ensuring meaningful participation of all students. For the theory topics, I would say the time is basically enough for theory lessons. However, as it relates to practical lessons, especially those where you have to cover theory and practice in one, I do not think the time is enough. I feel rushed at times." (PET-B)

This differentiation between theory and practical delivery is important. Although theory lessons can be taught in normal timeframes, practical lessons take longer, including warm-ups, instruction, activity, and cool-downs, a structural reality that timetabling decisions often cannot accommodate. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school reinforced this concern:

"You have 70 minutes to teach a class, and right when you finish going through the technique, because not everybody is interested in sport, by the time you try to deliver the technique, the time is up. Nothing major was expected to some extent." (PET-A)

The fact that not every student is interested in sport, as the teacher observed, is typical in PE, particularly when lessons include competitive games or when students are inexperienced or unconfident. This lack of interest causes teachers to waste more time trying to reach out to unwilling learners, further reducing already shortened instructional time. As pointed out by Alayan et al. (2025), this low engagement and time limitations may be detrimental to learning; the problem is not only student disinterest but also how these factors compound existing time-related pressures in real PE classes.

Table 4.2: Summary of Timetabling Challenges Across School Grades

Challenge	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C
Insufficient lesson duration	✓	✓	✓
Lessons shortened by assemblies	✓	✓	✓
Lessons cancelled for school events.	✓	✓	✓
Friday afternoon initiative disrupting attendance	✗	✓	✗
Multiple classes sharing a limited space	✓	✓	✓

4.2.3 Interruptions and Cancellations

One of the most notable results was the rate and type of interruptions that decreased or cancelled PE instructional time. Students in all three schools cited several sources of disruption, such as school assemblies, activities on national holidays, parent-teacher conferences, and special events. The Deputy Head Teacher from the Grade B school provided a comprehensive list:

"On Monday mornings, we have an assembly that definitely shortens my lessons. I have level assemblies on Friday mornings as well. We have different school activities. For example, Easter is

coming up, and we are going to have Easter activities and Easter concerts. Some of these activities do interrupt and cause my lessons to be cut short." (DHT-B)

The Physical Education teacher from the Grade C school identified a particularly impactful interruption to the Ministry-initiated Friday afternoon physical activity programme:

"The initiative which is now implemented across the board in schools by the Ministry of Education for the Friday afternoon PE... It is usually a decrease or depleted attendance at school presently now because meeting with only my grade 8 level on one time per week, I tend to miss like two of the grade 8 classes on Friday due to the same activities which are implemented in school now." (PET-C)

This result reveals a well-meaning but self-defeating policy outcome: a Ministry programme intended to encourage physical activity has instead led to a decline in attendance at scheduled PE classes. The teacher's phrasing, describing "depleted attendance", suggests a failure of coordination among policy initiatives, resulting in unintended adverse effects on curriculum delivery rather than enhancing students' physical activity as intended.

4.3 Theme 2: Resource Scarcity and Infrastructure Deficits

4.3.1 Equipment Limitations

The second overriding theme in all the interviews was resource constraints. Respondents repeatedly cited a lack of basic equipment, outdated supplies, and poor amenities as key impediments to the successful provision of PE. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school articulated the scope of the problem:

"Some of the challenges faced as a PE teacher to deliver the subject effectively are a shortage of equipment, outdated equipment for sports, limited space and sometimes overcrowded schools in terms of limited space with a lot of students, especially when planning outdoor activities." (PET-A)

The reference to the old equipment is especially important, as it implies not only a lack of sufficient equipment, but also safety and pedagogical issues related to material decay. The Head of the Allied Arts Department from the Grade B school elaborated on the financial dimensions of this challenge:

"Some sports you are going to get access to the resources because they are quite prevalent sports in Guyana. However, there are some other sports that you are going to have difficulty with finding resources, and not only finding them, but the money to buy them, because some of them are very, very costly. They are expensive." (HOD-B)

This assertion underscores a significant difference between popular sports (like football and cricket), which have ready supply chains and community backing, and less popular sports, where equipment procurement is prohibitively expensive. This means the breadth of the curriculum is limited not only by school budgets but also by the wider economic environment in which schools exist.

