

## ADAPTABILITY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

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### Abstract

The essence of this paper is to ascertain the place of physical education in the school curriculum in Cross River State. The paper tries to examine the meaning of curriculum as advanced by some scholars. Effort was also made to discuss the concepts of curriculum implementation and physical education curriculum in Cross River State. It was concluded that, physical education curriculum in Nigeria still needs to be given proper attention by physical education experts and stakeholders in the educational sector. It was then recommended that physical education curriculum in Nigeria should be restricted in terms of its orientation and administration particularly at the tertiary institutions. Students should be allowed to specialize either in achieving teaching, sports journalism, recreation and tourism, sports business and facilities installation and maintenance. The paper also recommended that, other areas which contemporary physical education curriculum in Nigeria should encourage include: Mass participation of Nigeria youths in sports, catching Nigeria children/youth in skill development and developing individual fitness value to enable everyone meet the stress and challenges of social change in the country.

**Keywords:** Adaptability, Physical Education, Curriculum, Concepts implementation, and Assessment

### INTRODUCTION

Objective of any level of education cannot be achieved if the planned programme for such level of education is not well implemented (Onyeachu, 2010). Observing this, Onyeachu (2008) asserted that: "No matter how well a curriculum of any subject is planned, designed and documented, its implementation is important". This is because the problem of most programmes arises at the implementation stage. Recognizing this, Babalola (2004) and Mkpá (2005) remarked that it is at the implementation stage that many excellent curriculum plans and other educational policies are marred without any trace.

According to Alla & Olomnsola (2008), that in many countries of the world, high record of the death caused by heart related illness has become a matter for concern and debate. Recently, the Nigeria Healthy Heart Foundation announced that cardiac arrest (Heart attack) and other related ailments claim more lives of Nigerians. Therefore, there is need for human beings to engage in regular physical activity as one of the prerequisites for achieving optimum health and quality of life which has long been recognized and supported by the UNESCO chapter of physical education and sports established in 1978. It is the belief of this body that a sound mind can only reside in a sound body. The only way to avoid ailments or diseases caused by sedentary lifestyles is by getting people educated on the importance of active participation in physical activities.

During the world forum on physical activity and sports in Canada in 1995, physical education professionals from across Canada felt the need to draw attention to the diminishing priority of physical education, not only in Canada but worldwide. The goal of the exercise was



to find ways of giving wide recognition to physical education as an essential phenomenon to man's life. Physical education through its usefulness is yet to be accepted by Nigeria populace. It is expedient to talk about it at any forum to create adequate awareness among all Nigerians (Alla and Olorunsola, 2008).

Physical Education as viewed by Ajala, Amusa and Sohi (2002) is a vital part of education. It contributes to the general programme of education including the development of health, physical welfare and recreation. Ongundairo (2002) explained that the broad objectives of physical education are those of education in general. The rationale for physical education curriculum is eloquent and persuasive enough to justify its inclusion as a course in the National Policy on Education for Nigeria, (NPE). It is evidently clear that physical education plays a valued and vital role in providing a quality balanced education for all students.

The well being of the students and quality of skills, knowledge and values will ultimately be derived from this body of knowledge as the driving force for physical education curriculum. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted physical education, as an instrument per excellence for affecting national development. Physical education is listed among the subjects that will assist the government in achieving her dream of building:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
4. A greater and dynamic economy and
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 2004).

It is a policy statement by the federal government that physical and health education shall be emphasized at all levels of the education system. In order to pursue this goals, physical education curriculum was provided to ensure that the knowledge and skills acquired from the subjects produced individuals that are;

- a. Physically fit and health conscious;
- b. Functional and rational members of the community;
- c. Favourably dispose to meet societal needs;
- d. Benefit from the numerous career opportunities and
- e. Adequately prepared for further studies in the field of physical and health education, (National Policy Education, 2004).

