Managing Physical Education Provision for Primary School Pupils: A Case Study in Dong Thap Province, Vietnam

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HOW TO CITE:

Thanh Viet Pham, Dang Minh Thanh, Pham Hien Chuong, Nguyen Minh Sang (2026). Managing Physical Education Provision for Primary School Pupils: A Case Study in Dong Thap Province, Vietnam. International Journal of Special Education, 41(5s), 85-98.

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the quality of physical education (PE) provision and its management in primary schools in Dong Thap Province, Vietnam, providing empirical evidence to support implementation of the 2018 General Education Curriculum. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining a survey of 640 PE teachers with semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Quantitative results indicate that only 32.8% of teachers demonstrated good lesson preparation, while 41.5% were rated at a moderate level. Effective implementation of lesson plans was observed in 35.6% of cases, whereas shortcomings in instructional organisation and time allocation were common. Assessment and evaluation practices were identified as the weakest component, with over 45% of teachers reporting irregular or inadequately structured evaluation procedures. Qualitative findings further reveal inconsistencies in managerial monitoring and professional support. The study contributes empirical evidence from a provincial context in Vietnam, highlighting specific managerial bottlenecks that hinder curriculum reform. It proposes targeted management innovations in planning, instructional supervision, and assessment mechanisms to enhance the quality and sustainability of PE delivery in primary education.

Keywords: management; physical education; primary school pupils; Dong Thap Province; Vietnam.

1. Introduction

Physical education (PE) in schools plays a vital role in fostering holistic human development and contributing to national development and defence. Promoting students' physical development—particularly at the primary level—is essential to children's overall growth. President Ho Chi Minh also emphasised the importance of good health for national construction and development.

Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum identifies PE as a compulsory subject from Grades 1 to 12, aiming to equip students with knowledge and skills for health care and to cultivate lifelong exercise habits. For primary school pupils in particular, PE is crucial for enhancing physical fitness and safeguarding health (Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT dated 26 December 2018 issued by the Ministry of Education and Training on the overarching general education curriculum).

In primary schools in Dong Thap Province, PE management has shown positive developments, receiving greater attention from school leaders and exhibiting certain innovations in teaching methods. Nevertheless, limitations remain, including insufficient pedagogical innovation, inadequate lesson preparation, and assessment practices that do not yet reflect teaching quality in a substantive manner.

Internationally, school-based PE has been examined from multiple perspectives. The Russian scholar P. F. Lesgaft (1837–1909) laid foundations for modern PE theory as an independent scientific discipline through studies spanning history, anatomy, biology, pedagogy, and PE theory and methodology. Novikov and Matveev (1990) conceptualised PE as a process of addressing defined educational and training tasks, characterised as a pedagogical process guided by educators and organised according to pedagogical principles. Bailey (2006) reviewed the benefits and outcomes of PE and school sport, highlighting positive impacts on physical and mental health as well as students' social skill development, and underscoring PE as an essential component of holistic education. Donnelly et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between physical activity and academic achievement, reporting that participation in physical activity positively influences students' concentration and learning outcomes, thereby indicating that PE supports both health and academic processes. Dumith et al. (2011) analysed global physical inactivity prevalence and its association with the Human Development Index (HDI) across 76 countries, showing higher inactivity rates in countries with lower HDI and emphasising the role of policy and supportive environments. Janssen and LeBlanc (2010) conducted a systematic review of health benefits of physical activity for children and adolescents, particularly in reducing risks of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and highlighted the importance of establishing movement habits early. Kohl et al. (2012) characterised physical inactivity as a global "pandemic" with adverse public health consequences and called for stronger PE programmes and more comprehensive physical activity policies. Pate et al. (2009) examined participation rates in physical activity in the United States and found generally low levels, especially among older adults and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. Sallis et al. (2000) reviewed determinants of physical activity among children and adolescents—including family environment, school programmes, sport opportunities, and community support—and proposed strategies such as creating school and community environments that facilitate physical activity.

