

THE SURVIVAL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

Physical education by its introduction into the Nigerian School system had its root in primary school. This must have been in realization that primary school is the base and foundation of educational system. Generally, primary school age years fall between 6 - 11. Educationists agree that whatever is neglected at this stage in many cases cannot be made up in later life.

The natural urge in man for movement need to be established early in life for survival in this automatic age. Education is much more than being able to read and write. The child needs activity both physical and mental, especially as his physical and intellectual qualities are the major determinants of his personality Churcher (1972). Above many other subjects, physical education provides opportunity for play. Play is one language all children understand and through which they express themselves. At present a casual observation of physical education programme in primary school reveals absence of teacher's involvement in physical activities for the benefit of the child. Physical education periods are free periods for unorganised plays; farm work or completion of assignment in other lessons. The achievement in this area depends on the proper selection, organisation and implementation of the programme.

The objectives of this paper is therefore to highlight the relevance of physical education and most importantly provide guidelines for the successful implementation of the subject at the primary school level.

Relevance of physical education in primary school

Physical education is generally conceived as an integral part of the total education process, a field of endeavour that has as its aim the improvement of human performance through the medium of physical activities that have been selected for the purpose of realizing the desired outcomes Bucher (1979). The subject physical education is taken as education through the physical, and it seeks outlet through fundamental skills of movement, dual sports, team sports and games, dance and the rhythmic activities, combat or self-testing activities, gymnastics, track and field athletics and aquatic sports (Udoh 1992).

Physical education in primary school is a means of providing pupils opportunity to make appropriate adjustment in physical growth and general behaviour pattern. Experiences acquired by the children through physical activities enable them function efficiently and effectively in later life. Adedeji (1985) provides experiences the child is

likely to achieve through planned programme of physical education. These include: The skill of movement in relation to the idea of space, time, force level, energy, intensity and relationship with people and inanimates objects which affect the performance.

The social behaviour skills needed for good person to person relations and individual adjustment.

Participation in physical education provide an excellent means of determining the child's physical, mental social and emotional attributes. It enables the teacher to observe the child's inner character which is usually difficult to identify in the classroom. In view of the importance of physical education to the child. Udoh (1992) emphasized that children be provided ample opportunities for the best way to "move" through physical education activities.

Guidelines for implementation of physical education programme in primary schools

The school has accepted the responsibility of educating the "whole child" through guided experiences. Primary school education is widely acclaimed as the base for the laying of sound physical, mental, social, emotional requirements of the child. There was a time when physical education lessons were not only heard but seen. The zeal and commitment on the part of the teachers seems not to be there again. A keen observer of the present educational enterprise would agree that physical education neither command nor is accorded its pride of place. If physical education is to fulfil its role of modifying human personality through the use of selected psychomotor, affective and cognitive experiences, then positive changes must be reflected in the teaching, organisation equipment and facilities and methodology.

Furthermore, children should be guided, not only to discover how to move, but how best to move to attain the maximum benefits derivables, be they physical, intellectual, emotional or social. The pertinent questions are: how prepared are physical educators in schools in terms of training and participation in physical education lesson? What are the equipment and facilities on ground? How ready are parents and government to support effective implementation of physical education programme in schools, as the base for the laying of sound physical, mental, social emotional requirements of the child?

Teaching

From whatever perspective, teaching is a complex activity. Teachers design and redesign experiences for the learners, the lesson content and the teaching - learning process. To be successful teaching has to elicit worth while changes in behaviour and maintain a constant open attitude Rink (1985). 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. At the same time, the teacher must ensure that the child understands why he is asked to perform a particular activity (Adedeji 1985).

Today in schools, two types of teachers could be found: some dedicated with genuine interest in working with young people, while others regard teaching a stop-over to a more lucrative employment. The later group are the enemies with us, they are cheaters while the former are real teachers (Obanya, 1982).

Physical education cannot be meaningfully implemented unless teacher's are knowledgeable, dedicated, humane, didactic and interested in professional growth. The

commitment on the part of the teachers need to be rewarded through provision of incentives. The expectations of good physical education teacher include:

- i Physical fitness
- ii Acquisition of basic sports and games skills
- iii Socially Adjusted
- iv Resourcefulness
- v Mastery of teaching methods
- vi Interested in teaching and moral rectitude.

Organisation

Undoubtedly, primary school education remains the most accessible area to a greater percentage of Nigerians. Organizational competency on the part of school and teacher is a pre-requisite for successful programme implementation. The following need to be considered.

