

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: THE CASE OF CENTRAL PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

Physical education (PE) and sport is one of the subjects in Kenya's curriculum. This study aimed at establishing the actual practice in schools and the possible suggestions that could enhance its effectiveness. A total of 118 teachers, with a background in PE responded to a brief questionnaire. The questionnaire sought information pertaining to their demographic details, interest in sports, emphasis on the subject, sports disciplines offered, coaching competence, time-tabling of PE, level of emphasis, subject supervision and recommendations. Among other findings, it is apparent that the subject is time-tabled, the sports disciplines emphasized are soccer, netball, athletics, volleyball and handball, the ministry inspectors rarely supervise the teaching of PE, that students are enthusiastic about sport, and that competent coaches are lacking in some disciplines. There is need for the government to lay more emphasis on the implementation of PE in schools by re-training teachers, holding regular in-service and other short-term courses, formulating and implementing an evaluation system, providing a diversified range of facilities, and including more sports disciplines for competition at school games.

Key words: Curriculum, in-service, re-training.

INTRODUCTION

Physical education (PE) and sport is one of the subjects in Kenya's educational curriculum popularly referred to as the 8-4-4 system (Njororai, 1990, 1996; Wamukoya, 1994). This curriculum emphasizes that PE and sport is compulsory at primary school, secondary education, and even at teacher education level of certificate and diploma preparation. In addition, the participation in sports within and outside the school system is quite prominent (Njororai, 1994).

The acceptance and inclusion of PE and sport in the school curriculum is in line with the United Nations Charter Physical Education and Sport, which was proclaimed by the UNESCO Conference on 21st November 1978 in Paris, France. The conference stated that PE and sport has a major role to play in the all round development of an individual. It emphasized that:

"One of the essential conditions for the effective exercise of human rights is that everyone should be free to develop and preserve his or her physical, intellectual and moral powers, and that access to physical education and sport should consequently be assured and guaranteed for every individual (UNESCO, 1980, p.22)."

The PE and sports charter, among other proclamations, pointed out that the practice of PE and sport is a fundamental right for all; it is an essential element of life-long education in the overall education system; it must meet individual and social needs; adequate facilities and equipment are essential; teaching, coaching and administration should be performed by qualified personnel; and research and evaluation are indispensable components of the development of PE and sport (UNESCO, 1980).

Despite the inclusion of PE and sport in the school curriculum in Kenya, researchers have pointed out that it is not emphasized as well as it should be (Mahlmann et al., 1993; Wamukoya, 1994; Njororai 1990, 1994, 1996). This study, therefore, was aimed at establishing the actual practice of PE and sport in Kenyan primary schools and proffering possible suggestions that could enhance its effectiveness.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The sample comprised 150 teachers drawn from primary schools in the Central Provision of the Republic of Kenya. Out of these, 118 of them (78.7 %) filled and returned the questionnaire. The respondents were qualified primary school PE teachers, who had participated in coaching courses in various sports disciplines. The questionnaire sought information pertaining to their demographic details, interest PE and sport, emphasis on the subjects, time-tabling, coaching competence, subject supervision and recommendations. The data were descriptively presented

RESULTS

Demographically, most respondents (59.3%) were aged between 20-30 (28.8 %). Most of the respondents had taught for between 6 and 10 years (45.8 %), 11-15 years (22.0 %) and over 16 years (21.2 %). The least were those with a teaching experience of less than 5 years (11.0 %). Additionally, most respondents had coached for less than 5 years (50.8 %). About 13.6 % had coached for over 11 years.

The results showed that primary school pupils were rated to be "very interested" in physical and sport activities by 78.8 % of the respondents. This result reflects the enthusiasm that pupils have for PE and sport in schools.

However, the head teachers were rated as being “very interested” by 41.5 %, “interested” by 45.8 % and “not interested” by 12.7 %. Although majority of the head teachers were rated to be interested, the percentage of those not interested is worrying given the central role that such teachers play in the running of school programmes.

