

Physical Education and Sports Sciences: Future trends and Challenges

Satpal
Assistant Professor
Government College,
Chhachhrauli

1. Introduction

The importance of physical education has never been emphasised more than it is today. It is widely recognised that physical education and sports is relevant and important in developing an active and healthy lifestyle and the solution to rising obesity rates worldwide. Although in most countries, physical education is part of the school curriculum, lessons are not given, thus leading to a reduced experience of physical activity for children and youth. The practice of a physically active lifestyle in combination with healthy nutrition, however, needs to be started in early childhood. Therefore, ensuring that all children engage in regular physical activity is crucial, and the schools are the only place where all children can be reached. Quality Physical Education is the most effective and inclusive means of providing all children, whatever their ability/disability, sex, age, cultural, race/ethnicity, religious or social background, with the skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding for lifelong participation in physical activity and sport and is the only school subject whose primary focus is on the body, physical activity, physical development and health. The present study will identify the current trends, issues and challenges in Physical Education and sports based on which future challenges will be addressed

Current trends, issues and challenges in physical education and sports

The “reality check” reveals several areas of continuing concern regarding current trends in PE and sports. These areas embrace: physical education not being delivered or delivered without quality, insufficient time allocation, lack of competent qualified and/or inadequately trained teachers, inadequate provision of facilities and equipment and teaching materials, large class sizes. It is noted that the amount of time dedicated to physical education has been diminished in the school curriculum throughout the world. Physical educators have failed to ensure that the linkage between their efforts in the classroom and the health and cognitive development of their students. The responsibility rests directly on the shoulders of physical educators to ensure that the importance of their subject matter is understood and embraced as a part of their schools’ overall curriculum. Today, more than ever, the physical education curriculum needs to be linked to the overall well-being of children and youth as they matriculate through the curriculum. As has been noted, lessons learned at an early age carry into adult life. Furthermore, the importance of physical activity as a way of creating greater attentiveness in the classroom has not been recognized. The opportunity for schools to provide Brain Breaks, which stimulate students and reenergize their efforts, has largely been ignored in the overall curriculum.

Therefore it is dire need to generate student’s interest in sports and other physical activities by making these studies more interesting and creating awareness about the importance of such activities.

Developing 21st Century Skills and Competencies in Physical Education and Sports

"The aim of Physical Education is to develop physical competence so that all children are able to move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome, physical literacy, along with numeracy and literacy, is the essential basis for learners to access the whole range of competences and experiences." Linkages to community-based organizations, agencies, and institutions are an essential component of the 21st century health and physical education curriculum (Pate et al., 2006; Sallis, Floyd, et al., 2012). Schools often work with community agencies in all sectors of society— private and commercial, non-governmental and government organizations—to plan and develop programs on a cooperative basis. An important component in developing the joint use of resources is the establishment of a program of communication and interaction. As the joint use of resources implies a sharing of human fiscal and physical resources, it requires that the leaders of cooperating organizations develop close relationships and partnerships among people, agencies, and institutions. A key factor in building cooperative relationships is the importance of leadership that is willing to overcome issues related to territoriality, inertia, legal mandates, tradition, fear of the loss of power, feelings of ownership, the misunderstanding of programs, and others. Such cooperative activities improve the accessibility to programs and services, as well as areas and facilities. In this way, the talented students will be sponsored through different agencies to take part in different competitions. In India specially where there is so much talent but due to lack of financial funds, many students lacks behind even being so talented. The co-operation from different agencies will help needy students to showcase their talent at different world level competitions. Thus, adequate training through well-defined curriculum as well as funding from different agencies is necessary to promote the PE and sports activities.

Role of technology

Children born in the early part of this millennium are known as the "iGeneration" (Rosen, 2010, 2011). This group of individuals has access to forms of technology unheard of just two decades ago. They have never known life without wireless high-speed internet connections, cellular phones with data connections, texting or video gaming consoles. Most of them are very familiar with technology interfaces, using apps and social media on a regular basis. The implications of such dramatic changes in access to technology among children and youth should be self-evident in all learning areas. Applications in health and physical education pedagogy are available and can be applied to enrich and enhance curricular offerings in most school settings. Numerous technological applications focused on promoting physical activity and fitness is available and easily accessible. However, application of various technologies will require new student and teacher competencies and practices. Students will be required to demonstrate competency in basic motor skills and also competence in using technology. In addition, such technology will enable individuals to learn in a student-cantered self directed fashion; students will be required to gain greater time management skills in order to enable appropriate time on a task. Teachers will also be required to gain knowledge of contemporary, technology-based instructional strategies. Furthermore, teachers will need to gain a greater awareness of teaching strategies that support anytime, anywhere learning and leverage technological applications. Technology holds promise for the way that students learn and also for the way in which teachers teach. Physical and health educators are challenged to become more responsive to a technology-driven environment that provides enhanced opportunities for learners

well beyond the walls of the traditional classroom setting. Technology thus can play vital role in generating the interest in physical education and sports activities.

Conclusion

The current practices and present curriculum needs to be modified to generate interest of students in physical education and sports activities. The future challenges will mainly be the appropriate curriculum to be made and followed and to make available adequate funds from various organisations in order to support the needy but intelligent children so that they can only focus on their game without worrying about the funds. The technology will also play an important role in expanding and creating the interest in physical activities. The importance of physical education and sports activities are being identified in today's world and efforts are being made to improve the situations so that more and more talent can be recognised.

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