In Vietnam, several studies have addressed PE management in specific localities. Research on managing PE activities in lower secondary schools in Loc Ninh District, Binh Phuoc Province analysed factors affecting PE quality, including facilities, teacher workforce, and teaching methods, and proposed solutions to improve effectiveness (Nguyen V. Tr., 2023; Nguyen, T. T. H., & Nguyen, T. M. H., 2023). Another study in Cu Chi District, Ho Chi Minh City examined the status of PE management in lower secondary schools and identified challenges such as inadequate facilities, programme inconsistencies, and shortages of specialised PE teachers; it recommended improving PE quality through increased investment and

teacher professional development (Nguyen T. N. B. & Vo D. Th., 2024; Tran, M. D., & Le, Q. A., 2022).

Overall, prior international scholarship consistently recognises PE as integral to holistic education. Physical development contributes to intellectual growth, improves mental well-being, and provides a strong foundation for students' cognitive development. Accordingly, strengthening the management and development of PE in primary schools in Dong Thap Province is necessary to enhance the quality of comprehensive education. Well-coordinated organisation and implementation of PE activities can contribute to improved outcomes consistent with the standing of local primary schools in the region.

Against this background, the study entitled "Managing Physical Education Provision for Primary School Pupils: A Case Study in Dong Thap Province, Vietnam" is timely and significant in both theoretical and practical terms.

2. Methods

Design

This study employed a mixed-methods, cross-sectional design to examine: (i) the quality of physical education (PE) delivery and (ii) the management of PE provision in primary schools. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey, while qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and non-participant lesson observations were used for triangulation and contextual interpretation.

Setting

The research was conducted in public primary schools across Dong Thap Province, Vietnam, during the implementation of the 2018 General Education Curriculum, under which PE is a compulsory subject with defined standards for teaching, organisation, and assessment.

Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of all PE teachers currently working in public primary schools in Dong Thap Province during the 2024–2025 academic year ($N \approx 720$, according to provincial education statistics).

A stratified cluster sampling approach was applied to ensure representation across urban, semi-urban, and rural districts. Schools were first grouped by district, and clusters (schools) were randomly selected within each stratum. All PE teachers in selected schools were invited to participate.

A total of 680 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 640 valid responses were returned, yielding a response rate of 94.1%. This high rate was achieved through coordination with school administrators and follow-up reminders. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection.

For the qualitative component, 24 PE teachers were purposively selected from the survey sample to ensure variation in years of experience, school location (urban/rural), and reported performance levels. In addition, 12 PE lessons across different schools were observed using structured observation criteria.

Measures

A self-administered questionnaire was developed based on the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum and relevant literature on PE management and instructional quality. The instrument comprised four domains:

1. Lesson planning and preparation
2. Implementation of lesson plans and instructional organisation
3. Monitoring, assessment, and evaluation practices
4. Contextual supports and constraints (facilities, leadership support, workload, professional development)

Items were measured using a 4-point Likert-type scale (Level 1–Level 4), indicating increasing levels of performance, importance, or frequency.

To enhance content validity, the instrument was reviewed by three experts in physical education and educational management. A pilot test with 30 PE teachers outside the main sample was conducted to refine wording and clarity. Internal consistency

reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the overall scale was 0.87, indicating good reliability.

A semi-structured interview guide and an observation checklist were developed in alignment with the same four domains to support methodological triangulation.

Procedure

Questionnaires were administered in both paper-based and online formats over a four-week period. School leaders facilitated distribution but did not have access to individual responses to ensure confidentiality.

Semi-structured interviews (30–45 minutes each) were conducted either face-to-face or online, recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim. Lesson observations were conducted as non-participant observations using a structured checklist to document enacted planning, instructional organisation, classroom management, and assessment practices.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean scores). Factors were ranked according to mean values to identify strengths and limitations in PE management.

Mean score formula: $X = (4A + 3B + 2C + 1D) / N$

Where:

X = mean score

A, B, C, D = frequency of responses at Levels 4, 3, 2, and 1

N = total number of respondents

Mean scores ranged from 1 to 4. The scale range ($4 - 1 = 3$) was divided into four equal intervals (0.75) for interpretation.