### **The Meaning of Curriculum**

The word curriculum came from the Latin word 'currere' meaning 'to run' or probably more correctly to run a course. Traditionally, the school curriculum has-presented a relatively standardized ground (a course of subjects covered by students in their race towards the finishing line (a certificate, diploma or degree). From this early usage the word curriculum has passed into common usage and many people think of it as 'a course of study' containing the body of subject matter officially taught in schools, (National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna 2002). In support of this, Alaezi (1989), submits that the school curriculum is at the heart of education, so, the extent to which one can become dependent or independent is subjected to the level, the content and method of his/her education.



Hirst (1974) stated that, the term curriculum is, of course, used very vaguely, but here it is taken to mean a programme of activities designed so that pupils will attain by learning certain specifiable ends or objectives. He went further and stated that the term is also referred to as the planned guided learning experience, and intended outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience, under the auspices of the school, for the learner's competence. According to Tanner and Tanner (1997), curriculum is often taken to mean a course of study. Mezieobi, Fubura and Mezieobi (2008) added that, curriculum is learning experiences which the learner is subjected to under the guidance of the school. Curriculum therefore, as the nerve centre of education must ensure its functionality so as to achieve the aims as justified by the meaning of education.

### **Concept of Curriculum Implementation**

The term curriculum implementation has been defined in different ways by different scholars. Mkpa (2005) defined curriculum implementation as: "the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined efforts of the students, teachers and others concerned. Garba (2004), viewed curriculum implementation as: "putting the curriculum into work for the achievement of the goals for which the curriculum is designed. Babalola (2004) described curriculum implementation as: "the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice". Ivowi (2004) defined curriculum implementation in a nutshell as "the translation of theory into practice, or proposal into action". Onyeachu (2008) viewed curriculum implementation as the process of putting all that have been planned as a curriculum document into classroom through the combined effort of the teachers, learners, school administrators, parents as well as interaction with physical facilities, instructional materials, psychological and social environment. All these definitions show that curriculum implementation is the interaction between the teachers, learners and other stake holders in education geared towards achieving the objectives of education.

### **Physical Education Curriculum in Nigeria**

The 1933 physical training syllabus marked the first syllabus adopted for physical education in Nigeria schools. This was however replaced with a more modern syllabus drawn by the Ministry of Education in 1995. This was when the modern system of conducting Physical Education (P.E.) replaced the former command response techniques (Salokun, 2005). The Federal Government of Nigeria reacting to 1962 UNESCO conference calling for a standardized physical education programmes for Nigeria secondary schools formulated a National Policy on Education (Obelle, 1991). The policy advocated that physical education should be taught at all levels of education. The revised edition of the National Policy on Education in 1981 introduced the 6-3-3-4 system of education and directed that physical education should be a teaching subject in the junior secondary school and as well as examinable subject in the West African School Certificate Examinations. Towards the realization of the policy statement, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology developed a physical education curriculum in 1981 and reprinted it in 2001.

The 2007 edition which according to Adeniji (2007) is due for revision in 2010 is a great improvement on the former ones. This latest edition added the Health Education components that were absent in the previous ones. The developer observed that the previous



curriculum recognized the demand of the present 6-3-3-4 systems of education, the 9 Years Basic Education concept of the federal government and the need to attain the millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. According to Adeniji (2007), the curriculum gave attention to contemporary issues at local, national and global levels, incorporating concepts such as violence in sports, career opportunities, drug use, misuse, first aid and safety education, human rights education and entrepreneurial skills. The 9 Years Basic Education ensures continuity and flow of themes, topics and experience from primary school to junior secondary school levels. The course-contents are covered under fifteen themes and are structured across the nine years of Basic Education in a spiral form. The themes include:

- i. Fundamental movement and rhythmic activities
- ii. Athletics track and field events
- iii. Games and sports
- iv. First and safety education
- v. Personal, school and community health
- vi. Physical fitness and body conditioning programmes
- vii. Gymnastics
- viii. Recreation, leisure and dance activities
- ix. Food, nutrition and health
- x. Marital arts
- xi. Swimming
- xii. Pathogens, diseases
- xiii. Issues and challenges in physical and health education
- xiv. Historical and scientific foundations of physical and health education and.
- Xix Career guidance in physical and health education, (9 Years Basic Education Curriculum, 2007). The 6-3-3-4 Nigeria education system is divided into three major levels namely primary, secondary and the tertiary education. However, the 9 Years Basic Education concept explains that Basic Education shall be 9 years duration comparing 6 -7 year primary education and 4 years of junior secondary education. Education at this stage shall be free and compulsory (National Policy on Education, 2004).

