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**AN ANALYSIS UPON IMPORTANCE OF
ELEMENTARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION TO BUILD
A SOLID MOVEMENT FOUNDATION**

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An Analysis upon Importance of Elementary Physical Education to Build a Solid Movement Foundation

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Abstract – The most salient findings were that key structures are in place for imparting quality Elementary education. However, several weaknesses in the system of educational administration and management currently limit the quality of education provided. A strengthening of crucial elements of the education system is needed in order to achieve the two important goals of building 1. Strong accountability in the system and evaluating the quality of the system by regular 2. Monitoring of student learning, and thus, improving the overall efficiency of the system.

INTRODUCTION:-

Many physical educators work in environments that pose great challenges to achieving their professional goals. Such issues as class size and class load, limited time for contact with students, less-than-optimal facilities and equipment, and curricular demands can present obstacles to student success. Yet accomplished teaching occurs even in the context of such daunting challenges. Accomplished teachers work to bring about positive change, improve their teaching practice, and strengthen the quality of physical education instruction, even under the most challenging conditions.

Accomplished physical education teachers genuinely care for and appreciate all their students. They expect all students to achieve. Skilled diagnosticians and clinicians, they tailor instruction, as appropriate, to the strengths and limitations of their students. They pay particular attention to students with special needs, recognizing that appropriate instruction in physical education is key to such students' developing self-esteem and confidence. Accomplished teachers base instructional decisions on students' individual requirements and characteristics in order to promote growth and learning.

Accomplished physical education teachers provide students of all abilities and interests with a foundation of movement experiences designed to help them lead active and healthy lifestyles. Teachers' instructional objectives and approaches form a continuum of essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that students need to be healthy, productive individuals.

Physical education is a wide-ranging, complex field that should influence and involve learning in other academic areas. Physical education classes can provide laboratories in which to apply concepts from other subjects, such as social studies, psychology, physics, mathematics, biology, chemistry, literature, and theatre. The very breadth of the field confirms the special integrative function of physical education, which occurs not only at the individual level but also on a larger curricular level.

In 1997, a committee of physical education teachers and other educators with expertise in this field began the process of developing advanced professional standards for teachers of students ages 3–18+. The Physical Education Standards Committee was charged with translating the Five Core Propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards into a standards document that defines outstanding teaching in this field.

In physical education, the focus is on movement and its contribution to the development of individuals and communities. By learning in, through, and about movement, students come to understand that movement is integral to human expression and that it contributes to people's pleasure and enhances their lives. They learn to understand, appreciate, and move their bodies, relate positively to others, and demonstrate constructive attitudes and values. This learning takes place as they engage in play, games, sport, exercise, recreation, adventure, and expressive movement in diverse physical and social environments.

Physical education supports the curriculum's vision for our young people of enabling students to become

confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. Physical education helps students to develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies to live healthy and physically active lives at school and for the rest of their life. They learn 'in, through, and about' movement, gaining an understanding that movement is integral to human expression and can contribute to people's pleasure and enhance their lives.

PHYSICAL education is primarily concerned with the physical manipulation of the most perfectly developed, complex and interesting of known organisms—the human body. Marvels of this body have been copied by engineers for centuries in the construction of buildings, bridges and machines. The complexity and infinite potential of this human machine can be immensely frightening to teachers.

Elementary teachers confronted with 35 squirming children may shy at their responsibility for teaching a subject involving physical skill. Unfortunately, most elementary teachers have had very few physical education experiences in their professional preparation. Contemplating their plight, they are faced with the realization that, to teach physical education, a background of physical skills plus a knowledge of the whys and hows of teaching these skills is essential. Since accidents are invited by the unskilled and since skirts and nylons are not conducive to vigorous activity, many elementary teachers tend to shun the instructional aspects of physical education. Therefore, the teaching of skills is spotty. Experience indicates again and again that example is the best teacher, and the teacher may be the only book some of the students ever read. Frightened, ill prepared, poorly coordinated and inappropriately dressed, the classroom teacher is presented a frustrating task, conducive to criticism and failure.

ELEMENTARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The modern era of physical education began in Germany in the late 1700s, as part of a movement led by Johann Christoph Friedrich Guts Muths (1759-1839). Guts Muths was a physical education teacher who taught and wrote about his work for more than 50 years. Historians call him the grandfather of physical education. Guts Muths provided individualized gymnastics programs for students, including those focusing on wrestling, running, leaping, throwing, balancing, climbing, lifting, skipping rope, swimming, dancing, hiking, and military exercises. He also included games that contributed to building strength, speed, and flexibility.