4.3.2 Space Constraints

Facility constraints were also a concomitant issue, with respondents in all three schools indicating a lack of space to deliver PE effectively. This was especially acute when several classes had to use limited facilities at the same time. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade B school described the situation:

"Space is oftentimes a problem as well, because when physical education is happening, sometimes you have multiple classes doing physical education. So then, for myself and, say, two other teachers having to share one space, it becomes an issue at times." (PET-B)

This is not simply a lack of space, but a scheduling issue. Several PE classes will take place simultaneously, which means teachers and students will have to share the few available facilities. Classes could be better spaced out with improved scheduling; each would have appropriate access to space. This not happening indicates that PE needs are not given full attention, or that it receives spare time after another subject's priority.

The Physical Education teacher from the Grade C school added a further dimension - the impact of weather on already limited outdoor facilities:

"Weather conditions often disrupt planned activity, especially when planned for outdoor lessons. We know we are in the summer season. Many students cry out that the sun is hot. So, you have to shorten your time to give them enough water because we know hydration plays a major role." (PET-C)

This observation represents the interplay of natural and infrastructural limits. Where there are no indoor or covered facilities, tropical climatic conditions, extreme heat and heavy rain can directly reduce the time available for instructions as well as compel pedagogical accommodations that can impair learning results.

Table 4.3: Resource Challenges Across School Grades

Resource Category	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C
Insufficient equipment quantity	✓	✓	✓
Outdated equipment	✓	✓	X
Limited outdoor space	✓	✓	✓
Multiple classes sharing space	✓	✓	✓
Weather-related cancellations	✓	✓	✓
Lack of indoor facilities	✓	✓	✓
Limited textbooks/resources	✓	✓	✓

4.3.3 Textbooks and Instructional Materials

One of the unanticipated discoveries was the lack of textbooks and written instructional resources in PE. Although it was expected that equipment would be insufficient, the lack of basic curriculum materials became a major issue, especially in the theory aspect of PE. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school noted:

Currently, we are using only two textbooks: PE123 and another for CSEC. I cannot remember the exact name right now. So maybe if we have other resources in terms of textbooks..." (PET-A)

The teacher's inability to recall the second textbook title may indicate limited engagement with written resources or a limited range of available materials. The Head of Allied Arts Department from the Grade C school reinforced this concern, linking textbook scarcity to broader challenges in accessing sport-specific knowledge:

"There are limited resources when it comes to physical education and sports. For example, you are limited in terms of information on a sport. I mean, yeah, you can go online and get it. However, if you have local people who can provide books and so forth as resources, it will be great." (HOD-C)

This remark brings out a significant conflict between digital and print resources. Although the internet provides access to information, the teacher recommends that local, contextually relevant materials would be better, which has implications for decision-making in curriculum development and resource allocation.

4.4 Theme 3: Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

4.4.1 Initial Training and Qualifications

The participants were also asked to report their levels of formal qualification in PE, with all three Physical Education teachers holding some form of certification or currently pursuing additional studies. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade C school described his qualifications:

"I am a physical education teacher who has a diploma in physical education. Moreover, I am also currently a final-year student at the University, Saratoga College of Education, considering an associate degree in physical education. Along with being an athlete, I am grounded here, experience is concerned for the subject area." (PET-C)

The Physical Education teacher from the Grade B school provided a more detailed account of his training:

"I had to go through the Sierra Plata College of Education as a physical education major. Moreover, I received quite in-depth training in various sports and aspects of physical education, sports management, and sports psychology. I did different sports, volleyball, dance, football, cricket, and golf as well." (PET-B)

While these accounts demonstrate that specialised PE training exists within the Guyanese system, the Deputy Head Teacher from the Grade A school raised concerns about consistency and quality:

"Physical education teachers in training in most developing countries do receive some initial training; however, this is often as a general teacher training programme and not a specialised PE course. The quality of this training is very mixed." (DHT-A)

This is an observation regarding the Deputy Head's broader curriculum perspective: some PE teachers are being trained as specialists, while others are recruited with general teaching qualifications. This leaves the system with an unequal distribution of expertise, with some schools having ready PE experts and others having generalist teachers who have little to no pedagogical content knowledge in physical education. This difference in teacher preparedness is probably a contributor to variation in the quality of PE provision within and between schools.

