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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Scientific research and publications in JOSEM show what partnering amongst scientist and science educators offer. Having perpetually studied, having collected data on events and phenomena, the act of interacting with observations and findings via publications indeed demonstrates the “flowers and fruits” of our academic culture. This edition of the Journal is an exponent of emerging trends in curriculum science and human kinetics with greater survey on productivity than “paperization”. Evolving through the recycling of common issues and perspectives involving competencies in studying and teaching, Systems technology in instructions, Health concerns syndromes and Sports administration, the expanse of contributors and combined efforts in co-operative authorship of most articles rescind the itinery of scientific research in this incipient millenium.

Readers are enjoined not to see themselves as mere contributors, but more importantly as facilitators of the philosophies and ideas borne out of the package.

**Editor-in-Chief**

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## **SUSTAINING PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THROUGH EFFECTIVE TEACHING AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL**

By

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Physical education has not gotten its place in the Nigerian educational system despite the recognition given to it in the National Policy on Education, Much attention is not given to it compared to some other subjects. However, elementary education is the foundation for all formal education. Any inadequacy of it will negatively affect education at higher levels. The curriculum required physical education to be taught as practical lessons at elementary level of education. The subject's not been given its needed attention, it's teaching by non-professional physical educators and lack of facilities and equipments have been identified as some of the major factors that brought about the unfortunate situation. It is therefore recommended that professional teachers should be employed to teach physical education in the schools and such teachers should adopt improvisation to make up for the lack of facilities and equipment.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sustaining means to keep alive, to nourish and keep functioning, to provide the necessities for survival, to up-keep and put in shape, to support, to invigorate, to keep in place [Ipaye 1999J. We could only need to sustain when what requires it is , dying and we need to keep it alive; when it lacks most [if not all] necessities for survival and there is need to inject these into it. It is not a gain saying that physical education has lost its place or has not gotten it in Nigeria educational system. Despite the recognition given to it in the nation's policy on education as one of the subjects

to be taught at all levels of education (National Policy on Education, 1998], much attention is not paid to physical education compared to other vocational and pre-vocational subjects taught in the schools. Studies have shown that physical education; despite its values is almost a complete neglect, as it is not largely taught (Nwaboku, 1990 and Okuneye, 1997). Despite the overwhelming scientific evidence on the value of physical activity and the fact that the 1978 UNESCO Charter enshrined physical education as a basic human rights (USSA, 2003) physical education is in a perilous position in all regions of the world.

The report of Hardpan on the state of physical education in the world as reported by United States Sports Academy [USSA, : showed that the area of study is in a critical state, regardless of geography or socio-economic status. Nigeria is not an exemption of the situation.

### **ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

Elementary School constitutes a major educational establishment throughout the world. In a developing country like Nigeria, it may constitute over 50% of those enrolled in her educational institutions. In the developed nations, considerable attention is paid to primary schools in all dimensions especially research relevant policy; this may be due to its prime position (Komolafe, 2003 ).

Elementary or primary education is generally seen as the place where a child acquires fundamental knowledge, skills, thoughts, feelings and actions that are considered very necessary for overall development. Elementary schooling according to Ipaye (1991) begins at the age of six plus (6+) and it is expected to end at the age of eleven plus (11+); though it is earlier for some pupils nowadays. For many children this is the level at which basic skills, literacy and numeracy are acquired. For this reason/ many countries of the world put a lot of emphasis on qualitative work at

this level since they know that the foundation is very crucial. If learning is not properly anchored at elementary level of education, learning at other levels of education becomes more difficult. Ipaye emphasized that the type of behavioral foundations laid at this level matters very much since it has concomitant effect at later levels of education.