Born in Prussia, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) is the father of physical education and modern gymnastics. Influenced by the ideas of Guts Muths, he was a leader in developing "German Gymnastics" and Turnvereine (gymnastics societies). So-called Turners (i.e., gymnasts) exercised on the horizontal and parallel bars, vaulting horse, balance beam, climbing

ropes, and ladders; they also participated in wrestling, hoop and rope jumping, throwing, running, broad jumping, pole vaulting, and lifting weights. Gymnastics was seen as primarily a means of developing fitness. The military, for example, used gymnastics for training troops—the horse apparatus was modeled after live horses used in the cavalry. Even in the early 1900s, the horse apparatus still had one end pointed up and the tail end pointed down.

In physical education, Thomas Wood and Rosaline Cassidy (1927) wrote a book titled *The New Physical Education* that advocated a shift from the regulated fitness regimes of German and Swedish gymnastics to teaching movement skills and physical activities such as games, sports, and dance. It makes sense that physical educators moved away from the German and Swedish systems when addressing the general public because these systems were developed, in part, for military training. By the 1920s, World War I was over, Europe was "over there," and people were optimistic. Educators of this era viewed fitness exercises as inadequate for a total program of physical education; instead, they claimed that health would be an outcome of children learning skills and activities that they could enjoy in their everyday lives.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Establishing and implementing high-quality physical education (PE) programs can provide students with the appropriate knowledge, skills, behaviors, and confidence to be physically active for life. High-quality PE is the cornerstone of a school's physical activity program.

Benefits of Physical Activity -

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends that young people participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) daily to obtain multiple health benefits, such as decreased likelihood of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. For overweight and obese youth, physical activity can reduce body fatness.
- Additionally, participation in physical activity is associated with academic benefits such as improved concentration, memory, and classroom behavior.

Insufficient Physical Activity Levels Among Youth-

- In 2009, less than 20% of adolescents participated in physical activity for at least 60 minutes daily.⁸

- About one in four adolescents does not engage in 60 minutes of physical activity on any days of the week.

The Current State of Physical Education -

Physical education (PE) is an effective strategy to increase physical activity among young people. HHS recommends that students engage in MVPA for at least 50% of the time they spend in PE class—one of the most critical outcome measures in determining the quality of a PE program.

- Nine studies have documented that, in typical PE classes, students engage in MVPA less than 50% of class time.
- PE teachers use too much of their class time for activities related to administrative and management tasks (e.g., taking attendance, making announcements). Student MVPA rates are lowest during these types of activities. One study found that 15-26% of PE class time was spent on management tasks.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The measurements of the past are different from those of today's current studies; nevertheless, the results still indicate that improved academic performance is associated with increased physical activity level (Coe et al., 2006). Further observations by Schneider and Lounsbery (2008) shows that after an eight year longitudinal study, the most active children are more mentally alert and have less body fat by the time they reach adolescence, which seems to support the notion that physical activity behaviors affecting lifestyles may be established at a young age. Over the years, there has been increased concern about the growing number of overweight/obese students within the school population. This study focuses on parent's perspective on physical education, health issues and concerns and academic achievement of elementary school students. It addresses the question of should physical education be a core, rather than supportive, subject in the curriculum based on the overweight and obesity problems the school system faces today.

As Cockburn and Clarke (2002) pointed out, physical education is comprised of traditionally masculine activities, which might lead one to believe that boys would have no quarrels with it. However, as in sports, physical education classes are yet another arena where boys who do not exhibit traditional masculinity come into conflict with the ideals placed on them by traditional social values and their peers. Although Ronholt studied a physical education class in Denmark, it is not hard to see how his findings could easily relate to an American student's experiences. Ronholt (2002) observed a class preparing for a two-

kilometer run, where the class was split into two groups: one would run without breaks, the other would stop for occasional breaks. The groups split almost entirely along gender lines, with all but two boys in the no-breaks group, and all but one girl in the break group. The boys in the no-break group called out "it's only the sissies" that are running with breaks, referring to the two boys in the break group, thus advancing the belief that truly masculine behavior means having the stamina to run the whole time without a single break (p.29). Klomsten, Marsh, and Skaalvik define masculine sports as consisting of: "danger, risk, violence, speed, strength, endurance, challenge, and team spirit" (2005:626). In Ronholt's study, the boys recognize this and see endurance as equaling masculinity. This will also be an issue for boys in United Kingdom schools.