Scheduling: The practice of routinely fixing physical education the first lesson in the morning renders the conduct of the subject a glorified waste of time. Fixing the same time for all the classes causes organizational problems of inadequate space, insufficient equipment and facilities, weather factor and poor supervision. Physical education lessons need not be periods of mass, disorderly merry-go-round. Scheduling should reflect the peculiarity of the school and the environment.

Costume: It is not uncommon to see all types of dresses being worn by both teachers and pupils during physical education lesson. Neat, properly fitted, costumes are recommended. Cheap and identical uniforms on the part of the pupils is supported. Aesthetic value is enhanced and it equalizes peer concepts by eliminating display and social hierarchy. The uniform should be conducive to sanitary and healthful conditions. This condition promotes personal hygiene and good dress habits.

Activities: Physical exercises are meant for the body. It is the "trade mark" of the profession. It gives the profession a unique distinction. In the use of activities to develop man, care should be taken to ensure that unintelligent movements are eliminated.

In the selection, the following considerations should be observed:

- 1 Progression
- 2 Objectivity
- 3 Creativity
- 4 Growth and development
- 5 Resources
- 6 Health and safety
- 7 The disabled.

Records: Records are important tools in determining the success or otherwise of the

programme. Unfortunately, in most schools they are virtually non-existence. Records should be kept on pupils' health, physical achievement test, accident, inventory, attendance, lessons and anecdotes. Accurate records keeping tells the history of the programme.

Equipment and facilities: Equipment and facilities are indispensable in physical education. There is no part in physical education where these materials are not required. For now there is hardly any public schools that provides adequate equipment and facilities for effective programme implementation. In the primary schools the situation is deplorable. Nevertheless, teachers should not use inadequate facilities an excuse for poor teaching and as ineffectiveness but rather learn to improvise.

Teaching methods

Children vary in abilities across all areas of development. The teacher uses teaching methods to moderate the rate of learning by pupils. Good teaching is dependent on the knowledge and mastery of content. The choice of methodology a teacher adopts in teaching physical education is dependent on his past experiences, his interaction with the learners, his professional background, his personality and host of other factors Clark and Star (1976) has highlighted certain strategies which have been found useful in the teaching of physical education in schools namely:

- i Guided discovery the teacher selects the activities and guides learners based on needs and programme goals.
- ii Role playing/imitation teachers discuss situations and allow the learners to form movement patterns to depict or solve the problem situation.
- iii Team teaching two or more teachers because of their individual expertise handle a class within a limited of instruction.
- iv Small group teaching under the same teaching unit the class is divided into small groups for effective practice. Each group should be appointed a leader.
- v Free play operated when a teacher wants to find out the level of understanding and application of previously taught concepts. The learners perform while the teacher inspects and corrects mistakes. Whatever teaching method adopted the teacher must be in constant supervision, use correct teaching procedures, motivate and be in control of the class.

Supportive role of parents and government

Parents are the first teachers of pupils and home the first school. They send pupils to school and also cater for their needs. It means that their indifference towards physical education will directly affect the pupils. It is expected that parents provide food, clothing and shelter as basic needs. In the school, basic physical education materials, such as costumes, should be provided. Children need encouragement and not condemnation from parents.

Governments have accepted to be a major financier of education. This must be reflected on the physical, social and psychological well being of both pupils and teachers. Physical education is the base for sports development, hence the much cry on "catch them

young" is best handled during physical education lessons. The attainment of the lofty goals in physical education should be supported by adequate equipment and facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If physical education is to survive in primary school for the development of human society, it is recommended that:

- 1 Specialists teachers should be trained on the subject and made to handle the conduct of physical education lesson.
- 2 Physical education should be made a teaching subject (classroom) at least at the upper primary classes.
- 3 Mass activities of the school should be replaced with moderated scheduling based on needs and time.
- 4 Greater intramural sports programme be encouraged to build the spirit of sportsmanship.
- 5 Physical education teachers should be adequately rewarded because of the demand in the subject.
- 6 Physical education teachers at the primary school should be made to belong to the various professional bodies in the field.
- 7 Regular seminars, workshops, conferences be organised for all grades of physical educators.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be deduced that physical education has not been given its due attention at the primary school. It makes it difficult to realise the unique contributions of the subject. However, the guidelines are path way of redirecting the course of the subject in primary school.

There is the hope that if appropriate steps are taken to salvage this subject, the Nigerian society stands to benefit from it greatly.

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