Qualitative interview and observation data were analysed thematically following coding, categorisation, and cross-case comparison. These findings were used to triangulate quantitative results and enhance the credibility and explanatory depth of the study.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Key Concepts

Management

Management has been conceptualised as an essential activity that coordinates individual efforts to achieve group goals efficiently. Koontz, O'Donnell, and Weihrich (1992) define management as an indispensable activity that ensures the coordination of individual efforts to attain group objectives with the least time and cost and with minimal personal dissatisfaction. Tran Kiem (2012) emphasises the managerial influence exerted to mobilise, integrate, use, regulate, and coordinate resources (human, material, and financial) within and beyond an organisation—primarily internal resources—in an optimal manner to achieve organisational goals with the highest efficiency. Similarly, Nguyen Thi My Loc (2010) views management as purposeful and goal-directed influence from the subject of management (manager) to the object of management (those managed) within an organisation, enabling the organisation to operate effectively and accomplish its objectives. Synthesising these perspectives, management may be understood as a conscious and goal-oriented human activity aimed at achieving predetermined objectives.

Physical education

Conceptualisations of physical development and PE have been addressed in Vietnamese scholarship primarily in relation to holistic human development. Tran Thi Huong et al. (2009) argue that physical development constitutes a crucial dimension of comprehensive personality development and refers to lifelong changes in the body's morphological and functional attributes; in human life and activity, achievement is inseparable from health. The same authors further specify that PE involves transmitting and acquiring foundational and contemporary knowledge of PE, sport, and hygiene; maintaining, caring for, protecting, and improving health; developing fundamental motor skills in accordance with the school PE curriculum; fostering students' interests, needs, willpower, and exercise habits; cultivating health-protection awareness; identifying and nurturing sporting talent;

and supporting the development of other moral qualities (Tran Thi Huong et al., 2009). Accordingly, physical education can be defined as a planned and purposive educational process with a specialised function of developing learners' motor skills, motor abilities, and physical fitness.

Physical education activities

Educational activities are commonly understood as organised actions conducted by educators according to curricula and plans to shape students' worldview, moral qualities, aesthetic development, and physical development through pedagogical influences on students' thoughts, emotions, and lifestyles, in coordination with family and society (Nguyen Thi Thuy Lien, 2022). Building on this, Bui Hong Khanh (2022) proposes that PE activities consist of two primary forms: curricular PE and extracurricular sports activities. These activities are implemented with clear objectives and plans to develop motor skills, sport-related qualities, and physical fitness and constitute an essential component of holistic education, particularly at the primary level (Bui Hong Khanh, 2022). In primary schools, PE activities are delivered through scheduled lessons mandated by the Ministry of Education and Training and through school-based extracurricular practice activities.

Management of physical education

PE management refers to the purposeful influence exerted by management actors on PE activities to ensure intended objectives are achieved and to enhance stakeholders' understanding of the role and importance of PE in schools and society. In operational terms, PE management may be conceptualised as the process of planning, organising, directing/leading, and monitoring–evaluating PE activities to achieve educational goals.

3.2. Managing Physical Education Activities for Primary School Pupils

Based on classical management functions and prior PE management literature, the management of PE activities for primary school pupils comprises four interrelated functions: planning, organising, directing, and monitoring/evaluating.

Planning PE activity management

Planning involves defining goals and specifying actionable steps, resources, and timelines to implement PE effectively. According to Bui Hong Khanh (2022), planning PE management for primary pupils includes: (i) designing appropriate PE content and programmes; (ii) managing the promotion of pupils' active, self-directed, independent, and creative engagement in learning; (iii) managing pupils' needs, motivation, interests, and active participation; and (iv) managing the process and outcomes of applying PE content in learning and training both inside and outside school. PE content should be age-appropriate, diverse, and regularly updated, while ensuring a balance between specialised knowledge and relevant cultural knowledge. Instructional time allocation should be reasonable and should not negatively affect other learning activities. Effective planning further requires: (a) reviewing and updating policy and guidance documents related to PE; (b) disseminating relevant materials for pupils; and (c) implementing, supervising, and periodically evaluating execution.

Organising PE activities

Organisation refers to mobilising and allocating resources (human and material) to implement planned PE activities, including both curricular instruction and extracurricular sport. Bui Hong Khanh (2022) suggests that an organisational structure for PE management should: (i) clearly determine the number of personnel and management stages; (ii) specify authority and responsibilities; (iii) maintain stability while enabling adaptability; and (iv) meet effectiveness requirements. Core personnel typically include the vice principal in charge, subject leaders, PE teachers, and primary classroom teachers. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities support more effective coordination and more valid appraisal of implementation capacity.