4.4.2 Continuing Professional Development

An even more troubling discovery was that there are few opportunities for continuous professional development among PE teachers. Although participants indicated that they had isolated training opportunities, these seemed infrequent and unorganised. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school described his CPD experiences:

"I would have received one karate. The karate head would have reached out to the Ministry of Education to provide karate classes, which I would have done, and collected certificates on my belt. When I entered CPC, I had exposure to volleyball, football, cricket, and dance. During cricket, they would have allowed

us to get an ICC certificate. So, I would have gotten my beginner certificate in cricket and football. Also, GFF, along with ExxonMobil, would have provided different activities as well." (PET-A)

Although this narrative shows initiative and a sense of exploration of the existing opportunities, the ad hoc quality of the training karate via a Ministry outreach, cricket via an external partner, and football via a corporate sponsor implies that there is not a systematic, curriculum-based approach to the professional development. The Head of the Allied Arts Department from the Grade B school acknowledged this gap:

"Teachers should be constantly trained to ensure they can stay abreast with current methods and the evolving needs of the students; otherwise, there is a risk of repeating old practices." (HOD-B)

The Physical Education teacher from the Grade C school explicitly called for more structured CPD:

"I would say train and support PE teachers where you have a workshop at least every month or at least every academic term. You should host a workshop to refresh PE teachers in order to provide different courses." (PET-C)

The specificity of this recommendation for monthly or termly workshops indicates that the current provision falls significantly short of what teachers perceive as necessary for effective practice.

4.5 Theme 4: Student Engagement and Participation Patterns

4.5.1 Overall Enthusiasm and Attitudes

The many challenges listed above notwithstanding, the participants consistently indicated that students who do participate in PE exhibit high enthusiasm, especially for practical activities. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade C school rated student motivation highly:

"Motivation and attitude towards the subject... I would rate it 95 out of 100. And that is all because of the teacher who usually delivers the subject." (PET-C)

This attribution of student motivation to the teacher's influence is noteworthy, as it suggests that individual teacher quality can partially compensate for systemic constraints. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade B school offered a similar observation:

"Students would gravitate towards mostly the sports aspect of physical education. There are times when students will have the theoretical aspect; they will pay attention, but their attention span will not be as great as it would be if they were doing a sport. In-class participation compared to outside participation, outside participation wins by a lot." (PET-B)

This tendency towards applied rather than theoretical PE has significant consequences for the curriculum and timetable. If the practical lessons need more time and could be more engaging, the existing time limitation on practical work is an especially severe issue.

4.5.2 Factors Influencing Disengagement

Although positive attitudes prevailed overall, respondents highlighted several reasons for student disengagement. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school identified technology as a significant competing influence:

"The children now are not interested in sports because of how technology is influencing them. You find that some students do not even know how to play simple football or cricket. That should have been the foundation sports growing up... but now you find that social media and technology role would have changed the way how a person views sports." (PET-A)

This result, which suggests that digital technologies have diminished students' foundational knowledge of sport, can be interpreted as implying that PE educators must contend with two simultaneous issues: a lack of resources and evolving student attitudes shaped by broader societal trends. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade C school elaborated on the complexity of student attitudes:

"In terms of attitude, you find that because some students do not know about the sport and the way in which you deliver it, it now causes some students to be interested... You will find that some students do not care about sports because technology has taken over their social lives. So, it is balanced in terms of some students will receive while some do not." (PET-C)

Table 4.4: Factors Influencing Student Engagement in PE

Factor	Effect on Engagement	Reported by
Interest in the activity	Positive	PET-C
Teacher delivery quality	Positive	PET-C, PET-B
Availability of equipment	Positive/negative	PET-C, PET-A
Facility conditions	Positive/negative	PET-C
Technology/social media	Negative	PET-A, PET-C
Confidence level	Positive/negative	PET-C
Gender biases	Negative	PET-A
Cultural beliefs	Negative	PET-A

4.5.3 Gender Differences

Gender emerged as a significant factor shaping engagement patterns. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school observed:

"Gender biases in terms of some people's view that females should not take part in certain sports. For example, I will use football. When you hear about football, you mostly see women coming forward to say, 'I can play football,' but you will find many boys interested in football and cricket. However, maybe you put a sport like golf or tennis, you might find more females reaching out to that sport instead of football and cricket." (PET-A)

This finding is consistent with Hills and Croston's (2012) examination of gender boundaries in coeducational PE. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade B school noted developmental differences in engagement patterns across grade levels:

"The form ones, they are very, very enthusiastic about the whole practical aspect. However, when it comes to forms three to four, some children tend to be reluctant to complete the practical aspect. Some of them are just here; they want to have a book and talk. They do not want to get sweaty and naturally bring out the real meaning of the practical lesson." (PET-B)

This assertion highlights a significant difference between the Head Teacher's implied formal support for leadership and the overall school culture, in which other teachers can undermine PE.

