



RESEARCH ON THE CONTENT AND CURRICULUM OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SOME VIETNAM UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract:

Through previous research works, surveying the course syllabus of a number of universities and through analysis and evaluation of research results, it is shown that: Universities in Vietnam today, when building the content and curriculum of physical education subjects, have based on the guidance of Circular 25/2015/TT-GD&DT, Vietnam and the actual conditions of the school such as: facilities, teaching staff, financial conditions, subjects of study, etc. Therefore, each school has different subject content (sports), program duration, score ratio and final subject assessment method. This has caused many difficulties for students who want to transfer, transfer schools or take a bridging course, etc. This is the basis for further research to find suitable solutions when building the curriculum.

Keywords: assessment criteria; content, program; physical education; Vietnamese universities

1. Introduction

In Vietnam, physical education is a subject with specialized content that teaches movement and intentionally develops human motor qualities. The Law on Physical Education and Sports, Vietnam (2008) affirms that “*Physical Education is a core subject in*

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the education program that aims to provide basic knowledge and movement skills to learners through exercises and movement games, contributing to the implementation of comprehensive education goals”[5]. Physical exercises and sports are the most proactive, positive, least expensive and feasible means of caring for and improving human health, in accordance with the laws of mental and physiological activity of age and gender, with the nature of preventing diseases, improving health, beautifying the body, and comprehensively developing motor qualities in the most effective way. With the high demands of effort in each different sport, it contributes to educating and forming human moral qualities naturally, such as will, courage, determination, confidence, perseverance, patience, sense of organization and discipline, team spirit, team spirit, etc. Sports activities improve the cultural and spiritual life of society, contribute to repelling social evils, especially building trust and a healthy lifestyle for the young generation. Physical education plays a very important role in training and educating people to develop comprehensively in intelligence, morality, and physical strength to meet the demand for high-quality labor to serve society. Sports training is considered one of the activities that attracts the most participation from students. Introducing physical education into university teaching is a way to help students develop scientific living habits, and students learn how to exercise and take the best care of themselves. Along with that, students can study in a dynamic environment with exciting activities, and their bodies are regularly and consistently active, helping to improve their health and learning spirit. It is a compulsory subject for each student in the training program. However, depending on specific conditions, schools design and build appropriate subject curriculum content, and the organization of theoretical and practical learning of physical education subjects in schools is also different, causing certain obstacles for management as well as difficulties for learners, such as: students who want to study in a bridging program, transfer study, or link between schools. Objective reality requires that the organization and implementation of physical education subjects in universities need to be changed, especially to meet the needs of lifelong practice and learning of learners.

In the study, the following methods were used:

- Comparative and analytical method,
- Pedagogical observation method,
- Statistical mathematical method.

1.1 Research object

Content and curriculum of physical education subjects of Vietnamese universities.

2. Research content

2.1 Current status of physical education content and curriculum in some Vietnamese Universities

According to Hoang Ha (2016), *“The content of physical education subjects is conveyed to students by lecturers in a scientific and flexible way. The lessons all focus on knowledge about that*

sport such as: Rules of the game, how to play, supporting tools, guiding learners towards educational goals, maintaining and training health, methods of organizing daily health training"[4]; Phan Thanh My and colleagues (2021) stated: "Although physical education teaching has had positive changes in methods and diversified sports, due to many other objective factors such as: facilities, teaching staff, unsuitable sports, environmental conditions, study time, etc. This has partly caused students to feel bored, many students study with negative attitudes, lack of seriousness, and students attend class with the purpose of checking attendance to qualify for the exam"[6].

On the other hand, there are some lecturers who are not dedicated to their teaching duties, so the results achieved are not high. The way teachers convey content in physical education subjects is still quite rigid, so it does not create interest for learners. According to Vo Nhat Son and colleagues (2022) express opinions: "In order for physical education to clearly promote its functions and purposes in the university environment, it requires the teaching staff to seek the most scientific and effective teaching methods and, more specifically, to conduct surveys to collect students' opinions on the need to choose their favorite sport, as one of the bases for the school to build the content of the subject's program"[7].

