

Original Article

The teaching of physical education in primary school as the foundation of sports development

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Abstract

One important aim of education is to enable an individual to live an effective and useful life through participation in the activity of his community. Sport is an important aspect of human society and is essentially physical activity. Every society work towards transmitting the worthwhile aspects of the society. Physical education as a subject aims at providing all round development of the child. It is through this process at the school level, that children are exposed to sport. Children by their nature take delight in physical activity irrespective of sex, race, family status, religion or geographical location. It is through this process that children learn about others and expand their world view. This paper examined physical education as the foundation of sport development and the primary school is the base for grassroot sports development through physical education activities.

Key Words: Professionalism, grassroot, achievement, knowledge, recreational.

Introduction

Individuals, communities and nations of the world spend so much in time, energy and resources to ensure success in sport. This is in realization to the immense benefit that accrue from it. Part of the gains include, international recognition and economic value both to the individual and the nation. Today, cuba is known for boxing, Brazil for soccer and chineses for table Tennis. Sport is a universal language and thus cut across geographical and cultural boundaries, religious belief, race, colour. It's general nature makes it a complex phenomenon. International Olympic Committee (2002) considered sport as a vast variety of human behaviour, involving different environment, varied structures which is subject to immense pressure as racism, politics, the demands of mass media and entertainment industry, professionalism etc. these are enough evidences of influence of sport on human society. Stroot and Morton (1989) remarked that sport as human activity touches on three areas namely:

1. Sport as a game; that is a free activity which does not follow any utilitarian objective but which is developed within a set of rules and at the same time put the individual to the test; the objectives are recreative and self testing.
2. Sport as a contest against an opponent: an adversary, space, time, obstacles, or natural force; the objective is victory.
3. Sport as intensive physical activity; the objectives of which are self-excellence and record breaking. Sport is a game of prowess. With this basic understanding, physical education as a school subject has a great role to play in the development of sports.

Many educators agree that physical education covers all activities which is directed towards the development and maintenance of human body. Udoh (1982), Roefs (1998) defines physical education as that aspect of education concerned with the teaching and acquisition of skills and attitudes in games and sport. Physical education is therefore a means through which changes take place in an individual as a result of movement experiences. Experts highlight different usage of the term physical education to include: name of courses of study in the higher institutions; a qualified position for work; as a subject in the school times table and as a process. The achievement of the letter provides the basis for sport development. The uniqueness of physical education and sport lie on human activity directed towards the development of self and society (Parkhouse 2005). Today, the strength of nations are not judged by their wealth or even military might but the position on which they are placed in the world of sport, this is one main reason why physical education should be given proper attention. Sport men and women do not just appear, they were first identified at the tender age before elsewhere. The number of pupils at the primary schools, the central location of school environment and basic facilities, the readiness on the part of the children that take instructions and corrections, and the inward drive for physical accomplishment make physical education in primary schools a rich avenue for grassroot sport development. However, the success of this level depends on such factors as the teacher, content, equipment and facilities, support from parents and government among others. (Avolio 1999, Kraus & Curtis 2000, Fleischman 2003).

Physical Education as the base for sport development

Physical education is more than mere acquisition of neuro-muscular skills, strength, endurance, agility, flexibility and co-ordination. It provides a rich opportunity for social interaction and mutual understanding. These are necessary tools for individual survival in his environment. A child needs to be involved in physical education to develop basic skills for games; to test oneself and for recreation (Bucher & Krotee 2002).

Sport in Nigeria is seen as an instrument for achieving national objectives such as integration, love, unity amongst the diverse ethnic groups in the country. The Federal Government goes on to provide sporting facilities, equipment and supplies, encourages sport competitions at various level. However, it appears that physical education which could be taken as the nursery levels of sport, is not accorded similar attention. It must be noted that many Nigerian children can only afford primary school education; the implication here is that education offered here including physical education could enable them make a career. It is also considered that if proper attention is given to physical education right from primary school level, the present poor performances in sport, hooliganism in sport, use of enhancing drugs and unwarranted profession would be overcome.