4.6 Theme 5: Leadership Support and School Culture

4.6.1 Variable Leadership Priorities

Participants' perceptions of leadership support varied considerably, both across schools and within the same institution. The Head Teacher of the Grade B school offered a cautiously positive assessment:

"We do have support from the school, but not 100% fully, because I always think that teachers always think that physical education and sports subjects are not important subjects in school. So, some people turn a blind eye to the subject." (HT-B)

This statement reveals an important distinction between formal leadership support, which the Head Teacher suggests exists, and the broader school culture, where other teachers may devalue PE. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school provided a more critical perspective:

"My school leadership is, they do support, but people view sports as different... sometimes you find that they pay little to no interest in certain sports, or unless the Ministry of Education is sending a letter that says that this has to be done, that is the only way the sport will be executed." (PET-A)

The constant mention of the Ministry's mandates as the only way to make things happen can also suggest that the school administration gives PE very little consideration in the absence of outside interference. This finding helps substantiate Leithwood et al.'s (2020) claim that leadership commitment plays a crucial role in policy-to-practice translation.

4.6.2 Resource Allocation Decisions

The highest priorities of leadership were best demonstrated in resource allocation decisions. Respondents across all three schools indicated that budgetary allocations for PE were insufficient relative to demand. The Head of the Allied Arts Department from the Grade C school called for systemic change:

"If we can have more partnerships with the Ministry of Education along with our department, where they can reach out to schools and ask them what are some equipment that they need, and each school should have the same amount of equipment, not just one school should dominate in terms of equipment, because if one school dominates, then you will find that when there is competition, that school will always come on top." (HOD-C)

There are equity issues in this statement. The implication of the proposal that certain schools outperform the rest in the form of equipment, presumably Grade A schools with more equipment, is that existing patterns of allocation might continue or even increase the inequalities that already exist between schools. These concerns connect with broader attention to context and equity in educational research, policy, and practice (Wilcox & Lawson, 2022).

4.7 Theme 6: Impact on Learning Outcomes

4.7.1 Reduced Depth of Learning

The participants consistently reported that the challenges mentioned above directly affected student learning outcomes. The Physical Education teacher from the Grade B school articulated this connection clearly:

Challenges often reduce the effectiveness of the lesson and limit the time available. Lack of equipment, space constraints, and low participation may prevent students from fully developing their skills, ultimately affecting their learning outcomes. (PET-B)

The Physical Education teacher from the Grade A school elaborated on the mechanisms through which constraints produce reduced outcomes:

"Reduced participation where you have a lack of equipment and trained personnel. Some students are less active. For example, maybe you might have a PE teacher, but you do not have the space to execute the task. You go into the classroom and teach the content. Low motivation refers to how students react to your teaching of the topic. Some students skip the classes." (PET-A)

The mention of teaching theoretical material in classrooms when practical work is not possible is especially noteworthy because it constitutes an essential violation of the PE curriculum. If space allows no viable activity, the subject is reduced to its theoretical aspect, which is an adaptation, but, as essential as it is in the given circumstances, it is detrimental to the physical growth goals of PE.

4.7.2 Cumulative Effects

The Deputy Head Teacher from the Grade B school described the cumulative nature of these effects:

"Limited time and resources can reduce the depth of learning, and low engagement from students can make it harder to achieve the learning objectives. Hence, why you probably have to go over the objectives and take it over into another class because you did not achieve it in the first one." (DHT-B)

This finding demonstrates a recursive relationship, whereby achieving the objective within the allocated time is not possible due to constraints, necessitating more time in subsequent lessons and further limiting the curriculum coverage achievable within the academic year. The net result is a systematic contraction of the PE curriculum, which aligns with the pedagogical contraction suggested by the conceptual framework in Chapter 2.