According to Article 4 of Circular 25/2015/TT-BGDDT of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, it is stipulated that:

- About the amount of knowledge of the subject: "The minimum amount of knowledge of the Physical Education subject program that students need to accumulate is 3 (three) credits. The higher education institution specifically regulates the amount of knowledge of this subject in accordance with the requirements of each training sector"[2]. Survey results of a number of universities in Vietnam show that the application of activities and training programs of the schools is very diverse and rich, specifically: Ho Chi Minh City National University established the Sports and Physical Education Center to organize the teaching of physical education for all member schools with a knowledge volume of 6 credits (90 periods) divided into 2 courses, each course has 45 periods; Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education includes 5 credits (150 periods) with 5 courses, 30 periods/course; Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry and Ho Chi Minh City Open University both have 3 physical education credits (90 periods) with 2 modules, 45 periods/session; Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music is 2 credits (60 periods), allocated to study 1 subject; University of Finance - Marketing includes 3 credits (90 periods) divided into 3 courses, 30 periods/course; Can Tho University builds a program with 3 credits (90 periods), divided into 3 courses, each course has 30 periods.

Table 1: Distribution of study programs in schools

No.	School name	Subject content (sports)	Credits	Periods	Course	
					Compulsory Courses	Elective Courses
1	Sports Center, Ho Chi Minh City National University, Vietnam	Swimming, volleyball, basketball, vovinam, karatedo, aerobics, tennis, pickleball.	6	90	0	2
2	Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education, Vietnam	Athletics, volleyball, football, swimming, chess, tennis.	5	150	2	3
3	Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam	Athletics, football, volleyball, badminton.	3	90	1	1
4	Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam	Aerobics, football, volleyball, martial arts and self-defense, badminton, swimming.	3	90	1	1
5	Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, Vietnam	Badminton, martial arts and self-defense	2	60	0	1
6	University of Finance and Marketing, Vietnam	Golf, tennis, pickleball, football, volleyball, table tennis, Muay Thai, Vovinam, badminton, basketball, aerobics, athletics.	3	90	0	3
7	Can Tho University, Vietnam	Chess, athletics, tennis, football, volleyball, taekwondo, badminton, basketball, aerobics.	3	90	0	3

Source: The author synthesized from detailed outlines of the schools.

- **Regarding the selection of compulsory and elective courses:** *“Based on current regulations on physical education, develop general and specific objectives for each courses; determine the structure, develop subjects in the Physical Education curriculum, including compulsory courses and elective courses; assessment methods”* [2].

The survey results in Table 1 show that there are quite large differences in some Vietnamese universities in designing and constructing physical education course content:

- Ho Chi Minh City National University Sports Center: No compulsory courses. With 2 elective courses, students can choose one of the following courses: swimming, volleyball, basketball, vovinam, karate, aerobics, tennis, pickleball, which are studied throughout the program (90 periods).
- Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education: Regulations on 2 compulsory courses include: compulsory courses 1 is athletics (30 periods) and

compulsory course 2 is volleyball (30 periods). In the elective courses (03 credits), students choose one of the following courses: football, swimming, chess, or tennis to study throughout the 90 periods of the elective courses.

- Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry: Regulations on 1 compulsory course: athletics (45 periods). Elective courses (45 periods) students choose one of the following courses: soccer, volleyball, or badminton.
- Ho Chi Minh City Open University: Regulations on one compulsory courses is aerobics (45 periods). In the elective courses (45 periods), students can choose one of the following courses: football, volleyball, martial arts and self-defense, badminton, or swimming.
- Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music: No compulsory courses. Students only study 1 elective course. Students can choose 1 of 2 subjects: badminton or self-defense to study throughout the physical education program with a duration of 60 periods.
- University of Finance - Marketing: No compulsory courses, students can choose all 3 courses, including: Golf, tennis, pickleball, football, volleyball, table tennis, Muay Thai, Vovinam, badminton, basketball, aerobics, athletics.
- Can Tho University: No compulsory courses are required; students can choose all 3 courses, including: chess, athletics, tennis, football, volleyball, Taekwondo, badminton, basketball, and aerobics.