The physical education teacher has an advantage over other teachers because children by nature take great delight in running, jumping, throwing, catching and endless physical activity, to children this is considered as play which is a serious business to them. Adedeji (1985) observed that play may be directive (extrinsic) or non-directive (intrinsic). In directive play the child may imitate a hero like J.J. Okocha in soccer. He tries to work hard in order to develop J.J. Okocha's skills. A child in this case submit himself to be taught by an expert so that he may become a star. On non-directive play there seems to be strong force within the child himself which makes him strive continuously for complete self realization. The physical education and the games teacher should work co-operatively to identify these two groups in order to motivate them accordingly.

Physical education relate to sport in the following areas:

1. **Education:** Generally, education is a process of helping individual live effective and useful life. Physical education is concerned with the all-round development of individual and by extension, the society. The child should first be and equally be protected from the hazards that may go with sport. Coakley (2001) makes the point clear when he remarks that children need to be 'insulated' but be not isolated. This implies that talented children in sport need not be exploited. They should be identified, groomed and allowed to be nature in relevant sport area, Catch them young but do not spoil is required at this level.
2. **Acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes:** Physical education set the base for acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes which are necessary for participation in recreative physical activities and sport during their leisure time while at school and later in life. It is observed that children who possess the right knowledge, skills and attitudes perform better in sport.
3. **Interest:** Physical education provides opportunity for pupils to make selection on the choice of area to follow in sport. Individual need not get into sport only for the fun of it rather the extent to which he can reach out to others and importantly the future benefit. According to Mertzman (2000), 'no amount of teaching of an activity can compensate for an attitude which is unhappy. Children are happy during physical education class and sport.
4. **Physical Qualities:** Development of muscular strength, endurance, speed etc. are better introduced at the Primary School age. Physical education lesson serves as laboratory for the preparation of future sportsmen and women.
5. **Attraction:** Many pupils are attracted to school because of physical education which is embodiment of sports at that level. Effort should be made for physical education to accommodate all levels of pupils including the special group and even those outside the school system.

Primary School and Sport Development

Primary School offers the greatest opportunity for the attainment of formal education by many Nigerian children. This has direct impact on the development of sport through the teaching of physical education. The following areas are identified as potential areas through which primary school situation promotes sport development in the country.

- a. **Identification:** The broad based education offered in the primary school enables the teachers to identify interest and abilities of pupils. In physical education it is easy to discover a fast runner, high jumper, a good ball dribbler, good goalkeeper, all these and other opportunities avail themselves during physical education lessons. Outstanding sportsmen and women of today made their way from primary school days.
- b. **Trained Personnel:** The primary school before the state Government abolished teacher training colleges, every teacher was trained and was except to handle the class during physical education lessons. The teachers did not only end up teaching the subject but were involved in seeing to pupils improvement on sport skills through evening games. The games master appointed by the school oversee

- the conduct of extra curricular sport activities in the evenings. These teachers by every standard have the abilities of developing sport skills in primary school pupils during intra-mural sport activities.
- c. **Equipment and Facilities:** Every public primary school is blessed with a sports field which stands for several sporting activities. These include physical education lesson in the morning, recreational activities during recess and various sporting activities in the evening. This is a great boast to sport life of the school and the host community.
 - d. **Amenable Age:** Children at this stage of development (6-11 +) are amenable to changes and corrections. They succeed much better than adults when it comes to following instructions. It is appropriate to expose them to sport skill as during physical education for observation, correction and encouragement.
 - e. **Government Participation:** In Nigeria Sport is likened to Education as instrument that in part excellence for effecting national integration and unity. Government is able to reach out to school than to individuals and clubs in the development of sports. Sports competitions are held from primary to University levels. The slogan “catch them young” is directly applicable at the primary school. Physical education is a means to healthy development and physical fitness of the participants. A nation needs physically fit men and women to protect the lives and properties, and if necessary expand geographical boundaries, strong people to work in the industries and farm to boost the national economy. Apart from these, a culture of physical fitness is laid at the Primary school through 3 days a week physical education. The gains in running, jumping and acquisition of sport skills are necessary for better living (Siedentop & Tannehill 2000, Sport Canada 2002).