The attitude formed by the child at elementary level of education that is attitude to learning and education generally influence future developments and orientation. The quality of teaching and learning at this level of education thereof is of grave importance to attainment at the higher levels. Therefore proper physical education programme in elementary schools is important to improve standard and sustain the noble area of specialization in Nigerian educational system. According to Ajayi [1999] elementary education is regarded as the foundation of all other levels of education. It is the pillar upon which all other levels of education rest. The success or failure of education at the level determines the fate of the other levels of education. Ajayi itemized the primary objectives and concerns of elementary education as follows;

- i. inculcation of permanent literacy and ability to communicate effectively;
- ii. laying of a sound foundation for scientific and reflective thinking;
- iii. citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society
- iv. character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
- v. developing in the child the ability to adapt to his constant changing environment
- vi. giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity; and
- vii. providing basic tools for further educational

advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality,

Since the elementary education is the gateway to success of total education, there is need to focus attention on the weakness of physical education at this level of education for a total revival and proper positioning of the subject: in our educational system,

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL**

Children do not automatically develop the skills/ knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that lead to regular and enjoyable participation in physical activity. They must be taught/ and the responsibility for this instruction is vested primarily in physical education programmes in our schools (NASPE, 2004). Primary physical education is taught only through practical classes. Intact, the curriculum does not prescribe the teaching of theories of physical education at elementary level of education; as in other levels of education.

In the teaching of physical education in elementary school/ it is essential to consider the characteristics and needs of the children. These needs and characteristics according to Ogunsina (1999) vary at different levels and grades in the elementary school. In primary one to four/ children are usually very active, inquisitive/ daring and enthusiastic towards physical education programme.

Children have short attention span and prefer to play individually rather than in groups and have little or no ability for competition. Later on, they develop physically and socially, and acquire the ability to concentrate for longer periods. At this time/ they enjoy working or playing in groups and teams and learn to face challenges or adventure?

The need for pupils in this early stage is grossly the opportunities to use their bodies in order to express their ideas; hence/ they want to play vigorously. It is therefore necessary that monotony and boredom should be avoided in the activities planned for them. Ogunsina suggested that activities at this level should be given variety as much as possible. So he recommended

activities such as running/ chasing, climbing/ ball handling, activities with beanbags/ sticks/ creative dance and explorative plays. , In the later part of the pupils development/ that is at about primary three or four/ they would need activities requiring more purposeful skills/ courage, initiative, continuity, adventure/ endurance and strength. At this stage they are able to reorganize the importance of fatigue, rest, relaxation and moderation in other activities as play, sports and games. Many specialist are of the opinion that at this stage, the activities children need are specific sports and dance that encourage the use of the big muscles of the limbs (Ogunsina). They should also attend to fairly complex rules, tactics as well as group activities. It is not out of place to introduce self-tasking activities involving problem solving, athletics and developmental exercise at this stage. Ogunsina also mentioned that Adedeji insisted on elementary swimming for primary one to four.

In the last two grade of elements education, that is primary five and six, the pupils need to take part in more rigorous activities, therefore must be treated uniquely in physical education classes. The pupils at this stage want to identify themselves with groups and they need the exposure as group leaders and team captains. At this time, they need a lot of practice to help them develop the abilities to use the skills learnt in games. Flexibility and agility must be maintained at the stage. Rapid changes in growth, ranging from development into puberty among females pupils and muscular development in their male counterparts to the realization of sex and sex roles. At these last grades of elementary education; pupils need fitness and development exercises/ team games such as soccer and basketball, co-educational dance/ folk dance, gymnastic activities such as group activities/ pair activities, pyramid formation/ vaults and stunts.

The table below presents varieties of gymnastics activities out of which choices can be made for teaching physical education lessons in primary school.