When allocating compulsory and elective courses with a number of prescribed sports, it has created favorable conditions for schools to be proactive, to exploit well the facilities, teaching staff and available conditions of the school, as well as to facilitate the arrangement and scheduling of timetables. Students study compulsory physical education courses in the first semester, right after enrolling. But there are also certain difficulties when dividing compulsory and elective courses, such as: indirectly affecting and limiting students' practice of their favorite sports; not creating motivation to encourage students to exercise on their own. This makes students not have much time to practice, invest in their favorite subjects, and it is also very difficult to form motor skills and develop advanced techniques in competition to serve mass movement activities in life, as well as in the future work process. Besides, building outlines, writing textbooks, and learning materials for each sport with a duration of 01 credit (30 periods) will not have enough necessary scientific content and will cause many difficulties and costs.

The asynchronous application of physical education subject knowledge volume for learners is due to the conditions and characteristics of the Schools, suitable to the actual requirements of the training institutions, flexible according to the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training. However, it causes certain difficulties when students transfer schools, study in a joint program (horizontal, vertical), etc. Some schools build programs with a minimum of 3 credits (90 periods), which does not promote the nature of sports as regular, long-term and continuous training. For example, Ho Chi Minh City National University Sports Center and Ho Chi Minh City Open University built a physical education program with 90 periods, divided into 2 modules, each module has

45 periods. Thus, students only study physical education in the first year, then if any student has a need to practice sports, they can go to clubs inside and outside the school to participate, etc. But most students currently rarely participate in extracurricular sports activities due to many different reasons, such as: playgrounds and equipment are not guaranteed; no favorite club; no time; no instructor; geographical distance difficulties; they do not like to go to extracurricular clubs; the school does not organize extracurricular clubs, etc.

2.2 Survey on students' opinions on choosing content (sports)

Through evaluating the current status of physical education curriculum content in some Vietnamese universities, the study consulted students' opinions on the need to choose their favorite sport for the physical education curriculum content.

The results achieved are as follows:

2.2.1 Survey results on 600 students of Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam

Table 2: Results of sports selection (n = 600)

No.	Sport of choice	Responses		
		Frequency	Percent (%)	Percent of Cases (%)
1	Aerobic	62	3.4	10.3
2	Table tennis	165	9.2	27.5
3	Volleyball	180	10.0	30.0
4	Football	60	3.3	10.0
5	Handball	40	2.2	6.7
6	Basketball	98	5.4	16.3
7	Swimming	45	2.5	7.5
8	Badminton	217	1.21	36.2
9	Chess	50	2.8	8.3
10	Athletics	11	0.06	1.8
11	Gym	320	17.8	53.3
12	Pickleball	13	0.07	2.2
13	Sports dance	17	0.09	2.8
14	Tennis	200	11.1	33.3
15	Martial Arts	325	18.1	54.2
16	Yoga	51	2.8	8.5
17	Other sports	33	1.8	5.5
Total		1800	100	299.9

Source: Vo Nhat Son and colleagues, Grassroots level project (2022).

Table 2 shows that students' interests and choices of sports to practice are extremely diverse and rich. Of the 17 sports listed, almost every subject has students' favorites and choices, and the highest selection rate of students at Ho Chi Minh City Open University is martial arts with 325 opinions (accounting for 18.1%), followed by gym (17.8%), tennis (11.1%), volleyball (10.0%), table tennis (9.2%)... and the lowest is athletics (0.06%). But currently, the School only chooses the sports content to be taught as soccer, volleyball,

self-defense, swimming, badminton and aerobics, in which aerobics is a compulsory subject.