The Teaching of Physical Education and Sports Development

Primary education is the foundation of educational system. The national Policy on education (1998) defined it as institution for children normally aged 6-11+. The document rightly observed that since the test of the education system is built upon it, the primary education is the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system in any nation of the world. The primary school is the key to the success or failure of competitive sport in any nation while physical education is the father of sport right from the time of the Greece. Success in sport does not just happen rather it is a product of many variables. The following are considered important factors to the successful sport development through physical education.

1. **Teaching:** Teaching is a complex activity hence not every teacher should be assigned to teach physical education. Rink, (1985) observed that a good teacher will always aspire to get a good understanding of what he is to teach in order to establish required skills in the child. Physical education cannot be meaningfully implemented unless teachers are: Knowledgeable, dedicated, humane, didactic and interested in professional growth. The commitment on the part of the teacher need to be rewarded through provision of incentives. The expectations of a good physical education teacher include:
 - a) Physical fitness (b) Acquisition of basic sport and games skills (c) Socially adjusted (d) Resourcefulness (e) Mastery of teaching methods (f) Interested in his work and proper upbringing of the children. (g) He must be strained.

Physical education could serve as a major boost to sport development in the country if the following areas are addressed.
2. **Introduction of Physical Education-Theory:** It is time that physical education be taught as a classroom subject. Subject matters should constitute proper walking, running, sitting, jumping, uses of exercises, effect of exercise on the body, safety measure in sports, basic skills, rules and regulations, officiating and officials could make up the theoretical framework of physical education in Primary Education. The content be graduated on the basis of the class. Pupils should be tested in both theory and practical aspect of the work.
3. **Provision of Basic Equipment and Facilities:** The School should be provided with basic sporting equipment and facilities like table tennis, lawn tennis, balls for various games like volleyball, basket ball, and soccer. Pitches outside soccer pitch should be available for pupils’ practices and competitions. The host community should contribute to the provision of needed equipment and facilities.
4. **Evaluation of the Pupils:** Pupils who perform excellently well during physical classes and competitions should be identified. They should be placed in appropriate training programmes to meet with their age and abilities. Pupils should be protected from excessive competitions.
5. **Review of the existing Physical Education Curriculum:** Experts in curriculum studies should review the present physical Education curriculum in Primary school in line, that worth the development needed in Sport. Such areas could include drug in sports, special sports, sport management, marketing, professionalism, and coaching sports. These areas should be highlighted in the training of physical Education Specialists.

6. **Supervision:** Supervisors who are expert in the field of physical Education and sport should visit school regularly to identify problem areas, and should be able to provide corrections and encouragement for better performance.
7. **Record/Counselling Services:** Records are useful in determining the success or failure of a programme, where physical education is made examinable subject in both theory and practical, pupil performance can be assessed in these areas and appropriate recommendation made. The counseling services should take proper account of the choice of sport by pupils and advise them accordingly.
8. **Teaching Methods:** Children vary in abilities across all areas of development. The use of various teaching methods are a means to eliciting learning process in Pupils.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the teaching of physical Education in the Primary school is *Sine qua non* to the development of Sport in Nigeria. This is attributed to the fact that physical education is the sum total of man's physical activities, selected and presented to the child for his all round development. Basically, the dwelling performance in Sport can be traced to the State of Education in School. Specialists need to be trained to match with the modern trend in sport on the use of sophisticated facilities and equipment. Games teachers should be adequately rewarded so also the pupils this will go along way to motivate them to better performance in sport.

Recommendations

In addition to other issues raised in this paper for consideration, the following are commended:

1. Introduction and teaching of special sport. This will create awareness and stimulate effective participation of this group of children.
2. Coaching Clinics, Seminars and conferences should be organized regularly for games teachers and physical education teachers.
3. Regular competitions at the school level, inter-schools and at Zonal levels should be organized to help select talented sport men and women.
4. Indigenous games and sport should be introduced into physical education programme. This will help to promote the nation culture and materials.
5. There should be a closer working relationship between the school and the Ministry of Sport for the development of physical education viz-viz.
6. Parents should encourage pupils to participate in physical education and in organized sports. As rightly observed by Umoinyany and Edim (2000) that Parents and educators share an interest in the achievement of the child.
7. In the interim some teachers should be selected and retrain to teach only physical education. On the long term, institutions of higher learning should review the curriculum of physical education and train physical education teachers as specialist in the Primary.

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