

PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER PREPARATION IN NIGERIA - PROJECTIONS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The role of education in shaping the destinies of individuals and nations could be better imagined than being described. Physical education is part of this process. To achieve the objectives of physical education programme, certain conditions must be fulfilled. One of such conditions is adequate physical education teacher training. The society is dynamic with varying needs and aspirations. There are innovations, and other breakthrough in different human endeavours as by-products of science and technology. In the field of physical education, new sports and games, instructional methods/techniques, tactics and strategies, systems and formation, to mention a few, erupt which calls for changes in curriculum contents. If the physical education teachers are not adequately trained and retrained through in-service programmes, workshops etc to meet the challenges posed by science and technology, the achievement of objectives of physical education programme may remain a mirage.

Introduction

Education is very important in any given society. It is a process which the society establishes to assist the young to understand the heritage of the past, to participate productively in the society of the present and to contribute to the future. Physical education is part of this process. Bucher, (1975) defines physical education as an integral part of the total education process a field of endeavour that has its aim as the development of physically, mentally, emotionally and socially fit citizens through the medium of physical activities that have been selected with a view to realizing these outcomes. The school including other agencies accept the Herculean task of guiding the youths to develop certain attributes necessary for adjustment in the society. This is achieved by providing in the curriculum numerous opportunities for the acquisition of positive attitudes, habits, knowledge and skills paramount for existence in the human environment.

The success or failure of any educational system depends largely on the quality of the teacher vis-a-vis his professional preparation. If the teacher is expected to play such key role in educational matters, it is absolutely necessary that he be prepared adequately for this task. As Lang and Johnson(1975) put it, a teacher teaches primarily as he was taught, how he teaches after his training depends to a large extent on what experience he internalized while in training. Teachers are responsible for shaping the destinies of nations and individuals. The teacher is the hub, the pillar who translates theory into practice.

The education of personnel for particular field of human endeavor differs in scope and nature. On this note Jenny (1961) asserts that physical education teacher preparation is dependent on the quality of the instructional staff, adequately of the facilities, the philosophy of the curriculum methods and materials. He goes further to say that if the students are properly selected as to their academic ability, motor capacity, health and personal qualities, the orientation and guidance programme should greatly assist in the selectees' success in training programme and in their ultimate professional placement. The primary problem with all teacher preparation programmes as educators see it is the limited amount of exposure students have to education courses and field experiences which invariably affects their effectiveness. At this juncture, it becomes expedient to trace the origin of teacher education in Nigeria.

Teacher Education In Nigeria - Background Information

The historical background of teacher preparation programme in Nigeria throws more light on the nature and scope of the various training modes available for professional teachers. Formal education generally was introduced into Nigeria by the missionaries/colonial masters in the course of evangelism and imperialism. Fafunwa (1975) stated that in the Southern part of Nigeria, the introduction of Western oriented education was exclusively due to the efforts of the Christian missionaries. He further stated that

missionaries were evangelists first and educationists second.

Towards the end of 1800, the public began to press for higher educational institutions where the Nigerian youths could receive higher training without going abroad. Fafunwa (1968) reports that in a resolution presented to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies after the meeting of National Congress of British West Africa held in Accra in 1920 demanded among other things the development of Africa of institutions of university standard, having regard in their curriculum to the needs of the African environment.

Still on the report in 1930, the University College should be established in Nigeria which should have Faculties of Arts and Sciences, School of Agriculture and Department of Teacher Training. Higher education in Nigeria started with the founding of Yaba High College in 1931 by E.R. Hussey, Director of Education in Nigeria between 1927-1936. With the establishment of College of Arts, Science and Technology in Zaria now Ahmadu Bello University, Physical Education was introduced in 1957 as a course leading to the award of diploma (National Teachers Institute N.C.E. (D.L.S.) course book on Physical and Health Education (1990). In 1960 when the University of Nigeria Nsukka was established, a Department of Physical Education in Faculty of Education was included in the discipline of the university. In 1969, University of Ife became the second university in Nigeria to offer Physical Education as a degree course. In 1975, the University of Ibadan established a full Department of Physical Education. This led to the training of physical education specialists in Nigeria, Adedeji (1985). However, with the emergence of Nigerian independence, Physical Education saw a lot of changes with the establishment of tertiary institutions running Physical Education programme and the eventual introduction of 6:3:3:4 system of education.