2.2.2 Survey results on 500 students of the University of Finance - Marketing, Vietnam

Table 3: Results of sports selection (n = 500)

No.	Sport of choice	Responses		
		Frequency	Percent (%)	Percent of Cases (%)
1	Football	330	9.8	66.0
2	Volleyball	360	10.07	72.0
3	Basketball	290	8.6	58.0
4	Table tennis	240	7.1	48.0
5	Swimming	430	12.7	86.0
6	Badminton	410	12.1	82.0
7	Chess	70	2.1	14.0
8	Shuttlecock kicking	190	5.6	38.0
9	Athletics	50	1.5	10.0
10	Aerobic	390	11.4	78.0
11	Tennis	230	6.8	46.0
12	Martial arts	440	13.0	88.0
Total		3430	100.0	686.0

Source: Phan Thanh My and colleagues, Grassroots level project - 2023

Table 3 shows that, among the 12 sports offered to students of the University of Finance and Marketing, athletics has the lowest selection rate (only 1.5%), but at that time, athletics was a compulsory subject. The data in Tables 2 and 3 clearly show the inappropriateness of the sports included in the physical education curriculum for students. This is the result when the construction of the program content is still subject to the program builder. It has not focused on the needs and interests of the learners, and has not kept up with the development and integration trends.

In the current trend of integration and development, schools still choose sports content such as athletics and swimming to apply to compulsory teaching for students, which is no longer appropriate. In reality, there are many new sports, highly popular, easy to practice, easy to organize, creating community cohesion, such as yoga, gym, dance sport, tennis, pickleball, golf... but few schools include them in teaching.

2.3 Methods of assessing physical education course results in Vietnamese Universities

Assessment of course outcomes plays an important role in ensuring the success of the teaching and learning process. Assessment criteria will help clarify the current state of teaching and learning quality. Appropriate and accurate assessment of the course helps students recognize the necessary knowledge and skill standards that must be achieved in the process of studying and researching the course. With the goal of improving practical capacity, technical skills, as well as physical development of students, the subject of Physical Education requires relevant departments, especially the Department

of Physical Education, to identify specific criteria for assessing students' learning outcomes in a comprehensive, appropriate and reliable manner.

“Course Learning Outcomes” (CLOs) are specific requirements and criteria for knowledge, skills, and attitudes that learners must achieve after completing the course. This is an important part of the detailed course outline, showing the training objectives of the course in conjunction with the program learning outcomes (Program Learning Outcomes – PLOs)[1].

Characteristics of course output standards are as follows:

- Specific and measurable: clearly describe the expected results so that they can be tested and evaluated.
 - Linked to learner capacity: focus on what students “can do” after the course.
 - Consistent with the training program objectives: each CLO contributes to the PLO.
- Output standards are divided into 3 main groups:
- Knowledge: understanding and applying theory and concepts.
 - Skills: professional skills, soft skills (practice, analysis, problem solving, etc.).
 - Attitude/autonomy: sense of responsibility, professional ethics, lifelong learning ability.

Output standards are the basis for the Ministry of Education and Training to issue regulations on opening training majors, determining enrollment targets, organizing enrollment, organizing training management, training linkage, assessment standards and study programs, etc.

But in non-specialized schools, physical education is a general compulsory subject, not a specialized subject, so the development of the program and subject content is based on Circular 25/2015 of the Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam “*regulations on physical education subject programs in university training programs*” and based on the specific conditions of each school. In fact, schools have not yet organized the evaluation of physical education subject programs (internal evaluation, external evaluation).

According to Circular 25/2015/TT-BGDDT, the output standards for the Physical Education subject must meet:

- Present basic knowledge about the principles of sports training and health.
- Correctly perform basic techniques of the sport being studied.
- Apply knowledge to build a personal training plan.
- Have a positive and proactive attitude in physical training and team spirit.

In short: course output standards are commitments to the minimum learning outcomes that students must achieve after completing the course.

