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CHALLENGES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT OBLIGATIONS

BY

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Abstract

Sports are very popular all over the world because of the diverse purposes they serve. Sports serve as a social institution teaches and reinforces societal beliefs, norms and values, thereby assisting in socializing athletes into major cultural and social behavior patterns in various societies. This paper focused on challenges of secondary school physical education and sports in Nigeria: implications for government obligations. It discussed the sustainable future directions for physical education and sports in schools, situation of physical education in secondary schools, governmental obligations towards sports, finally the paper concluded that all personnel who assume professional responsibility for sport must have and be provided with appropriate qualification and training. The paper further recommended that all secondary school sports personnel should be carefully selected in sufficient numbers and given preliminary as well as further training to ensure that they reach adequate levels of specializations.

Key words: *Sports, Physical Education, Obligations, Sustainable future.*

Introduction

Sports are very popular all over the world because of the diverse purposes they serve. Onifade (2001) states that sports is a social institution that teaches and reinforces societal beliefs, norms and values, thereby assisting in socializing athletes into major cultural and social behaviour patterns in various societies. Bucher and Krotee (2002) opined that sports contribute to character building, discipline, patriotism, mental development, physical fitness, and health. Sports competitions, seminars, conferences and meetings of

various types provide the opportunity for individuals from different countries to exchange ideas and knowledge which in turn would be of immense benefit in educating the citizens of their countries. Morakinyo (2000) observed that sports as a social phenomenon, have grown from its humble beginning of being an entertainment and recreation pastime to becoming a visible and prominent business phenomenon that could no longer be ignored in the social, political and economic environment of any nation. Many great nations and societies of the world have realized that participation in sports is the key to a healthy development of their citizens, and have used it to develop their young ones and attaining success that science, religion and politics have failed to achieve. Sporting activities have as well permeated the Nigerian society just as many other societies worldwide and also all aspects of societal life such as politics and religion. Awosika (2003) described sports as a symbol that has become a unifying factor in Nigeria and views it as an essential ingredient for nation building and has served as a medium for the development of the youths.

Hardman (2009) asserted that, while some physical activity is certainly better than none, the physical education profession alone cannot solve the obesity crisis. This is not to suggest that physical educators should not try to stimulate young people's activity engagement, and help them to understand the value of physical activity and healthy eating. Inactive lifestyles and unhealthy diets ignored by families, communities, media, and some kind of legislation, mean that the best efforts of the physical education profession to turn the tide of obesity will not succeed. For socialization into physical activity engagement, the school physical education curriculum needs to be conceptually and contextually re-appraised. The widespread practice in physical education curricula is to provide experiences, which merely serve to reinforce achievement-orientated performance in sport.

It is unsurprising that students interest in physical education declines throughout the school years and become less active in later school years. For many boys and girls, such programmes do not provide meaningful and relevant experiences rather limit participation. If physical education is to play a useful role in the promotion of active lifestyles, it must be based on performance criteria. In some countries, its content has little relevance to young people's life-style context and there are considerable discrepancies between what occurs in physical education lessons and what is going on outside and beyond the school (Hardman, 2009).

Sustainable future directions for Physical Education and Sports in Schools

Over the years, there has been an apparent steady shift in physical education to a broader, more balanced approach. Physical education curricula needs to be based on the vision that the knowledge, skills and understanding acquired should benefit the students throughout their lives and help them thrive in an ever-changing world by allowing them to acquire physical and health literacy, and to develop the comprehension, capacity and commitment

needed to live a healthy, active lives and to promote healthy active living. Physical literacy (the ability to move with competence in a variety of physical activities) and health literacy (the skills needed to obtain, understand and use the information to make good decisions for health) are key in curriculum development: the curriculum is about helping students develop the necessary skills to make healthy choices. One example of innovation in physical education curriculum development is a recent initiative in Ontario, Canada (Salokun, 2005). The Ontario Health and Physical Education Model is made up of three distinct but related strands: Healthy Living, Active Living, and Movement Competence: Skills, Concepts and Strategies. A further set of expectations related to living skills (personal, inter-personal, critical and creative thinking skills) are included at the beginning of each year grade and are taught and evaluated in conjunction with the learning in the three strands. The approach to healthy living focuses on helping students to use their understanding of health concepts to make healthy choices and to understand the connection between their personal health and well-being and that of others and of the world around them. The movement competence strand focuses on developing movement skills, concepts and strategies that prepare students to participate in lifelong physical activity. The active living strand focuses on teaching students about the joy of physical activity while developing personal fitness and responsibility for safe participation in physical activity. A strong emphasis is placed on teaching the living skills across all strands. The shifts in this approach are reflected in the five fundamental principles on which the curriculum is based:

1. Health and Physical Education programmes are most effective when students' learning, values and healthy habits are shared and supported by school staff, families and communities. They should be characterized by (i) high quality teaching and relevant programme content; (ii) a healthy physical environment; (iii) a supportive social environment; and (iv) community partnerships.