Sheehy (2006) suggests that physical education teachers in particular maintain a widely held belief that parental perceptions matters a great deal and are critical to the future of physical education in schools. Research indicates that parents perceive the amount of time spent in physical education (mean = 109 minutes) to be lower than the minimum amount established by national authorities, 150 minutes a week for elementary school children (Morgan & Hansen 2007). Downing and Rebello (1999) both agree that parents demonstrate an understanding of the need to decrease class size, in both general and integrated physical education classes. They reinforced concerns regarding teacher preparation issues and support education for children with disabilities, which are currently a moot topic in the academic circle.

Morgan and Hansen (2007) present research literature over the past 20 years identified difficulties many classroom teachers experience when teaching physical education. They recognize that "some major barriers that seriously inhibit teachers include inadequate training, insufficient equipment and facilities, low level of teacher expertise and confidence, and time constraints for teaching physical education in an already crowded curriculum" (p.99). It has also been noted that qualifications and lack of confidence are areas that affect classroom teachers from teaching physical education classes effectively.

Trudeau and Shepard (2008) reviewed the literature on the relationship between PE, school physical activity and school sports on academic performance. They concluded that physical activity can be added to the school curriculum by taking time from other subjects without the risk of hindering student's academic achievement. Further conclusions were made stating the literature strongly suggests that academic achievement, physical fitness and health of children will not be improved by limiting the time allocated to PE instruction, school physical activity

and sports programmes. It was also reported that cross-sectional studies generally indicate a positive association between physical activity and academic achievement.

Keith (2009) noticed that other parent involvement activities that benefit children's educational development are to discuss school activities with his/her child, communicate with the teacher and school, and, monitor and supervise students away from school activities.

A review by Singh et al (2012) aimed to describe the prospective relationship between physical activity and academic performance, focusing only on longitudinal studies. It was concluded that participation in physical activity is positively related to academic performance in children, however only 2 high quality studies were found and the need for future high-quality studies was highlighted. These future studies should also examine the dose-response relationship between the two variables as well as explanatory mechanisms for this relationship.

METHODOLOGY

A physical education specialist taught two classes, a fifth grade class with 17 students and a sixth grade class with 14 students, for three lessons each. The male teacher, with a master's degree, had six years of full time teaching experience and had been employed at this elementary school for the last five years. This teacher taught with a direct-instruction style and actively supervised his students. This public elementary school (Grades 1 - 6) served 100 students from predominantly middle socioeconomic status neighborhoods.

Both physical education classes were coeducational and did not share the activity space with any other classes. The data collection took place during an indoor multi-activity unit (ballgames, fitness) in a gym with about 400 m² available space. Each lesson lasted from 39 to 48 minutes with generally 10% of the time allocated for pre and post management and the remaining time for skill instruction, circuit training, station teaching and game play. The first lesson for both groups consisted of a shot aerobics warm-up followed by circuit training. Subsequent lessons for both classes consisted of skill practice and game play, in team handball for the fifth grade class and basketball for the sixth grade class. The teacher was instructed to teach the lessons as he normally would.

In addition to quantitative physical activity data from all students, the sub sample of subjects (N = 11) categorized

as either low or high skilled, participated in individual stimulated recall interviews after the third lesson. In the semi-structured interview, these students could see the printouts of their heart rate curve for each lesson

while we also described the content and the structure of the lesson. Each interview with these students started with general and personal questions related to their leisure time and their perception of school physical education.

The main focus of the interview was related to the students' perception of physical activity and their own effort during these physical education lessons.

All data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows (21.0). Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the variables. As interview data were collected, two researchers transcribed all the interviews. After the first print version, the interviews were replayed in order to negate transcription errors. The first, second, and third authors first read several times through the interview transcripts to gain a broad overview of the material and thereby looking for trends and explanations. The analysis was data-driven and the descriptions were condensed from the data-base by using inductive constant comparison to describe these students.

CONCLUSION

Physical education has the potential to positively impact children by providing opportunities for active learning. Several contextual factors are contributors to our reported participation styles. The main reason for this appears to be differences in students' fitness levels, physical activity behavior and interest in physical education. Student performance is both dynamic and temporal within the context of physical education, and a key to success here is the ability of the teachers to see, understand and make connections between students' backgrounds and their behavior in class. This reinforces the importance of good teaching skills as a potential means to help all students in the class. The large variation among individual students shows that each student should be treated separately and that a "one size fits all" approach to teaching physical education doesn't work.

To conclude, the literature suggests that by participating in physical activity, PE and sport, children could potentially profit from a variety of physical and psychological health benefits. These include improved skeletal health and functioning of cardio-respiratory and muscular systems, a decreased risk of chronic illnesses and obesity, as well as enhanced self-esteem and reduced symptoms of symptoms.

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