Table 1: Sports disciplines offered in Kenyan primary schools

Sport	Offering	Percent	Not offering	percent	Total	Percent
Volleyball	118	100	00	00	118	100
Netball	116	98.3	02	1.7	118	100
Soccer	116	98.3	02	1.7	118	100
Athletics	104	88.1	14	11.9	118	100
Handball	97	82.2	21	17.8	118	100
Gymnastics	73	61.9	45	38.1	118	100
Rounders	07	5.9	111	94.1	118	100
Tenniquoit	04	3.4	114	96.6	118	100
Basketball	01	0.8	117	99.2	118	100

The majority of schools offered the sports disciplines of shown in table 1.

Table 2: Availability of competent coaches in Kenyan primary schools

Sport	Available	Percent	Not available	Percent	Total	Percent
Soccer	91	77.1	27	22.9	118	100
Volleyball	76	64.4	42	35.6	118	100
Netball	64	54.2	54	45.8	118	100
Gymnastics	57	48.3	61	51.7	118	100
Handball	45	38.1	73	61.9	118	100
Athletics	34	28.8	84	71.2	118	100

Table 2 shows the sports disciplines that are catered for in terms of coaching

Regarding time-tabling, the majority of the respondents indicated that PE and sport is on the time table (97.5%) although the subject is not taken seriously (72.9 %). In terms of supervision of the teaching of PE and sport by the ministry of education officials, majority indicated that this was rarely done (69.5 %).

Several suggestions to enhance the teaching of PE and sport were made by the respondents these include:

- a. providing more facilities and equipment in schools,,
- b. organising more sports competitions at intra- and inter-school levels,
- C. providing tokens of appreciation to pupils who excel in PE and sporting activities,.
- d. conducting in-service courses and seminars for teachers,
- e. laying more emphasis on the subject by the ministry of education,
- f. allocating more time on the time-table and utilising the same to actually teach the subject,
- g. training primary school teachers to be coaches of the various sports codes and organising regular coaching clinics,
- h. the school administration, board of governors and the community to offer more support to PE and sports activities,
- i. organising seminars for head teachers to sensitise them on the importance of teaching PE and sport in schools,
- j. the head teachers should ensure that PE teachers have proper schemes of work, lesson plans and that they actually conduct lessons,
- k. having regular inspection visits education inspectors,
- l. inviting national and international sportsmen and women to visit schools and popularise PE and sport,
- m. soliciting sponsorship for intra- and inter-school PE and sporting festivals, and
- n. developing evaluation instruments that can be utilised by the teachers with ease,

DISCUSSION

Physical education and sport are appreciated by the primary school pupils as

well as head teachers. Additionally, time is allocated to the teaching of the subject. The absence of serious teaching of the subject however, nullifies all the enthusiasm that the pupils may display. It appears that the subject still lacks teachers who are excited and enthusiastic enough to actively and aggressively teach it. Additionally, the management of the whole process of PE and sport curriculum implementation at both ministry of education and school levels appears inadequate. These observations concur with earlier ones by Mahlmann et al (1993, 1994), Njororai (1990, 1994), and Wamukoya (1994).

According to Wamukoya (1994), little progress has been made in improving the curriculum implementation of PE and sport in Kenya from what the case used to be in colonial days. Compared to other subjects, only two inspectors of schools have been employed to oversee and supervise the development and teaching of PE and sport in schools and colleges throughout the country. Additionally, there is only one curriculum developer specialised in PE and sports. Thus, such managerial and administrative lapses have to be addressed if PE and sport is to take its rightful place in the school curriculum.

At school level, there is need to diversify the movement experience of the learners by having more sports disciplines. The training of primary school teachers in coaching techniques would help lay a firm sporting foundation in schools that will eventually serve the country well by developing the youth in various sports codes in readiness for national and international assignments.

CONCLUSION

Given the narrow range of sporting experiences and the enthusiasm for PE and sport by the primary school pupils, there is need for the Kenyan government and other agencies to strengthen the teaching of the subject in schools. The government should support schools to diversify their sporting facilities, re-train teachers, improve on the supervision arm of the ministry of education, organise seminars for head teachers, involve the local communities in the school sporting activities, ensure that the subject is time-tabled, schemed for and taught, as well as utilise sports heroes and heroines to popularise the subject in schools.

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