Physical Education Teacher Preparation

Teacher education is an institutionalized procedure designed for the professional training of those who engage in the business of teaching. Katasek (1970) says that teacher education is an institutionalized procedure aimed at the purposeful organized preparation or further education of persons who are engaged directly or indirectly in educational activity as their life work. It encompasses such programmes that are designed to give professional training to those who will be engaged in the job of teaching. Therefore, the functional role of teacher education programme is the preparation of competent teachers who are knowledgeable in selected areas of knowledge and professional practices.

The problem of teacher education in Nigeria remains as was expressed by Fafunwa (1968), that the preparation of qualified teachers for any nation requires adequate planning and constant review. It has been pointed out that of all educational problems that beset African countries, none is as persistent and agonizing as the one relating to the training of the competent teachers. From the above, it could be inferred that the society is dynamic with changing curriculum contents. This implies that the teachers will not only be adequately prepared but also update their knowledge to keep abreast with changing curriculum. On a similar note, Leslie and Gene (1982) assert that one of the pervasive problems in teacher education is the tendency to resist change and maintain the status quo while the tempo of social and technological change has accelerated. They further state that the prospective teachers not only need to understand the practical and theoretical characteristics of the various instructional methods but they also need instructional role models.

Ojeme (1987), reports that in any teaching, too little knowledge of the subject matter or what is to be taught is very dangerous as the teacher may be disseminating erroneous information. He concludes that a Physical Education teacher with adequate professional preparation will be sufficiently knowledgeable to deal with his subject matter all the time. Physical Education as an academic discipline is very unique in the sense that it demands much from its practitioners. Apart from those role expectations common to all teachers, the Physical Education teacher has also special role expectations involving practical exponent of the skills involved in the performance of a wide variety of activities which comprise his programme of work with children in different school situations. The goals of teacher preparation have been clearly spelt out by the National Policy on Education (1981). These goals include the need to graduate educated individuals who are prepared and committed to teaching to influence not only the intellectual life of students but also the emotional and ethical aspect of their professional careers and to acquaint prospective teachers with the rights and responsibilities of potential service. In the same vein, Bucher, Constance and Milton (1961) state that since the Physical Education instructor is the one who must put to use any programme that is worked out, it is only natural that he or she should have a big part to play in his preparation programme. They further assert that Physical Education teachers have many requirements to

meet both personally and professionally, like teachers in every phase of education, they have numerous responsibilities which extend far beyond the classroom and not limited to the school building or to regular hours of the school day. The Physical Education teacher is faced with the responsibility of teaching, intra mural and interscholastic activities.

Since the professional competence of teachers depend largely on the kind of training they received, it is pertinent to discuss the different modes of training Physical Education teachers. Mode in this context refers to the training programmes available for preparing Physical Education teachers. In the present Nigerian educational system, there are few modes of preparing those who want to be professional physical education teachers. Each mode involves an approved period of training by each institution after which a successful student is awarded a certificate. Some of the physical education teacher preparation modes in Nigeria are described here mode, I, II and III.

Training Mode I

Through a three year training course in Physical and Health Education in College of Education or similar institution leading to the award of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). According to the academic programme of the Department of Physical and Health Education as contained in the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) Minimum Standards (1981) the department aims at developing in the students physical skills, knowledge, safety, skills, emotional, social and moral fitness so that each successful student teacher can achieve his potential as a responsible and contributing citizen. The programme further states that at the end of training, student teachers will be able to orient young pupils in the history of sports and physical education, teach effectively key health problems, furnish information on official rules, first aid, .methods of conducting tournaments and able to organize and teach popular sports in the country.

Training Mode II

This is a degree programme in physical education offered by a university or a degree awarding institution at the end of which a Bachelor of Science degree or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) is awarded. For this mode of training, a student teacher will spend four years in the university. The undergraduate academic programme of the Department of Health and Physical Education as stipulated in the National Universities Commission (NUC), (1990) Guide Lines, the programme is designed for students to acquire the necessary skills and competencies for successful teaching, organization and administration of Physical and Health Education in schools and other related institutions, produce qualified high level manpower to serve in rehabilitation institution, equip students with the appropriate skills and competencies for individual survival and contribution to the national goals and aspirations among others.

