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ADVOCACY FOR PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN KINETICS IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

By

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Abstract

From sheer ingenuity man has conquered his hostile environment. Technology is the corner-stone of the achievement. However, technology mismanaged is a mixed blessing of good and evil. While technology heralds the "good life", over indulgence manifests in human enfeeblement. To check the counter blast, the paper advocates a functional human kinetics (HK) philosophy in Nigerian schools. A programme that will furnish the youths with an all round education (hand, heart and head) in balanced proportions. The foundations for this desire is the provision of essential infrastructures and a positive change of attitude.

Introduction

Man is the dominant power in the universe. Literally man has reshaped his destiny. From numerous indications the hostile environment is seemingly at man's mercy. He has been able to tame the weather conquer the valleys and the mountains. He has reclaimed the seas and built satellite settlements and highways. The aircraft has turned the world into a global village by vanquishing distance. Within hours man can travel across the five continents with a speed second to the speed of light. With vehicular transportation, traveling hitherto a nightmare has made human and goods conveyance a lot easier. Man's battle against diseases and ignorance has been a tremendous success yet relentless. Man has made enormous progress in science, medicine, education, arts and technology. All these achievements have changed the world and man.

Technology is at the heart of man's unimaginable progress. On both legs, man wears the shoes of technology. The shoe on the right leg manifests the potentials of technology: increased life expectancy, increased food production, space exploration, mass production of goods, easy communication, manufacture of labour saving devices and a galor of other mixed blessings. The shoe on the left leg manifests the dehumanizing effects of technology; road carnage, manufacture of weapons of mass destruction, increased environmental pollution, population explosion, escalating crime wave, opulence, luxury, decreased physical labour and other "artificial sophistications, and debasements.

Technology is man's best friend. Paradoicially, it is also man's inexorable enemy. In his leisure time, man is likely to watch movies or abuse alcohol or get hooked to some kind of organic wasting indulgences. Man prefers to perform domestic chores with motorized or mechanical contrivances. Man's slavish dependence on technological automation degenerates his bio-physical capabilities. Except man adjusts the shoe on his left leg, Homo sapiens may become endangered species. This is the time to control the impact of technology on man's life, else technology may ride on man.

In Nigeria, education suffers from the dichotomy of having a theory that essentially extols mental sophistry with marginal attention to the psychomotor components of the human personality. In the process, Nigerian educational system churns out "grammarians", very sound in intellectualism; but uneducated through the physical.

However the new national policy on education, FGN (1998), was to reverse the "anti-athleticism" of the former policy. The new policy inter-alia oriented the quality of instruction towards the promotion of the emotional, mental, physical and social development of the school children. That was not all. The new policy stated that physical education is to be emphasized at all levels of the educational system. Uduk (1985) sees the event as the cutting-edge in the educational revolution of the country as no previous policy had made human kinetics (HK) a compulsory academic discipline at all levels of the nation's schools.

Unfortunately, the euphoria of the innovation had hardly subsided when the implementation of the policy was defective. The thrust of the curriculum places major emphasis on mental growth and development of the children. It is a serious mistake that the physical, social and emotional growth and development of the children is marginalized in HK curriculum. To substantiate the charge that HK is treated lackadaisically, a survey has shown that: about 80 per cent of the nation's school children do not participate in programmes of "actions". This is as a result of lack of play spaces, absence of leadership and insufficient periodization. Other reasons are that children with handicaps are ignored, there are no adequate supplies and equipment available as well as the absence of locker rooms where staff and students can dress decently after a programme of "actions" (Uduk, in press).

Human Kinetics: A Conceptualization

Webster (1965), opined that an understanding of any profession depends mainly upon knowledge of the origin, nature, meaning, aims and objectives of that profession. Human kinetics by its very nature is broad and inclusive. In a synoptic definition, Webster (1965) describes the subject as that phase of general education which is part of the whole instructional process, which educates through the physical but not of the physical, by employing motor activities to both small and large muscle groups, so that the participants may gain experiences in health, recreation, dance, safety and outdoor education, and to develop affective attitudes of honesty, fair play, cooperation and socialization. In the broad field of education HK uniqueness is exemplified by catering for the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains through the aegis of head, heart and hand experiences aimed at developing an integrated individual for a purposeful life and functional citizenship.

Dewey (1964) observed the paralysing impact of American education when he noted that though the American school children appear to be intellectually outstanding, their inadequacy in sports is a serious inhibition. The guess is that he was worried about the poor physical fitness level of the American school children.