An overview of the assessment of physical education results in Vietnamese universities is as follows:

2.3.1 Sports Center of Ho Chi Minh City National University, Vietnam

Physical education course scores are evaluated on a 10-point scale. Students are recognized as having passed if their course score is 5/10 or higher. Course score = final exam score + attendance score + learning attitude score. In which:

Table 4: Evaluation of the physical education output of the Sports Center of Ho Chi Minh City National University

Content	Diligence		Students' learning attitudes		Final exam
Point	2 points		2 points		6 points
Percent	20 %		20 %		60 %
Assessment form	Absent 1 session	Minus 1 point	For lazy students who do not practice actively	1 st time: warning, no deduction of points	Follow the individual grading scale of each subject
	Absent 2 session	Minus point		2 nd time: Minus 1 point	
	Absent 3 session	Banned from taking the exam		3 rd time: Minus 2 point	
				Banned from taking the exam	
			Students who have unethical behavior such as: being disrespectful, quarrelsome, insulting, etc., to anyone during the learning process will be banned from taking the exam.		

Source: Ho Chi Minh City National University Sports Center

2.3.2 Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam

The learning outcomes of the physical education course are assessed on a 10-point scale and students are recognized as having passed if their score is 5/10 or higher.

Course/subject score = Attendance score (maximum 2 points) + Midterm test score (maximum 3 points) + Final exam score (maximum 5 points).

Attendance score is assessed based on criteria such as full attendance, punctuality and learning attitude.

Total attendance score = full attendance, punctuality + learning attitude.

In which:

Students absent 1 session will have 0.5 points deducted; absent 2 sessions will have 1 point deducted. Students who are 5 minutes late to class 3 times will be counted as 1 absence.

Attitude assessment towards lazy students who do not actively practice: 1st time: warning, no deduction of points; 2nd time: deduction of 0.5 points; 3rd time: deduction of 1 point; 4th time: ban from taking the exam.

Students who exhibit unethical behavior, such as: being disrespectful, quarrelsome, insulting, etc., to anyone during the course are prohibited from taking the exam.

2.3.3 Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education, Vietnam

According to the detailed syllabus of the Faculty of Physical Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education, physical education learning results are evaluated on a 10-point scale, and students are recognized as having passed if their physical education score is 5/10 or higher. In which:

- Midterm test score: Accounts for 50% of the total final score of the semester.
- Final test score: Accounts for 50% of the total final score of the semester.

Final score of the semester/subject = Midterm test score + Final exam score.

2.3.4 Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam

The detailed syllabus of the physical education subject of Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry stipulates that learning outcomes of the physical education subject are determined based on 3 criteria:

- Attendance score: Accounts for 10% of the total final score.
- Midterm test score: Accounts for 20% of the total final score.
- Final test score: Accounts for 70% of the total final score.

Total score of the physical education subject = Attendance score + Midterm score + Final score

Students are recognized as Passed if they have a score of 5/10 or higher.

2.3.5 Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, Vietnam

According to the detailed syllabus of the physical education subject of the Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, the learning results of the physical education subject are determined based on 02 criteria: attendance test results and final exam results. In which:

- Attendance score: Accounts for 40% of the total final score of the subject.
- Final exam score: Accounts for 60% of the total final score of the subject.

The total score of the subject = Attendance score + Final score

Students are recognized as Passed if they have a score of 5/10 or higher.

2.3.6 University of Finance - Marketing, Vietnam

University of Finance - Marketing evaluates the learning outcomes of physical education subjects according to 3 criteria: attendance score, process score and final exam score.

- Attendance score: Accounts for 20% of the total final score of the semester. The attendance score is calculated by the lecturer taking attendance at any time without prior notice during 10 classes. The specific scoring method is as follows: Students are fully present (10 points); Students absent 01 session (7 points); Students absent 02 sessions (4 points), and Students absent 03 sessions or more (0

points). If a student gets 0 points for attendance, he/she will not be eligible to take the final exam.

- Midterm test score: Accounts for 20% of the total final score of the course.
- Thus,

The total score of the physical education subject = Attendance score (maximum 2 points) + Midterm test score (maximum 2 points) + Final score (maximum 6 points)

Students are recognized as Passed if they have a score of 5/10 or higher.

