Available on: https://jsshrs.ep-journals.org/ E-ISSN: 3051-3561 P-ISSN: 3051-3553

Journal of Social Science and Human Research Studies

Volume: 02 Issue: 03 March-2026

The Current Situation of The Physical Education Curriculum for Students at Saigon University, Vietnam

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Published Date: March 02, 2026 **Article DOI: 10.65150/EP-jsshrs/V2E3/2026-01**

ABSTRACT: The physical education curriculum is very important for helping students become fit, stay healthy, and learn how to exercise regularly. At the same time, it helps kids learn how to live a healthy life, be determined, be disciplined, and work together, which meets the standards for a well-rounded education. The purpose of the study is to conduct a survey and provide data regarding the current state of the physical education (PE) curriculum for Saigon University (SGU) students. The study employs literature review methodologies, interviews, and statistical analysis to comprehensively address the research topic. The research participants include 15,400 SGU students, 20 management staff members, 14 physical education instructors, and a range of experts, both affiliated with and independent of SGU. The study employs literature review methodologies, interviews, and statistical analysis to comprehensively investigate the research topic. The research subjects include 15,400 SGU students, 20 management staff, experts, and 14 physical education lecturers, both from within and outside SGU. The research findings indicate that the conditions for implementing the physical education program for SGU students do not meet the legal requirements in Vietnam for facilities (0.52 m² per student) and staff (1,040 students per lecturer). The physical education curriculum for SGU students is developed in compliance with the Ministry of Education and Training's regulations; nonetheless, it lacks sufficient diversity and richness to fulfill the students' needs.

KEYWORDS: Current situation, program, physical education, students, Saigon University, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The course syllabus is "a component consisting of knowledge about a course within a certain educational program." A subject is "a block of knowledge and skills of a part of the curriculum that needs to be taught and learned in a semester at the university level." A subject is "a system (or a part of knowledge) in a scientific field arranged according to pedagogical requirements to impart to learners" [1]. In English, the term "course syllabus" refers to a specific program with detailed layouts of the teaching plan and regulations on the content of knowledge and skills of the subject in the curriculum [2].

"Physical Education (PE) is a part of education in general as well as other educational fields; PE includes educational tasks through the pedagogical process or in the form of self-education" [3]. According to Novikov and Matveev, "Physical education is a process of addressing certain educational tasks, characterized by all the general signs of the pedagogical process, with the guiding role of the educator, organizing activities in accordance with pedagogical principles" [4], [5].

According to A.M. Maksimenko, B.C. Kizhnetsov and Sokolov define physical education as a type of education that includes specialized content such as teaching movements, developing physical qualities, acquiring specialized knowledge about sports, and fostering self-directed training in individuals [6], [7]. According to Stephen J. Virgilio (1997): "Physical education, like other forms of education, is essentially a pedagogical process with all its fundamental characteristics." The main difference between physical education (PE) and other forms of education is that PE specifically focuses on developing motor skills, physical qualities, and understanding the morphology and functions of the body, which in turn equips individuals with knowledge about these aspects and their interrelationships. *Thus, it can be seen that physical education (PE) is a relatively independent form of the comprehensive education process, with an objective relationship to other forms of education such as moral, esthetic, intellectual, and labor education…" [8].*

In physical education, there are two basic specific components: teaching movements (motor skills) and educating physical qualities (physical abilities). In other words, the hallmark of physical education is the instruction of movement techniques and the development of physical fitness in students. Additionally, the intensity of the routines encourages the adjustment of the body's natural characteristics, such as endurance and strength. Thanks to exercise, we can change functional morphology, creating increasingly adaptive changes in the body, such as improving the regulatory functions of the nervous system, increasing muscle growth, and enhancing the functional capacity of the cardiovascular system. [4], [5]. According to Novikov A. D. and Matveev L. P., "Physical development is the process and result of changes in the morphology and functional abilities of the human body, achieved under the influence of genetics, the living environment, and the individual's level of physical activity" [4], [5].

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Physical education is a required part of all majors' training programs at universities in Vietnam [9], [10]. The goal of the physical education curriculum is to teach students basic motor Students should develop their skills and knowledge, establish a habit of exercise and sports to improve their health, fitness, and height, enhance their personality and learning ability, and strengthen their social skills with a positive attitude and spirit. This is all part of the goal of comprehensive education [11, 12].