Directing/leading PE activities

Directing involves guiding and regulating implementation to ensure plans are enacted with quality. This function includes: organising PE lessons; organising extracurricular sport; guiding

pupils' practice, discipline, and teamwork; guiding the development and improvement of facilities and equipment that support PE; and preparing annual investment and procurement plans aligned with financial capacity. In teaching practice, teachers guide pupils through exercises, games, and competitions, using flexible pedagogical approaches to develop self-learning capacity, creativity, and responsibility.

Monitoring and evaluating PE activities

I n line with the 2018 General Education Curriculum, monitoring and evaluation of PE plan implementation involve measuring teachers' and pupils' outcomes against predetermined criteria to identify strengths and weaknesses and inform corrective actions. Monitoring typically comprises three core components: (1) establishing evaluation standards; (2) measuring implementation levels; and (3) proposing adjustments to address deviations. Evaluation should be aligned with grade-level and school-level learning outcomes; ensure comprehensiveness, objectivity, and differentiation; combine formative and summative assessment; integrate teacher assessment, pupil self-assessment, peer assessment, and parent input; and prioritise pupils' progress in fitness, competence, and learning attitudes. Assessment may be conducted at mid-semester and end-of-semester points and at the end of the academic year, with teachers synthesising formative and periodic results to record each pupil's PE outcomes.

In summary, managing PE activities in primary schools comprises four core functions—planning, organising, directing, and monitoring/evaluating—that must operate coherently to ensure effective implementation and to achieve the goals of holistic education.

4. Results

4.1. Current Status of Planning for Physical Education Activities

First, the current status of planning physical education activities for students in primary schools in Dong Thap province

Table 2: Status of planning for physical education activities

No.	Planning indicator	Good (%)	n Rather good n (%)	Moderate (%)	n Weak (%)	n Mean	Rank
1	Identifying strengths and weaknesses in PE planning	20 (3.1)	200 (31.3)	60 (9.4)	360 (56.3)	1.81	4
2	Defining goals for PE planning	130 (20.3)	150 (23.4)	50 (7.8)	310 (48.4)	2.16	1
3	Developing PE content, programmes, formats, and teaching methods	50 (7.8)	120 (18.8)	120 (18.8)	350 (54.7)	1.80	5
4	Establishing an operational system for PE work	10 (1.6)	160 (25.0)	80 (12.5)	390 (60.9)	1.67	6
5	Identifying resources for PE implementation	40 (6.3)	170 (26.6)	80 (12.5)	350 (54.7)	1.85	2
6	Periodically reviewing and updating the PE plan	10 (1.6)	160 (25.0)	80 (12.5)	390 (60.9)	1.67	6

Table 1 presents teachers' ratings of key indicators of planning for physical education (PE) activities in primary schools in Dong Thap Province. Overall, mean scores ranged from 1.67 to 2.16, indicating that planning was perceived as weak to low–moderate rather than strong. Consistently high

proportions of respondents selected the "Weak" option across all indicators (48.4%–60.9%), suggesting that limitations in PE planning are widespread.

Among the six indicators, defining PE planning goals received the highest score (Mean = 2.16, Rank 1). This finding suggests that schools have made initial progress in articulating PE goals, likely reflecting the requirement to align school planning with the 2018 General Education Curriculum. However, the fact that 48.4% of respondents still rated this indicator as weak implies that goal setting may remain largely formalistic and insufficiently translated into operational targets, measurable outcomes, or actionable implementation steps.

The second-highest rated indicator was identifying resources for PE implementation (Mean = 1.85, Rank 2), yet a majority of respondents (54.7%) still rated this aspect as weak. This pattern indicates that resource identification and forecasting—such as facilities, equipment, time allocation, and human resources—are not conducted systematically, which may constrain plan feasibility and execution.

In contrast, the lowest mean scores were observed for establishing the PE work system and periodic review of the PE plan (both Mean = 1.67, Rank 6), with 60.9% of respondents rating these indicators as weak. Similarly, designing PE content, programmes, formats, and methods was rated low (Mean = 1.80, Rank 5; Weak = 54.7%), as was identifying strengths and weaknesses in PE planning (Mean = 1.81, Rank 4; Weak = 56.3%). Collectively, these findings imply that planning is insufficiently grounded in needs assessment and lacks a coherent system for implementation and quality assurance.