Nigeria may well be in the grip of the erstwhile American predicament. United States of America established her identity through education and so could Nigeria. Education is indeed the "mother" of all rational developments, growth and progress, as well as the key to its consolidation and sustainability. Human kinetics is an integral part of general education, properly programmed can impact positively on the mental, physical, emotional and social, including the aesthetics as well as spiritual components of the learners. HK seeks to assist in the total process of living, and properly harnessed it would enable man to experience his unitary and interactive nature.

The Thesis

At this point, let us pry into the abstract tunnel of philosophy, for clarification in the attempt to form a pragmatic framework of HK in the nation's schools. Webster New World Dictionary (1962) defines philosophy as the study of the processes governing thought and conduct or the theories or investigations of the principles or laws that regulate the universe and underlie all knowledge and

reality. Zeigler (1964), defines philosophy as a branch of learning or science which investigates, evaluates and integrates knowledge of reality as best as possible, into one or more systems embodying all available wisdom about the universe.

A philosophical conception of HK will afford a clear insight of the objectives and how they are achievable. This view is in concert with Daughtrey (1967), advice to teachers that if they are to be successful, they must know the right way of teaching the correct skills and activities so that their efforts could bring about the desired results.

Over the years technology has lessened the amount of necessary manual work required of the average person. Whereas automation has increased tremendously, the amount of physical activity needed has decreased enormously. This is an irreversible reaction and the dilemma of modern civilization. The homes and peoples life-styles reflect technological advances. As a result, while human comfort increases in geometrical progression man's opportunities to engage in beneficially regulated physical activities decrease in arithmetical progression. While technological revolution has made life a lot more comfortable, it has adversely affected human organic systems, culminating for many in serious disorders. Huss (1999), reported that life insurance companies actuaries in the United States of America, have estimated that, if preventive measures or cures could be found for just the circulatory disorders, the average life expectancy figures could be increased appreciably. This is to say that prosperity and the concomitant luxuries of easy-living render modern man physically cum organically "soft". The reasoning is that, with increased rate of the "good life", and decreasing amount of physical activities (exercise), the stress and distress of life have increased. Man must reorientate his values. While advances in medicine have improve therapeutic treatments, combining preventive measures will reduce the so called diseases of affluence. More emphasis must be given to the aims and objectives of HK through a functional and sound philosophy which would effectively meet the needs and aspirations of the society.

The Tenet

As man matches on in the 21st century, advancement in science and technology will be quantitatively and qualitatively enhanced. These "modern" conveniences will further eliminate the opportunities of man to be mentally, emotionally, socially and physically active. Man by nature is a thinking, feeling, gregarious and active animal. To sacrifice any of the natural propensities is to destabilize his ecologic unity and by implication deny man the "natural life". This article is to inspire a philosophical awakening of physical education in schools. An action that will meet the mental, emotional, social and physical needs of the youths, so that they can face the "civilization hazards" of the society of the future.

With the obvious changes in the society towards increased leisure, sedentary life, automation and improved nutrition we are having a relatively healthier populace. Relative, because as medical science has made significant progress in the conquest of disease there is an alarming increase in "disease of affluence" in the society. These range from obesity, diabetes mellitus to circulatory disorders.

Authorities in medicine and education agree that; (i) exercise is necessary against physical degeneration, (ii) regular, proper exercise preserves physical and mental capacities longer than otherwise, (iii) proper physical activity can significantly delay the ageing process, (Selye, 1975; Morris, 1985; Bauer and Hein 1985). As a necessity therefore, HK programmes should provide instructions in skills for life – long leisure activity which will contribute to the maintenance and/or development of physical fitness. Also the programme should develop desirable social standards and ethical concepts in the participants. Teachers should endeavour to make learning dynamic, joyful and satisfying experiences. Activities should as much as is practicable reflect the culture of

the people so that while young they learn activities they can participate in later years. The objective should be to motivate participants to be physically fit throughout life to counter the "pitfalls" of the so called technological society.

Conclusion

Increasing physical inactivity, and leisure, time wrongly spent cause problems which pose challenges to the society and to HK as a profession. It is necessary that the youths are enlightened in the techniques and the skills necessary to overcome physical turpitude. To do this is to adopt a rational philosophy of activities for youths; the "endangered generation".

This is not a super drug that will cure the counter blasts of technology that may plague man, but a justification for educating the youths through the physical. In a technologically dynamic society, where relationship between civilization and human welfare is obscured this article provides the lens to focus and reconstruct Nigeria educational philosophy to meet contemporary reality.

To match the desire with actions it is recommended that Strategic Eusport Educational Culture "SEEK", should be introduced in the nation's schools. A culture that provides a friendly and enabling sports environment, biased towards programme infrastructural needs and attitudinal change.

*#The word "Eusport" is "invented" as a positive force
for "good" as in words like eugenics and eudemonics.*

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