The curriculum for physical education helps students grow in all areas, aligning with the goals of higher education. The program includes practical modules that are meant to improve physical traits like speed, strength, endurance, flexibility, and dexterity. It also includes a system of basic theoretical knowledge about physical training. Through the learning process, students are equipped with scientific self-training methods, develop the habit of regular exercise, and enhance their health and adaptability to the demands of study and work in the modern context. The physical education curriculum for students should be based on educational science and the mental and physical traits of the age group, with the goal of making sure that their physical and intellectual abilities grow in a balanced way. By following a structured learning process, students improve their physical abilities, sense of discipline, spirit of cooperation, and ability to take care of their health, which helps the university reach its overall educational goals. Does the current state of the physical education curriculum in universities in Vietnam, in general, and in Ho Chi Minh City, in particular, meet the above criteria? To address the aforementioned inquiry, it is imperative to possess information regarding the current state of affairs, which will serve as the foundation for the necessary modifications and enhancements. I am currently investigating the subject matter due to the aforementioned reasons:

"The current situation of the physical education curriculum for students at Saigon University, Vietnam"

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Methods

Documentary research method: aimed at collecting, synthesizing, and analyzing information related to various sources; the results help the researcher build a theoretical foundation for the study, select research methods, and discuss research findings.

Interview method: aimed at collecting information through the opinions of experts and professionals on the current status of the physical education program.

Statistical method: aimed at processing and analyzing the data collected during the research process with the support of SPSS 22.0 software.

2.2 Participants

Testees:

15,400 students participated in the Physical Education (I) course at Saigon University, Vietnam.

Survey respondent

20 management officials, specialists, and 14 physical education lecturers from within and outside Saigon University.

3. RESULTS

Research on the current status of the physical education curriculum for SGU students, Vietnam, is conducted with two main focuses:

- The study focuses on the current state of various factors that support the physical education curriculum for SGU students in Vietnam.
- The current state of the physical education curriculum for SGU students, Vietnam.

3.1. The current state of certain factors ensures the quality of the physical education curriculum for SGU students in Vietnam.

Regarding the facilities

The facilities that help students learn always have an effect on the quality and effectiveness of physical education instruction. Providing all the necessary teaching tools will create the best possible conditions for lecturers to do their jobs and ensure high quality. The present is a good time to improve the quality of education and teaching at the school.

Table 1. Facilities currently in operation that facilitate the instruction of physical education to students

Location	Type of field	Quantity	Area	Quality
Main facility	Basketball court	01	1680 m^2	Good
	Football field	01	420 m^2	Good
	Badminton court	02	220 m^2	Good
	Volleyball court	03	1300 m^2	Good
	Table Tennis training room	01	400 m^2	Good
	Athletics training field	01	2000 m^2	Average
Second facility	Multipurpose court	01	1200 m^2	Average
	Volleyball court	01	400 m^2	Above average
Total			7.620 m^2	

Table 1 indicates that the facilities for teaching physical education at the main campus of SGU are currently well-invested in both quality and quantity, providing a suitable environment for lecturers and students. These facilities include 03 volleyball courts, 01 basketball court, 01

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soccer field, 02 badminton courts, 01 table tennis room (with 4 tables), and a track and field practice area. Teaching is conducted at the main campus because the second campus's facilities are unsafe for training.

The total area of sports fields designated for physical education teaching in the 2023-2024 academic year is 7,620 m², serving 19,668 students; of these, 14,565 students are registering for physical education courses this year, with Semester 1 having 6,794 students who each have 1.12 m², Semester 2 having 5,411 students with 1.41 m² each, and Semester 3 having 2,360 students who each have 3.23 m². On average, each student has 1.92 m² of sports field area for training activities, and if this total area is divided among all the students at the school, the average area of the sports field per student decreases (7,620 m² / 14,565 students = 0.52 m²). Thus, the total area of the school's sports fields and training facilities has been relatively well invested in terms of quality and quantity; however, it still does not meet the standards for infrastructure or the study and sports activity needs of students [13].

Due to the school's multiple training facilities, students study various specialized subjects at the second facility rather than the main facility, while physical education is focused solely at the main facility. Therefore, moving between campuses before and after taking physical education classes is unavoidable, making it difficult and challenging to register for suitable elective courses and travel to different study locations.