4.8 Theme 7: Recommendations for Improvement

Participants' suggestions for enhancing PE delivery directly reflected the barriers identified earlier in this chapter. Regarding resources and infrastructure, teachers and leaders demanded more, higher-quality resources, better facilities (e.g., indoor or covered spaces to reduce weather interruptions), more dedicated curriculum time (e.g., one to two times a week, not once), and enhanced leadership. Regarding professional development, the members suggested a structured, frequent training, preferably at least one workshop a term and that a monetary reward for after-hours CPD might boost attendance and motivation. Suggestions at the policy level were for greater acknowledgement of PE in holistic student development, more equal allocation of resources in schools, and needs-based allocation that considers the sporting culture of individual schools rather than a general pattern. All of these recommendations reaffirm that the systemic and school-level issues mentioned above need the concerted efforts of policymakers, school leaders, and teachers.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes by summarising the findings introduced in Chapter 4, situating them within the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and answering all four questions addressed by this study. The chapter then covers the strengths and limitations of the research, provides recommendations for policy and practice in response to the findings, and concludes with thoughts on what the findings mean for PE delivery in Guyana and other contexts.

5.2 Interpretation of Findings

5.2.1 Systemic Marginalisation and the Policy-Practice Gap (RQ1)

The first research question asked: *What are the perceptions and experiences of teachers and school leaders in Education District Region 4 regarding challenges in curriculum timing, infrastructure, and resources in the teaching of Physical Education?*

The study found that staff across all three schools in Region 4 perceived PE to be consistently marginalised. According to them, there is a paucity of curriculum time, interruptions are common, and PE classes are occasionally cancelled. This is consistent with wider concerns about curriculum time and implementation (Hardman et al., 2014), and with teachers' accounts of curriculum change in a high-stakes examination climate (Simmons & MacLean, 2018). Despite PE being officially part of the national Allied Arts programme (Ministry of Education, 2021), interviewees reported a stark discrepancy between policy and practice, with schools' academic success being the most pressing concern. Poor equipment, facilities, and space were also mentioned by staff, aligning with the findings of Hardman et al. (2014) on the worldwide lack of PE resources. The teachers continued to note that weather conditions hamper outdoor lessons in areas without indoor facilities. Consequently, practical lessons are often reduced or replaced by theoretical training, which supports Burnett's (2021) point that PE policies tend to fall short in low-resource settings.

5.2.2 Professional Development and Leadership Support (RQ2)

The second research question asked: *How do teachers and leaders perceive the adequacy of professional development and leadership support for PE in these schools?*

The research determined that PE teachers have weak and irregular professional development. Despite basic teacher training, there is no systematic, ongoing development system. The majority of CPD opportunities are informal and rely on fortuitous occurrences rather than design. This supports attention to teacher education and continuing professional learning, concerns addressed by Calderón and MacPhail (2023) and Tannehill et al. (2021). Support from leadership was also identified as inconsistent in schools. Others provide moderate support; others provide PE under the Ministry of Education's direction. This result is consistent with Leithwood et al. (2020), who indicate that leadership is a powerful factor in school enhancement and learning. Another finding of the study was that PE is underestimated by other teachers, which impacts the school culture. This demonstrates that cultural change, rather than resources or training, is needed to improve PE. Additionally, Simonton et al. (2021) discuss how teacher emotions and teacher–student relationships relate to student motivation and learning.

5.2.3 Impact on Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes (RQ3)

The third research question asked: *What are the perceived impacts of these delivery challenges on student participation and engagement in PE?*

The results indicate that, from the perspective of PE staff, learners who attend PE are very enthusiastic, particularly during practical lessons. However, participation is generally diminished by several obstacles in the school setting. These are the scarcity of time and resources, the use of technology, inadequate confidence, gender bias, and cultural beliefs. This supports Alayan et al. (2025), who found that enjoyment and relevance are key to student engagement in PE. There were also gender variations in which certain sports are perceived as masculine or feminine, consistent with the gender boundaries discussed by Hills and Croston (2012). Participants like PET-B also reported that older students were less involved in PE activities. All these factors reduce overall participation and limit learning outcomes. This has consequently led to a situation in which teachers find it difficult to cover the intended content during the school term. This results in a narrowing of the curriculum, with crucial PE content postponed or minimised over time. In general, the research indicates that system challenges directly influence both participation and performance in PE.

5.2.4 Cross-School Comparisons (RQ4)

The fourth research question asked: *How do the challenges and their impacts compare across the different schools within the district?*

The results indicate that the three school grades have more similarities than differences, as all those involved experienced problems with curriculum marginalisation, lack of resources, and student engagement, suggesting that the issues are systemic and not restricted to individual schools. However, there were also differences; the Grade C school was more strained in resources and was characterised as becoming more academic-based, the Grade B school had issues with attendance as a result of the Friday afternoon initiative and the Grade A school, despite its additional resources, also had problems with equipment, space, and time. On the whole, this indicates that although there are significant problems that affect every school and thus require broader policy intervention, certain problems are unique to a particular school and might also require specific intervention.