### **Primary Education**

This is referred to as education given in an institution for children aged 6 to 11 plus. Primary education is made compulsory, universal and tuition free. All the subjects in the primary education curriculum including physical and health education are offered as core-subjects (National Policy on Education, 2004).

### **Secondary Education**

Secondary education is the form of education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. The broad goals of secondary education are to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and higher education (National Policy on Education, 2004).

### **Tertiary Education Curriculum (Professional preparation)**

The origin of professional preparation of physical education teachers in Nigeria is comparatively recent. According to Uti (1977) and Salokun (2005) account for physical



education as a course at the higher institution of learning in Nigeria began in 1957, the Zaria branch of Nigeria College of Arts, Science and Technology (Now Ahmadu Bello University) admitted the first set of physical education majors for a three-year course leading to the award of Teachers Certificate in Physical Education.

### **Assessing Physical Education Curriculum in Nigeria Schools**

According to Alla & Olorunsola (2008), in order to ensure continuity and flow of themes, topics and experiences from primary school to junior secondary school levels, a 9-year Basic Education Curriculum was produced by the Federal Government. An important issue that needs to be addressed to ensure continuity of experience for the children is that physical and health education should be made a core subject. The understanding of elective is that the subject is optional. It is likely that greater percentage of the students would drop any subject which is made optional. Making physical education optional in the secondary school does not encourage the position of the government that physical education will be emphasized at all levels of the education system. The senior secondary school physical education syllabus was drawn by the West African Examination Council. This body perhaps employed services of experts to build the syllabus which is used in some schools in the country. This syllabus does not follow the construct and structure of 9-year Basic Education Curriculum designed by the Federal Government.

Physical Education as a lesson is on the timetable of almost all the schools but it is unfortunate that there are no Physical Education teachers to handle the lessons. The Teacher's Grade II programme has been cancelled. Though, it is the government policy that the least qualification for primary school teachers should be Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E). It is only in private primary schools that one can find N.C.E and University degree holders and this is because jobs are very difficult to come by in the country presently (Edim, Emeribe & Akah 2010).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the above observations, it is envisaged that physical education curriculum in Nigeria will still need to be given close attention by physical education experts and all stakeholders. It is in the light of this that the following recommendations are made:

1. Physical education curriculum in Nigeria should be restricted in terms of its orientation and administration particularly at the tertiary institutions. Students here should be allowed to specialize either in achieving; teaching, sports journalism, recreation and tourism, sports business and facilities installation and maintenance at the higher levels.
2. The teaching practice programme should be given a wide coverage to enable students go to other non-teaching areas and sports related industries to acquire the required experience. The teaching practice exercise for higher institutions in education-related programmes should be improved to a period of one term or a semester for students on practice.
3. The National Association for Physical, Health Education, Recreation, Sports and Dance (NAPHER-SD), which is a professional body in charge of physical education should be reorganized to be active in order to achieve its set goals.



4. Government should establish policies that will make it mandatory for corporate organizations to contribute a specific percentage of their profits for physical education and sports facilities development in the schools for the implementation of the designed curriculum.
5. More researches should be encouraged on curriculum development and ways to improve the teaching of physical education in Nigeria.
6. Some other areas which contemporary physical education curriculum in Nigeria should encourage include:
  - i. Mass participation of Nigeria youths in sports.
  - ii. Catching Nigeria children/youths in skill development.
  - iii. Developing individual fitness value to enable everyone meet the stress and challenges of social change in the country.

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