Concerning the instruction personnel

As of September 2024, the Department of National Defense Education and Physical Education at Saigon University has 23 full-time faculty members, including 2 divisions: the National Defense There are 8 faculty members in the Education Division, 14 in the Physical Education Division, and 1 specialist. Currently, the Department of Physical Education consists of 14 lecturers: 04 hold doctoral degrees, accounting for 28.57% (including 2 senior lecturers); 10 hold master's degrees, accounting for 71.43% (including 2 lecturers who are currently pursuing doctoral studies). The specialized expertise is also diverse, including 03 lecturers teaching football, 03 lecturers teaching basketball, 03 lecturers teaching volleyball, 02 lecturers teaching badminton, and 03 lecturers teaching table tennis. At the same time, all lecturers also participate in teaching the general subject (Physical Education (I)).

Each year, the school enrolls more than 5,000 students, with a total of 14,565 students for the 2023–2024 academic year and a total of 13,800 hours of physical education instruction for the year. Given the large number of students and the complexity of the learning process, the school does not have enough lecturers to meet the demand for physical education instruction, particularly for students enrolled in mandatory physical education courses.

Table 2. Statistics on the professional qualifications of PE lecturers at SGU

Subject	Professional qualifications				Total number of lecturers
	PhD	Percentage	Master	Percentage	
Athletics	04	28.57	10	71.43	14
Football	01	25.00	02	20.00	03
Volleyball	01	25.00	02	20.00	03
Basketball	02	50.00	01	10.00	03
Badminton			02	20.00	02
Table tennis			03	30.00	03

The study's Table 2 reveals the following observations.

+ Regarding professional qualifications: The team of physical education lecturers at SGU has met the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training with various specializations.

+ In terms of numbers: Given the size of the university and the Physical Education program (which requires 3 credits or 90 class periods for regular students), SGU does not have enough Physical Education lecturers according to the rules (with 14,565 students and only 14 lecturers, that's about 1,040 students for each lecturer).

Table 3 presents the statistical data on the number of lecturers with physical education teaching experience at SGU.

Table 3. Number of lecturers with teaching experience in Physical Education at SGU

Year of service							
1-5 years		5-10 years		10-20 years		Above 20 years	
Lecturer	Percentage	Lecturer	Percentage	Lecturer	Percentage	Lecturer	Percentage
0	0.00	01	7.14	04	28.57	09	64.29

Regarding seniority in physical education teaching, in total, the number of lecturers in the physical education department is 14, of which the number of lecturers working for 1–5 years is 0, accounting for 0.00%. The number of lecturers with 5–10 years of experience is 1 lecturer, accounting for 7.14%. Four lecturers, or 28.57% of the total, have ten to twenty years of experience. Nine lecturers, or 64.29% of the total, have been in the field for more than 20 years.

Through the above data, we can see that the majority of the Physical Education Department's teaching staff have teaching experience and are dynamic, with relatively high professional qualifications and a full distribution across subjects.

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The above data shows that every year, teachers in the Department of National Defense Education and Physical Education have to take on an excessive workload (besides teaching, they also have to participate in management tasks, youth union activities, scientific research work, etc.). Therefore, improving the overall quality of physical education teaching at the school continues to face many challenges.

3.2. Current status of the physical education curriculum for SGU students, Vietnam

The physical education curriculum for SGU students is built based on the framework program of the Ministry of Education and Training for non-specialized university students [12].

In addition, the physical education curriculum is also allowed by the Ministry of Education and Training to be flexibly adjusted, either increased or decreased, or to select elective sports based on the specific conditions of each school. Therefore, when selecting, developing content, and conducting the teaching of elective sports, the Physical Education Department of the Faculty of National Defense Education & Physical Education has based its selection of elective sports on the school's characteristics and regulations to ensure they align with the actual teaching conditions at the school, the professional qualifications of the teachers, and the students' enthusiasm for practicing.

Regarding the physical education program at the university level, studying 3 credits is equivalent to 90 periods, which includes 6 theory periods and 84 practical periods (30 mandatory periods and 60 elective periods). The theoretical teaching hours are integrated into the practical sessions.

Table 4. Curriculum for Physical Education at SGU

	Course	Course name	Periods		Time
			Theory	Practical	
1	Mandatory	Physical Education (I)	02	28	Semester 1, semester 2, semester 3
2	Elective course	Table tennis 1 Table tennis 2	02 02	28 28	Semester 1, semester 2, semester 3
		Volleyball 1 Volleyball 2	02 02	28 28	Semester 1, semester 2, semester 3
		Football 1 Football 2	02 02	28 28	Semester 1, semester 2, semester 3
		Basketball 1 Basketball 2	02 02	28 28	Semester 1, semester 2, semester 3
		Badminton 1 Badminton 2	02 02	28 28	Semester 1, semester 2, semester 3

Table 4 shows:

- Mandatory course:

For full-time SGU students, the mandatory physical education course (30 periods) includes athletics. - Middle-distance running (men: 1500 m, women: 800 m).