**Table 1: Gymnastics activities for P. E. Practical Lessons**

S/N	Activity	Type
1	<b>Individual floor balancing</b>	Squat head balance, squat hand balance/ head balance, head and forearm balance/ forearm balance, straight leg press to head stand/ backward roll to head balance, hand balance, hand walk/ elbow lever, scaling activities/ v-seat/ tiger press, straddle seat on hands, shoot through to L-seat, ball through the arm to hand balance.
2	<b>Tumbling</b>	Forward roll, backward roll, dive forward roll/ cartwheel, Arab spring, neck spring, head spring, front hand spring, Tinsica, fly spring, back hand spring, front somersault/ back somersault.
3	<b>Agility stunts</b>	Swedish fall, squat through, straddle leap, valdex, regular splits, straddle splits, alternates, bounders.
4	<b>Pair Activities</b>	Pushing and pulling, hopping tug of war, Chinese tug of war, lifting the log, obstinate mule, wheel barrow, kangaroo match, back-to-back setup/ Astride vault over partner, lifting the sack, fireman lift, chest balance, thigh stand, hold out facing in.
5.	<b>Pyramid Building</b>	Linear pattern, curve line, round base, square base, concentric round or square base.
6.	<b>Calisthenics</b>	Slow on the spot running, fast on the spot running, exaggerated high-knee raising on the spot, high straight-leg kicking to forward outstretched hands, alternate sideways leg stretch from squat, banana jump, surface
7	<b>Apparatus activities vaults</b>	Though vault, astride vault, reverse vault astride vault, thief or window vault, straddle vault, cat spring, horizontal astride vault, over swing vault, neck spring vault, cartwheel vault, handspring vault, and squat vault.

It should, however be noted that physical education lesson needed to be conducted with safe participation of the pupils.

Safety is much more important in gymnastics lessons because of the nature of activities, the use of apparatus and the individuality performance. Proper use of facilities and equipment/ adequate supervision and organization of classes and judicious use of warm ups and conditioning are few important fundamental factor? to safe organization of physical education classes in elementary schools

### **BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES TO PUPILS**

Appropriate practical physical education lessons have some developmental benefits for the participating pupils. Some of these include the following:

### **PSYCHOMOTOR DEVELOPMENT**

In a proper physical education programme for elementary level of education, children are provided with frequent and -meaningful age appropriate practice opportunities that enable individuals to develop a functional and understanding of movement concepts- body awareness/ space awareness, efforts and relationships, and build competence and confidence in their ability to perform a variety of motor skills [tocomoior, non-locomotor and manipulative [NASPE, 1992; 2004 & Perfect Schooling/2003].

### **COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Physical education activities are designed with both the physical and the cognitive development of children in mind. Physical education classes provide experiences that encourage children to question, integrate, analyze, communicate/ apply cognitive concepts and gain a wide multi-cultural view of the world, thus, making physical education an integral part of the total educational experience. According to NASPE [2004], more often than not, instructors fail to recognize and explore the unique role of physical education, which allows children to learn to move while also moving to learn. Children do not receive the opportunity to integrate their physical education experiences with art music, language arts, mathematics and others sciences.

### AFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

Elementary school's physical education curriculum was deliberately designed to engage pupils in practical lessons throughout the years. One of the major reasons for the deliberate act was to allow pupils the opportunity to work together to improve their emerging social and cooperation skills. The practical classes also help them to develop a positive self-concept. In the physical education class, all children experience and feel the satisfaction and joy that results from regular participation in physical activity. Teachers are already failures if the enhancement of the affective development of pupils is ignored. Physical activities foster the development of cooperation and social skills. Teachers, especially those that are not trained physical educators ignore opportunities to help pupils understand the emotions they feel as a result of participation in classes.

### PHYSICAL FITNESS DEVELOPMENT

Regular engagement in adequate physical activities has been widely reported as the road to physical fitness [Godwin, 2001; Cotton, 2001; Perfect Schooling, 2003; Adeogun, Setonji & Uansu, 2003; NASPE, 2004 & CIS & MSA 2004]. Physical education lessons enable the pupils to engage in physical activities that help them develop a suitable level of fitness. According to NASPE [2004] children through physical education are physically prepared to safely complete each component of a physical test battery. A well-designed programme of physical education should give fitness test to the pupils once or twice a year.

In addition to all these benefits discussed above, Salami [2003] identified some of physical education contribution to sports development that can only be achieved through a well designed and implemented physical education programme that involve, fundamentally, an adequate teaching of lessons at elementary level.