5.3 Comparison with Literature

The findings of this study align with existing research while also adding new insights. Consistent with concerns about marginalisation and examination priorities (Chen, 2022; Simmons & MacLean, 2018), the study indicates that participants perceived PE as receiving insufficient priority in the selected schools and also validates the resource issues identified by Hardman et al. (2014) and Burnett (2021). However, it also demonstrates how these issues manifest in a developing Caribbean country. The research contributes to the literature by demonstrating the interplay of various issues, including the absence of resources, insufficient time, and low engagement that aggravate each other and result in decreased learning in the long run, which is consistent with the findings of Rahman et al. (2026), Turner et al. (2017), and Alayan et al. (2025). It expands on Kirk (2010) and demonstrates that these difficulties compel teachers to rely on more restricted, teacher-based practices, such as theory-only lessons, when they are unable to engage in practical work.

5.4 Strengths and Limitations

5.4.1 Strengths

This study has several strengths. It employed a multiple-case study design across three schools at different grade levels. It incorporated multiple roles in each school, providing a comprehensive picture of the issues surrounding PE delivery through various lenses. The key leaders and teachers were selected through purposive sampling, which helped capture both planning and classroom experiences. The use of Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis ensured a clear and systematic approach to data analysis. The study also fills a gap in research by providing a district-level qualitative analysis of PE challenges in Guyana.

5.4.2 Limitations

There are also certain limitations to this study. It enrolled only three of the twelve schools in Region 4; the results might not be a true reflection of the district's schools. It did not include students, who could have provided useful insights into engagement. The researcher's position as a teacher in Guyana may have influenced interpretation; reflexive practices were used to examine this influence rather than eliminate bias. The research also relied solely on interviews and self-reported data; therefore, observing PE lessons would have enhanced the findings. Lastly, it also examined a single point in time, and thus does not illustrate how the challenges can evolve.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Policy makers

Policymakers should allocate more time to the PE curriculum and ensure this time is not interrupted. They should also enhance resource allocation, particularly to under-resourced schools, such as Grade C schools. PE teachers should receive regular, systematic professional development. Indoor or covered facilities should also be provided to schools, given the weather challenges. Lastly, the school programmes must be aligned to avoid interfering with PE lessons (Hardman et al., 2014; Ministry of Education, 2021).

5.5.2 School leadership

The PE leaders of schools must focus on PE as a subject on the timetable and ensure it is not often interrupted. They should also emphasise the importance of PE among employees to enhance school culture. Leaders are expected to assist teachers with training opportunities and resource support. They also need to do a better job of managing space through scheduling and alliances. These measures align with best leadership practices in schools (Leithwood et al., 2020).

5.5.3 PE teachers

PE teachers are encouraged to record obstacles to advocate and enhance. They ought to cooperate with other teachers to exchange ideas and resources. Teachers should also use low-cost, low-equipment activities. They ought to promote equal involvement of both boys and girls in any activity. Lastly, student feedback should be utilised by teachers to enhance teaching and engagement (Simonton et al., 2021).

5.6 Future Research

Further studies ought to encompass student opinion to gain more insight into PE engagement. The actual PE lessons should also be observed to validate teacher reports. Longitudinal research is required to monitor changes in PE delivery. Transferability could be examined by comparing the results of various areas of Guyana. Lastly, intervention research ought to examine the most effective policies or strategies for enhancing PE outcomes.

5.7 Conclusion

This study examined the challenges affecting the delivery of Physical Education (PE) in secondary schools in Education District Region 4, Guyana, and their impact on student engagement. The results demonstrate that PE, as a subject in the curriculum, resources, teacher training, and leadership, is poorly prioritised across the three schools and inconsistently supported. All these issues combine to reduce the quality of teaching and restrict students' learning. Nevertheless, students attending PE are highly interested, and teachers are determined and innovative in passing lessons even with few resources. The research demonstrates that teachers can partially address these challenges, but doing so requires collaboration among policymakers, school leaders, and teachers to achieve real, lasting change. Policymakers should allocate more time and resources to PE, school leaders should prioritise it, and teachers should continue to adapt and promote the subject. On the whole, the study contributes to the under-researched area of PE in developing countries. It demonstrates that the issues are not insurmountable but can be addressed through joint, long-term efforts.

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