From an educational management perspective, planning should function as an iterative cycle that includes needs analysis, resource forecasting, programme design, implementation arrangements, and ongoing monitoring and revision. The particularly weak ratings for plan review and system-building suggest limited application of continuous improvement approaches (e.g., Plan–Do–Check–Act). Without structured mechanisms for feedback and scheduled revision, PE plans are less adaptable to changes in facilities, teacher capacity, and pupils' physical characteristics, thereby reducing their practical effectiveness.

4.2. Current Status of Implementation Organisation

The current situation of organizing physical education activities for students in primary schools in Dong Thap province.

Table 3: Current situation of organizing physical education in primary schools

Order	Implementing organization	Good	%	Rather	%	Medium	%	Weak	%	Mean	Rank
1	Establish a steering committee	10	1.6	160	25.0	80	12.5	390	60.9	1.67	7
2	Orientation in determining extracurricular PE content	140	21.9	190	29.7	90	14.1	220	34.4	2.39	1
3	Organize development of extracurricular PE programs	30	4.7	160	25.0	80	12.5	370	57.8	1.76	6
4	Direct implementation of extracurricular PE programs	90	14.1	200	31.3	70	10.9	280	43.8	2.16	3
5	Monitoring and evaluating extracurricular PE activities	150	23.4	120	18.8	60	9.4	310	48.4	2.17	2
6	Periodically review and adjust programs	80	12.5	90	14.1	80	12.5	390	60.9	1.78	5
7	Detect and resolve inadequacies promptly	30	4.7	190	29.7	70	10.9	350	54.7	1.84	4

Table 3 presents PE teachers' perceptions of how primary schools organise the implementation of physical education (PE) activities, with a particular emphasis on extracurricular provision. Overall, mean scores ranged from 1.67 to 2.39, indicating a generally low to moderate level of organisational implementation. Across several indicators, the proportion of "Weak" responses remained high (from 34.4% to 60.9%), suggesting that many organisational elements necessary for effective PE delivery are not yet consistently institutionalised.

The highest-rated indicator was orientation in determining extracurricular PE content (Mean = 2.39, Rank 1). This suggests that schools demonstrate a degree of strategic awareness in shaping extracurricular PE content. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of teachers still rated this indicator as weak (34.4%), implying that while orientations may exist, they may not be translated into robust plans and operational arrangements. The second- and third-ranked indicators were monitoring and evaluating extracurricular PE activities (Mean = 2.17, Rank 2; Weak = 48.4%) and direct implementation of extracurricular PE programmes (Mean = 2.16, Rank 3; Weak = 43.8%). These results indicate that some monitoring and delivery activities are in place; however, the large share of weak ratings highlights variability and limitations in implementation quality across schools.

In contrast, indicators reflecting organisational structure and programme development were rated lowest. Establishing a steering committee recorded the lowest mean (Mean = 1.67, Rank 7), with 60.9% of respondents selecting "Weak," indicating the absence of specialised governance structures for PE in many schools. Similarly, organising the development of extracurricular PE programmes (Mean = 1.76, Rank 6; Weak = 57.8%) and periodically reviewing and adjusting programmes (Mean = 1.78, Rank 5; Weak = 60.9%) were evaluated poorly. The indicator detecting and resolving inadequacies promptly also remained limited (Mean = 1.84, Rank 4; Weak = 54.7%), suggesting that corrective actions are not implemented in a timely or systematic way.

From a management standpoint, effective organisation requires clear structures, role allocation, coordination across stakeholders (school leadership, subject groups, teachers, parents, and relevant organisations), and routine mechanisms for review and improvement. The pattern observed in Table 3—relatively higher scores for "orientation" but consistently low scores for "steering structure," "programme development," and "periodic review"—suggests that implementation is still administratively driven and episodic, rather than governed through a stable and sustainable management system. Consequently, extracurricular PE activities may be implemented in a fragmented manner, limiting consistency, accountability, and continuous quality improvement.