2.3.7 Can Tho University, Vietnam

Can Tho University stipulates that the learning outcomes of physical education are determined based on three criteria:

- Attendance score: Accounts for 30% of the total final score.
- Midterm test score: Accounts for 20% of the total final score.
- Final test score: Accounts for 50% of the total final score.

Total score of the physical education subject = Attendance score + Midterm score + Final score

Students are recognized as Passed if they have a score of 5/10 or higher.

Table 5: Comparison of assessment criteria for physical education subjects among universities in Vietnam

No.	Evaluation criteria School name	Attendance score	Learning attitude	Midterm test score	Final test score
1	Sports Center of Ho Chi Minh City National University, Vietnam	20%	20%		60%
2	Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education, Vietnam			50%	50%
3	Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam	10%		20%	70%
4	Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam	20%		30%	50%
5	Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music, Vietnam	40%			60%
6	University of Finance - Marketing, Vietnam	20%		20%	60%
7	Can Tho University, Vietnam	30%		20%	50%

Source: Synthesis of detailed physical education subject outlines of schools.

Through Table 5, it can be seen that each school determines different criteria for evaluating learning outcomes for students. Ho Chi Minh City National University Sports Center pays special attention to students' diligence and learning attitude. If these two parts are good, students only need to pass the subject test with 1 more professional point (a passing score is 5/10). This can make students pay less attention to professional techniques as well as sports skills, so when they graduate and go to work at their agencies, very few people can participate in the agency's sports activities.

Some schools focus on professional competence, such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Technical Education, which focuses on professional competence (only evaluates mid-term and final exam competence, not evaluating diligence and attitude).

Some schools have built criteria for harmony between diligence (diligence includes learning attitude) and professional capacity, such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry, Ho Chi Minh City Open University, University of Finance - Marketing, and Can Tho University. This is consistent with the spirit of Resolution No. 08-NQ/TW on the main tasks of physical education: *"Improve health, ensure normal physical development of students; develop physical strength, equip basic and necessary motor skills for life; form habits of physical exercise, maintain hygiene and maintain moral qualities and personality of students, future owners of the country"*.

In short: Assessment of physical education learning outcomes of schools is related to training quality, curriculum content, physical education facilities, teaching methods, students' learning attitudes and lecturers' competence. However, the research results show that the development of criteria for assessing learning outcomes for students of current training institutions has not focused on the goal of comprehensive development in physical education, and has not closely followed the actual situation, as well as the goals and tasks set forth by the Party and the state. Current student assessment criteria of training institutions are not suitable and do not assess all the necessary aspects that a student must achieve after completing the Physical Education course.

3. Conclusion

From the research results, the following conclusions are drawn:

- The construction of physical education curriculum content of some higher education institutions in the past has not paid attention to the needs of learners, has been slow to innovate, and has not kept up with the integration and development trends of society in the field of physical education and sports.
- The assessment of learning outcomes in physical education only focuses on skills to form technical movements, not on assessing the physical development of learners, and has not created motivation to encourage learners to practice regularly.

To further promote the meaning and practical value of Physical Education, maintain and improve the health of students of higher education institutions, in addition

to paying attention to and increasing investment in facilities, dedicated and specialized teaching staff, etc., special attention should be paid to:

- Regularly research, investigate and grasp health trends and sports training needs of students to promptly adjust and supplement the content of the Physical Education program to meet the diverse needs of students with the constant development of society.
- Improve and innovate the way of assessing the learning outcomes of physical education, focusing on the goal of assessing the physical development of learners. Assessment criteria should aim at educating learners' awareness of regular self-training, maintaining and developing physical fitness.
- Strictly carry out pedagogical inspection of Physical fitness tests to obtain necessary information and documents, from which to design appropriate exercises that meet physical fitness standards according to regulations.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The article is the research work of the author group. The data and results are honest, not overlapping with other studies.

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