2. Physical activity is the key vehicle for student learning, a principle that students should learn about healthy activities by doing them. In this way, not only will they discover the joy of movement but they will develop skills that will lead to a lifetime of healthy active living. They will also come to understand how to apply the skills and principles they have learned to other things. The idea of teaching transferable skills and strategies is important to accommodate the growing number and range of activities available and accessible and where and when appropriate preserve traditional/cultural activities.

3. Physical and emotional safety is a pre-condition for effective learning in Physical Education and, therefore, there is a need for a supportive social environment. It recognizes that children may take part in activities that involve inherent risk and that they are doing so in a space where their peers can see them explore, succeed

and make mistakes. For this reason, a focus on safety and inclusivity is essential and the programme aims to accommodate the strengths, needs and interests of all students.

4. The physical and emotional development of students varies widely. Hence, the curriculum needs to shift from a content-focused approach to a more skill-based approach, which allows for differentiation of teaching methods/approaches with modification of lessons according to a student's readiness, interest and learning preference, ultimately, helping them to reach their full potential, i.e. learning should be student-centred and skill-based. This shift is intended to help students acquire and practice the skills needed to develop physical and health literacy, and to lead healthy active lives.

5. Learning in this Physical Education and Health curriculum is balanced (addresses physical, cognitive and psycho-social needs), integrated (connections between all strands of the curriculum, Healthy Living, Active Living and Movement Competence: Skills, Concepts and Strategies, and between the content of the strands and the Living Skills are made whenever possible), and connected to real life (topics covered are meant to reflect the situations students face and the choices they have to make in today's world) (Hardman, 2009).

Situation of Physical Education in Secondary Schools

Physical Education during compulsory school years varies across regions and countries and according to age or year of attendance. The average number of years during which physical education is taught in schools is 12 (range 8-14) with a 73% cluster of 11 and 12 years (Hardman, 2009).An initial reality is that despite legislation commitment of access to physical education in schools such provision is far from being assured. International surveys over the years indicate that almost 79% of countries adhere to implementation regulations and delivery but differ from school to school in the majority of countries. Conversely, 21% of countries, physical education is not actually being implemented in accordance with legal obligations or expectations. This proportion rises to 33% in Central and Latin America and the Middle East, 40% in Africa, and 67% in Asia and North America; in Europe only 11% of countries allege a shortfall in implementation (Onifade, 2001).

Hardman (2009) observed that, achievability of all of the outcomes ascribed to physical education in terms of curriculum time allocation, is generally complicated not only by localized control of curricula but also by practices of offering options or electives, which provide opportunities for additional engagement in physical education and/or school sport activity. Student 'uptake' of such opportunities can vary within, and between, countries and not all take advantage of the extra provision. Whatever, the

options/electives available may be included in curriculum time allocation as indicated in some countries' hence, may not accurately represent the prescribed time allocation for all students in some schools in those countries where additional opportunities exist (Salokun, 2005).Over the years, the various surveys' findings have revealed variations in the amounts prescribed or expected time allocated to physical education (and actually delivered). 'Guaranteed' access does not equate with equal amounts of access, testimony to which are the variations in timetable allocation (Omolawon & Aroglzonia, 2008).

The challenges of physical education and sports in secondary schools are associated with sport personnel, government policy, funding of sports, sports facilities and equipment as well as sports programmes. Sports programmes in secondary schools have to be handled by professionally qualified personnel if the objective of the programme and deserved developments are to be achieved. Hence, in choosing personnel for sports programme in secondary schools, certain principles must be borne in mind, such as qualification, personality trait, interest and experience (Morakinyo & Aluko, 2008).

The administration of sports programme in secondary schools is majorly the responsibility of the physical education teachers. This implies that secondary school sports are much affected by the activities of the Physical Education teachers. One of the most important factors to consider in planning any sports programme is the availability of quality and quantity of facilities and equipment. Sporting activities can hardly be effectively organized and administered without adequate funding. This is a very important factor upon which other factors depend. This is because the provision of personnel, facilities and equipment involve disbursement of funds (Adaramaja, Mustapha &Tanglang, 2010).

Governmental obligations in Physical Education and Sports

The policy seeks to clearly outline the obligations of the stakeholders in sports such that all parties will be educated with a view to achieving the desired result in sports development in Nigeria. The three tiers of Government namely, Federal, State and Local Governments shall have the following obligations.