4.3. Current Status of Directing Physical Education Activities

The current situation of directing physical education activities for students in primary schools in Dong Thap province

Table 4: Current situation of directing physical education activities for primary school students

Order	Directing the implementation of the plan	Good	%	Rather	%	Medium	%	Weak	%	Mean	Rank
1	By topic, subject of PE teaching	20	3.1	200	31.3	40	6.3	380	59.4	1.78	4
2	Daily activities teaching PE	100	15.6	170	26.6	40	6.3	330	51.6	2.06	1
3	Forms of teaching PE	50	7.8	110	17.2	150	23.4	330	51.6	1.82	3
4	Improve and adjust teaching forms	30	4.7	160	25.0	80	12.5	370	57.8	1.76	5
5	Guide students to self-study and self-practice	20	3.1	170	26.6	80	12.5	370	57.8	1.75	6

Order	Directing the implementation of the plan	Good	%	Rather	%	Medium	%	Weak	%	Mean	Rank
6	Detect and resolve shortcomings promptly	80	12.5	100	15.6	70	10.9	390	60.9	1.79	2

Table 4 reports PE teachers' perceptions of how schools direct (i.e., lead and guide) the implementation of PE plans. Overall, mean scores ranged from 1.75 to 2.06, indicating a low level of directive practice. Across all indicators, more than half of respondents rated practice as "Weak" (51.6%–60.9%), suggesting that directing functions are predominantly limited and inconsistently enacted.

The highest-rated indicator was directing daily PE teaching activities (Mean = 2.06, Rank 1), implying that routine implementation—such as maintaining timetable-based instruction and ensuring the required number of lessons—is relatively more stable. The second-ranked indicator, detecting and resolving shortcomings promptly (Mean = 1.79, Rank 2), still received the highest proportion of "Weak" ratings (60.9%), indicating that corrective actions are often delayed or insufficient despite being recognised as necessary.

Indicators associated with pedagogical improvement and learner autonomy were consistently rated lower. Directing PE teaching by topic/subject (Mean = 1.78, Rank 4; Weak = 59.4%) and directing forms of PE teaching (Mean = 1.82, Rank 3; Weak = 51.6%) suggest limited instructional guidance beyond routine delivery. Notably, the weakest areas were guiding students' self-study and self-practice (Mean = 1.75, Rank 6; Weak = 57.8%) and improving and adjusting teaching forms (Mean = 1.76, Rank 5; Weak = 57.8%). This pattern indicates that directive practices are not sufficiently oriented toward instructional innovation, differentiated teaching, or fostering students' capacity for self-directed physical activity.

From an educational management perspective, directing should extend beyond administrative supervision to include professional support, instructional coaching, motivation, and systematic facilitation of innovation. In the context of Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum—which emphasises competency development—low ratings for improving teaching forms and supporting self-practice suggest a misalignment between directive practices and curriculum expectations. When directing is primarily focused on maintaining routine compliance (e.g., lesson schedules), schools may deliver PE as a set of mandated sessions rather than as a learning process that develops autonomous movement competence and lifelong physical activity habits. Consequently, the limited emphasis on students' self-practice may reflect a continuing orientation toward "skill transmission" rather than cultivating sustainable exercise motivation and behaviour, which is central to contemporary PE goals.

4.4. Current Status of Management, Inspection, and Assessment

The current status of management, inspection and assessment of physical education activities for students in primary schools Dong Thap province.

Table 5: Current status of management, inspection and assessment of physical education activities for primary school students

Order	Management of testing and evaluation	Good	%	Rather	%	Medium	%	Weak	%	Mean	Rank
1	Develop and implement evaluation standards	20	3.1	180	28.1	90	14.1	350	54.7	1.80	4

Order	Management of testing and evaluation	Good	%	Rather	%	Medium	%	Weak	%	Mean	Rank
2	Adhere to regulations on testing and evaluation	99	15.5	171	26.7	40	6.3	330	51.6	2.06	1
3	Plan and observation records	40	6.3	129	20.2	141	22.0	330	51.6	1.81	3
4	Combine assessment of awareness and attitude	30	4.7	160	25.0	79	12.3	371	58.0	1.76	6
5	Use of evaluation criteria set	20	3.1	160	25.0	100	15.6	360	56.3	1.75	7
6	Design criteria and assessment tools	79	12.3	101	15.8	70	10.9	390	60.9	1.80	4
7	Basis for adjusting assessment activities	80	12.5	100	15.6	70	10.9	390	60.9	1.81	2

Table 5 presents PE teachers' ratings of management, inspection, and assessment practices in primary schools in Dong Thap Province. Overall, mean scores ranged from 1.75 to 2.06, indicating a low level of quality in this management function. Across all indicators, the share of "Weak" responses was consistently high (51.6%–60.9%), suggesting that assessment-related management is a pervasive constraint in PE provision.