#### ***The contributions include the following;***

- i. Discovery of talents in different sports
- ii. Opportunity for the pupils to choose and develop interest

- iii. in sports of their choices and interests
- iii. Learning of fundamental skills in various sports
- iv. Awareness of rules and regulations and officiating in sports and games
- v. Knowledge of ones capability
- vi. Opportunity for mass participation in sport?
- vii. Ability to be in many sports; and
- viii. Foundation for cooperation and good sportsmanship

With the above-enumerated points, Salami [2003] emphasized that the importance of physical education to sports development in school cannot be understated. The Teacher of Physical Education in Elementary School The instructional system in the elementary school in Nigeria required that the class teacher teach all the subjects, including physical education. This factor is probably one of the major problems that led to the unfortunate state of physical education in our schools today.

It should be clearly understood that the physical education teacher is an expert in his own right (Ogunsina, 1999). He therefore must have a concrete concept or his JOB. In essence, he should have adequate professional preparation, which ranges from Diploma in Physical Education through a university degree. Ogunsina asserted that it is the inadequate professional preparation of physical education teachers that result in practicing teachers as well as prospective ones lacking the necessary knowledge in physical education; as a result inadequate teaching is being experienced.

As teachers of physical education, one must bear the fact in mind that the subject area is, in fact the mother of all subjects. This is embedded in the philosophy of "a sound mind in a sound body". If the body and soul are not coherent, it is impossible for any other type of learning to have roots. It is therefore a must that professionals who are adequately prepared for the task handle such subject area.

The Diploma in Physical Education programme in some universities in Nigeria is specially designed to prepare teachers for teaching physical education at the elementary school level. It will be a waste of human resources not to employ the graduate of

this programme to teach physical education in elementary school. The duty of the physical education teacher goes beyond teaching alone so; it is never a task of non-professional physical education teachers. Other duties of physical education teachers as stated by Onifade [1999] and Olorok 12003] include the following:

- i. Planning for instructions
- ii. Evaluating learning
- iii. Organizing and administering intramural and extramural sports
- iv. Coaching the school teams in various sports
- v. Officiating sports competition
- vi. Performing administrative duties in the area of school sports
- vii. Interpreting the meaning of physical education
- viii. Rendering community services in the area of recreation and fitness
- ix. Health appraisal of pupils and staffers; and
- x. Research and development

#### **Facilities and Equipment in Elementary School Physical Education**

Facilities and equipment are strong factors in the teaching physical education in elementary schools. Studies have revealed serious inadequacies of facilities and equipment of facilities and equipment in schools [Okuneye, 1997 and Ayodabo, Idowu& Dansu, 2004].

There have been several calls on governments, corporate bodies and individuals to assist in making available adequate and appropriate physical education teaching facilities and equipment in schools, but the responses have always be insignificant. It is therefore a challenge to professionals of physical education to be innovative by improvising most of these facilities and equipment for regular and effective teaching of lessons in elementary schools.

Adegbamigbe [2000] was of the opinion that local production of some facilities and equipment through local technology wilt go a long way to satisfy the teaching requirements of physical education in schools. In the same vein, Odulaye [2003] strongly supported improvisation as a way from the problems of facilities and equipment as he listed some of the teaching

equipment that have been improvised in Ogun State University up to date. These equipment include cricket bat, shin guards/ table tennis bat, hockey sticks, multigym [steel], horizontal bar, gym mats/ table tennis board and net, goal post nets for ball games, bar bells, punching bags, anthropometer, massage table and stretchers among others. Professionals in various elementary schools can adopt such innovation reported by Oduiaye.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Elementary education is the foundation of format education. Therefore it must be made strong. Physical education which is an integral part of the general education, must be given a solid foundation. This can only be achieved through regular teaching of practical lessons. Our dream is to see physical education being placed in its deserved position in the Nigeria education system. For this dream to be actualized, the following recommendations are forwarded.

1. Non-professionals in the elementary schools should not handle physical education lessons. Professionals should be employed to administer physical education programmes in the schools
2. The school authorities should carry out regular and thorough supervision of physical education teachers to ensure adequate teaching of lessons.
3. The re-appraisal of the elementary school physical education curriculum should be done to make sure that it is in line with our constant changing society.
4. Professionals in schools should adopt improvisation to make up for the inadequate facilities and equipment in schools.

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