- Elective courses:

+ The physical education curriculum for SGU students is implemented in accordance with the framework program approved by the Ministry of Education and Training.

+ With the number of 05 sports for the elective module (table tennis, volleyball, football, basketball, and badminton), it has relatively met the students' needs for choosing their favorite sports, creating conditions for students to learn and practice the sports that match their talents and strengths, helping them to be active in training and fully develop their potential. But in reality, the current situation of the school has seen many positive changes, developing and expanding the training program, so it is very necessary to introduce more elective sports into the curriculum for students, which also meets the trend of societal development.

❖ **The current situation regarding the assessment and evaluation of Physical Education at SGU**

Department evaluation scores and course scores are calculated on a scale of 10 (from 0 to 10), rounded to one decimal place.

Table 5. Physical Education Evaluation Table at SGU for the 2023-2024 academic year

Evaluation criteria	Criteria evaluation score	Weight	Form of assessment
1. Process evaluation	Process score (1.1 + 1.2)	*50%*	Practical learning
1.1. Learning awareness	Attendance and study attitude	10%	Check attendance
1.2. Academic Records	Midterm exam score	40%	Practical learning
2. End-of-term evaluation	*Final exam score*	*50%*	Practical learning

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SGU evaluates the academic performance of the physical education course based on two criteria: process score and final exam score. According to the detailed syllabus of the Physical Education course, the process score is weighted at 50% (of which the attendance score is 10% and the midterm exam score is 40%), and the final exam score is weighted at 50% of the total score for the Physical Education course.

- **Attendance score:** Accounts for 10% of the total final course score. Attendance points are calculated by the teacher taking a roll without prior notice during the 15 class sessions. The specific grading method is as follows: Students who are present for all classes receive 10 points. If a student is absent for one class without a valid reason, they will lose 1 point for each period.
- **Midterm exam:** Accounts for 40% of the total course completion score, graded according to the scoring scale specified for each physical education course as detailed in the course syllabus.
- **Final exam score:** Accounts for 50% of the total course completion score, assessed according to the grading scale specified for each physical education course, detailed in the course syllabus.

Thus, the total score for the physical education course = Attendance score + Midterm exam score + Final exam score/100. Students are recognized as passing if they score 5 or higher in physical education.

With this evaluation standard, it is relatively reasonable, as it harmoniously assesses both the diligence and the professional competence of the students. This standard encourages students to actively participate in full classes.

❖ ***The current situation regarding students' demand for choosing elective sports.***

Table 6 displays the number of students registering for physical education courses in the 2023-2024 academic year.

Table 6. The status of students registering for physical education courses in the 2023-2024 academic year

	Course Name	Course code	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Total
1	Athletics (mandatory)	862101	2,600	2,400	800	5,800
2	Table tennis 1	BOBA11	600	560	280	1,440
3	Table tennis 2	BOBA12	80	40	40	160
4	Volleyball 1	BOCH11	880	760	320	1,960
5	Volleyball 2	BOCH12	80	40	40	160
6	Football 1	BODA11	480	880	360	1,720
7	Football 2	BODA12	40	40	40	120
8	Basketball 1	BORO11	600	760	280	1,640
9	Basketball 2	BORO12	120	40	40	200
10	Badminton 1	CALO11	880	800	360	2,040
11	Badminton 2	CALO12	80	40	40	160
	Total		**6,440**	**6,360**	**2,600**	**15,400**

Table 6 indicates that students' course registrations are uneven due to various factors, including the availability of facilities, the qualifications of teaching staff, the arrangement of course offerings by the Training Department, students' interest in sports subjects, and the class size limit of about 40 students, which restricts some classes. Many students express a desire to register for certain subjects but are unable to do so due to teacher availability or facility conditions, particularly in fields where there are already existing classes. Therefore, increasing the number of teachers with appropriate specialties, improving facilities, or researching the addition of more sports to elective courses is very necessary.

4. CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that the conditions for teaching the physical education program to SGU students do not meet the required standards for facilities (0.52 m² per student) and staff (1 teacher for every 1,040 students) as outlined in Vietnam's regulations.

The physical education curriculum for SGU students was developed in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training, but it is not yet diverse and rich enough to meet the students' needs.

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