The highest-rated indicator was adherence to regulations on testing and evaluation (Mean = 2.06, Rank 1), with 15.5% rated "Good" and 26.7% rated "Rather." This pattern suggests that schools generally comply with formal administrative requirements for assessment. However, more than half of respondents still rated this practice as weak (51.6%), indicating that compliance may be partial, uneven across schools, or focused on procedural completion rather than pedagogical quality.

The second-ranked indicator, using assessment results as a basis for adjusting assessment activities (Mean = 1.81, Rank 2), also recorded a high "Weak" proportion (60.9%). This finding implies that feedback loops—central to continuous improvement—are not functioning effectively. Similarly, planning and maintaining observation records (Mean = 1.81, Rank 3; Weak = 51.6%) remained limited, suggesting gaps in documentation and evidence collection that are necessary for fair and defensible assessment.

Indicators reflecting deeper professional assessment capacity were rated lowest. Use of the established evaluation criteria set (Mean = 1.75, Rank 7; Weak = 56.3%) and combining assessment of awareness and attitude (Mean = 1.76, Rank 6; Weak = 58.0%) were particularly weak. These results indicate that assessment is not yet consistently implemented as a multidimensional process that captures students' cognitive, psychomotor, and affective outcomes. In addition, designing assessment criteria and tools received one of the highest "Weak" proportions (Mean = 1.80, Rank 4; Weak = 60.9%), highlighting limited capacity to develop valid instruments and rubrics aligned with learning outcomes. Although developing and implementing evaluation standards also scored low (Mean = 1.80, Rank 4; Weak = 54.7%), the overall pattern suggests that standards and tools, where they exist, may not be translated into consistent classroom practice.

From a management standpoint, these findings indicate that inspection and assessment remain administratively driven rather than learning-oriented. Strong assessment systems require clear standards, valid tools, systematic evidence gathering, and—critically—use of results to improve teaching and learning. The combination of low mean scores and very high "Weak" rates across most indicators suggests that this stage constitutes a major bottleneck in the PE management cycle. When assessment practices are underdeveloped, schools lack reliable feedback to refine planning, strengthen instructional direction, and adjust programmes, thereby limiting continuous quality improvement.

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that the directing (instructional leadership and guidance) function of physical education (PE) management in primary schools in Dong Thap Province remains largely focused on maintaining routine implementation (e.g., delivering lessons according to the timetable and completing planned teaching contents). In contrast, limited emphasis is placed on pedagogical innovation, diversified organisational formats (especially for extracurricular PE), and the development of pupils' self-directed physical activity capacity.

In practice, PE implementation in some schools appears to be procedural rather than developmental. Teaching content tends to prioritise basic motor skills, while comparatively less attention is devoted to health-related knowledge, physical fitness development, and the formation of long-term physical activity habits. This pattern indicates partial misalignment with the competency-based orientation of Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum, which expects PE to support holistic development through knowledge, skills, attitudes, and sustainable behaviours.

A further concern is the weakness of monitoring and assessment. Assessment practices are often perceived as compliance-driven and insufficiently comprehensive, with limited integration of learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and individual progress. In PE, such reductionist assessment constrains teachers' ability to provide formative feedback and undermines the management cycle by weakening evidence-based adjustment of planning and instruction.

Explanatory factors. The observed limitations are likely influenced by multiple interacting constraints:

*. Academic-priority culture: Pupils and parents may prioritise academic subjects over PE, reducing support for extracurricular activity and long-term habit formation.

*. Insufficient incentives and support mechanisms: Schools may lack clear institutional policies that encourage teachers to innovate or organise extracurricular PE programmes.

*. Facilities and equipment constraints: Inadequate or uneven infrastructure and equipment can restrict the diversity and quality of PE activities.

*. Assessment capacity gaps: Limited use of valid criteria and tools, and weak documentation/feedback practices, reduce the effectiveness of monitoring and continuous improvement.

*. Limited structured opportunities beyond class time: Pupils may lack time, safe spaces, and adult guidance to engage in regular physical activity outside scheduled lessons.

Collectively, these factors suggest that PE management has not yet fully achieved a shift from administrative supervision to instructional leadership, nor has it consistently operationalised a continuous improvement cycle.