1. The Federal Government through the National Sports Commission (NSC) shall be responsible for:
    i. Providing enabling Legislation for Sports;
    ii. Formulation and review of the National Sports Policy;
    iii. Development and maintenance of Federal Government sports facilities;
    iv. Creation of conducive environment for participation in sports;
    v. Identification, nurturing and development of talents through a national elite development programme;
    vi. Monitoring and coordination of programmes on sports;

vii. Collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education on matters of Schools' Sports;
viii. Adequate preparation of elite athletes for international competitions;
ix. Providing adequate motivation and incentives in the form of scholarships, training grants, awards, etc. to outstanding athletes/officials;
x. Providing at least 5% of its total Budget for Sports for the maintenance of sports facilities and infrastructure;
xi Ensuring adequate Budgetary Allocation for sports;
xii. Organizing and funding of researches in sports;
xiii. Payment of Subscription Fees to International Sports Bodies;
xiv. Biding and hosting, as much as possible, for international sports competitions periodically, for the purpose of fast-tracking infrastructural development of the nation as well as other socioeconomic and political benefits (FGN, 2009).

The State Governments through their supervisory agencies shall:
i. Provide adequate and standard facilities, organize and deliver sports services at their level;
ii. Encourage development of physical education and sports in schools;
iii. Establish State Sports Councils or Commission as the case may be for the development of sports in their States;
iv. Ensure adequate Budgetary Allocation to Sports;
v. Identify and develop talented athletes within the State;
vi. Ensure that at least 5% of the total Budget for Sports is earmarked for maintenance of sports facilities and infrastructure;
vii. Organize and hold regular competitions for all sports.
viii. Collaboration with the State Ministry of Education on matters of schools' sports.
ix. Payment of subscription to National Sports Federations.
x. Adequate preparation of athletes for national competitions(FGN, 2009).

The Local Governments through their supervisory agencies shall:
i. Establish Local Government Area Sports Committee;
ii. Provide adequate funds for Sports in the Area;
iii. Encourage development of Physical Education and Sports in schools;
iv. Organize Intra-Local Government Sports Competitions;
v. Provide community-based sports centres in the Area;
vi. Encourage the formation of Sports Clubs;
vii. Earmark at least 5% of its total Budget for Sports for the maintenance of Sports facilities and infrastructure.
viii. Collaborate with the Local Government Education Authority/Board on matters of schools sports.

ix. Payment of subscription to State Sports Associations,
x. Adequate preparation for State competitions (FGN, 2009).

Conclusions

Conclusion drawn from this indicated that, sports as a social phenomenon have grown from its humble beginning of being an entertainment and recreation pastime to become a visible and prominent business phenomenon that could no longer be ignored in the social, political and economic environment of any nation. Many great nations and societies of the world have realized that participation in sports is the key to a healthy development of their citizens, and have used it to develop their young ones, attaining a success that science, religions and politics have failed to achieve. Sporting activities have as well permeated the Nigerian society just as many other societies worldwide and also all aspects of societal life such as politics and religion.

Physical education curricula need to be based on the vision that the knowledge, skills and understanding acquired should benefit students throughout their lives and help them thrive in an ever-changing world by enabling them to acquire physical and health literacy, and to develop the comprehension, capacity and commitment needed to lead healthy, active lives and to promote the benefits of healthy active living. The governmental obligations in sports policy seeks to clearly outline the obligations of the stakeholders in sports such that all parties will be educated with a view to achieving the desired result in sports development in Nigeria. The three tiers of Government namely, Federal, State and Local Governments shall have their obligations in sports development.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions made in this paper, the following recommendations were made:

1. Various school authorities should ensure that all personnel who assume professional responsibility for sport must have and be provided with appropriate qualification and training.
2. All secondary school sports personnel should be carefully selected in sufficient numbers and given preliminary as well as further training to ensure that they reach adequate levels of specializations.
3. The federal government should ensure that functional and effective sports development policy and obligations will be duly implemented so as to accommodate the needs, interests and aspiration of sports participants.
4. Government at all levels should earmark funds for sports in secondary schools.
5. Also, school authorities should involve private sector participation, sponsorship and business partnership to run effective school sports programme.
6. Public authorities, schools, private agencies and government at all levels should join forces and plan together so as to provide adequate and sufficient facilities and equipment and also make optimum use of facilities and equipment in order to meet

the needs of intensive and safe participation in both in-school and out-of-school sports programmes.

7. The facilities and equipment available should be regularly serviced and maintained by all the bodies concerned.
8. Sports programmes should be properly outlined, funded and implemented so as to meet the needs of the participants and bring about desired development in sports.

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