Proposed Solutions for Strengthening PE Management in Dong Thap Province. To improve effectiveness and quality, solutions should be aligned with the management cycle (planning → organising → directing → monitoring/evaluation) and designed for feasibility in school contexts.

First, strengthen awareness and shared responsibility among stakeholders. Implement targeted communication for school leaders, teachers, pupils, and parents on PE's contribution to health, learning readiness, and holistic development. Integrate PE priorities into school development plans and internal quality assurance processes. Expand school-wide activity events (e.g., sport days, movement challenges) to normalise participation and strengthen positive attitudes toward physical activity.

Second, improve planning through evidence-based, resource-linked approaches. Translate curriculum-oriented goals into operational targets with measurable indicators for each grade level. Use baseline information (e.g., beginning-of-year screening of fitness and motor competence, where feasible) to set realistic targets and differentiate activities. Forecast and allocate resources (teacher workload, time, space, equipment, and budget) and clarify responsibilities by role. Establish scheduled plan reviews (e.g., mid-semester and end-of-

semester) using monitoring evidence to revise targets and implementation strategies.

Third, strengthen organisational structures and coordination for curricular and extracurricular PE. Define a stable PE coordination mechanism (e.g., a designated focal person/committee) responsible for programme development, scheduling, safety management, and reporting. Clarify role allocation across leadership, subject teams, and teachers to avoid fragmented implementation. Develop feasible extracurricular PE formats (clubs, short activity sessions, grade-level sport events) adapted to each school's facilities and staffing.

Fourth, upgrade directing practices toward instructional leadership and innovation. Support teachers to adopt more engaging and competency-oriented pedagogy (e.g., game-based learning, stations/circuits, experiential tasks) aligned with pupils' physical readiness. Promote differentiation and safety by guiding teachers to adjust tasks for heterogeneous fitness levels. Strengthen pupils' self-directed practice through simple school–home activity routines, goal-setting, and progress monitoring. Introduce incentive mechanisms (recognition, internal awards, workload consideration) for teachers who lead extracurricular PE and pedagogical innovation.

Fifth, reform monitoring and assessment to strengthen the feedback loop. Develop and apply standards/rubrics aligned with curriculum outcomes, integrating knowledge, motor skills, attitudes, cooperation/discipline, and individual progress. Diversify assessment methods (teacher observation checklists, performance tasks, self/peer assessment, learning portfolios). Use assessment results to improve instruction and to adjust school-level planning (closing the feedback loop). Establish internal monitoring procedures (lesson observation, record checks, professional feedback) with a supportive—rather than punitive—orientation. Where feasible, strengthen collaboration with local health services to support periodic monitoring related to pupils' health and readiness for physical activity.

Overall, PE in Dong Thap primary schools is generally implemented in accordance with official schedules; however, stronger reforms are needed in instructional leadership, organisational capacity, and assessment practices to meet competency-based curriculum expectations and to promote sustainable physical activity habits among pupils. Strengthening the feedback loop between monitoring/assessment and planning is essential for continuous quality improvement.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the perceptions of school leaders and teachers regarding the role of PE in supporting the physical development of primary school pupils in Dong Thap Province, Vietnam. The findings indicate that managerial staff and teachers demonstrate a generally positive and adequate awareness of PE's importance. However, the implementation of PE teaching and learning in primary schools remains only at a low–moderate level and does not yet fully meet the expectations of the 2018 General Education Curriculum. Teaching methods, organisational forms, and instructional resources show limited innovation and flexibility, while monitoring and assessment practices continue to exhibit notable shortcomings.

In addition, the management of PE activities in primary schools reveals several weaknesses. The leadership role of school managers is not consistently evident in steering professional improvement, and the capacity to support systematic instructional innovation remains limited. Extracurricular PE and school-based sports activities have not received sufficient attention or resourcing, which constrains pupils' opportunities to practise and form sustainable physical activity habits and, consequently, affects overall PE quality.

The proposed recommendations are grounded in empirical findings and are designed to be feasible within local conditions. Collectively, these measures aim to strengthen planning, organisation, instructional leadership, and monitoring/assessment, thereby improving the quality and effectiveness of PE provision in Dong Thap primary schools and contributing to the achievement of the study objectives.

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