Training Mode III

This is a three year programme in a College of Education leading to the award of N.C.E. and going through another three or two years degree programme in a university depending on the entry qualification. This category of teachers passed through the first two modes of training and therefore possess both the N.C.E. and the B.Sc (Ed) certificates respectively.

The products of these modes of physical education teacher preparation are professionally qualified teachers who by virtue of their training are expected to be effective teachers. To support this assertion, Vanier and Faith (1964) opine that professional preparation is the prerequisite of a successful teaching career. They go further to state that physical education generally require specific training in sports and games, health, safety, first aid, recreation, general education, teaching techniques, science, liberal arts, guidance and practice teaching.

Projections And Challenges

The growth of interest in sports and games by the Federal Government, State, Local Governments, organizations and individuals is rather encouraging. The government has realized the tremendous influence of physical education and organized sports as vehicles for a social order, growth and development of patriotic and worthy citizens. The country needs technically and professionally competent physical educators to implement the curriculum in such a way as to generate interest in the youths who elect to take up Physical Education as a vocation.

In most schools in Nigeria, Physical Education specialists are responsible for the teaching of Physical Education. For this reason, they should be adequately prepared to enable them discharge their

duties efficiently. According to Nixon, Flanagan and Frederickson (1964), it is the obligation of P.E. teachers to be thoroughly grounded in the knowledge that movement is inherent in life and that physical activity is a biological necessity for development and survival. Unfortunately, students often complain that they are not groomed on the subject particularly the practical aspect. Some authorities in physical education have tried to identify some of the causes of poor performances of physical education teachers in the work.

Regretably, Abdullahi (1980), observed that by their training, most teachers lacked skills in observation, practical investigation and inquiry aspects and summarized the style of teaching in schools as merely informational and memory questions. Sometimes some of the physical education specialists are not only inexperienced but also lack interest in the job, Nwokocha (1992) states that many Nigerians both educationists and laymen cry out against the alleged fall in the performances or efficiency of teachers in much the same way as they cry out against the alleged fall in academic standards in schools. On a similar note, Ezewu (1992) commenting on the product of educational institutions states that the problem of examination malpractice which have eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian education system and the production of scientists who cannot differentiate between a beaker and a round bottom flask. Scientists without scientific attitude and orientation.

Nothing is constant in this universe except change. Physical Education is now radically altering as a new age of massive leisure, massive affluence, mass mobility, mass education and makes itself known and felt. The new age introduced with the exodus of competitions in various fields of sports and recreation force a vast re-evaluation of the development and distribution of physical education knowledge and skills. A well balanced, comprehensive and varied programme of physical education and sports require personnel who are educated to administer and deliver services.

The question facing us is whether our present professional preparation will survive the sports festivals and the right international competition epoch and the consequent demands made of those of us who are employed in the field of physical education. To make projections about physical education teacher preparation in the near future, becomes very dicey.

Of course, it may be risky to project the future because of the likely intervening variable which might occur between the present and the future through the process of social change. It is a truism that most socio-political problems of today are products of inadequate analysis and synthesis of the trends and problems of the present in order to properly predict the future.

Nevertheless one can for see a situation where the physical education specialist will be required to keep abreast with the vast changing skills and rules in physical education administration including the use of computers and other gadgets in teaching. New teaching methods and techniques will be absolutely needed in physical education teacher training and updating one's knowledge through regular training and retraining will become the only answer for survival in the job.

These few projections pose a very serious challenge in teacher education (Hkpenyong, 1992), as discussed below:

Policy On Physical Education Teacher Training

Physical education -is an established and acknowledged academic discipline in Universities, Colleges of Education, sport schools and institutes

These institutions train prospective teachers, coaches, leaders, administrators and researchers through pre-service and in-service programmes. The person who chooses to qualify as a professional Physical Educator elects to prepare himself for a uniquely diversified, stimulating, demanding and rewarding role. Good teachers for tomorrow's children will need new knowledge and skills which we have not yet learned. They will need to be creative individuals prepared to utilize their own creativity in identifying and expanding the creative potentials of their clients. Today physical educators are responsible for creating learning environment which provide varied stimuli, encourage explorations and enhance the motivations of students to achieve desired out-comes. He designs learning opportunities to facilitate personal variations in performance and to encourage inventiveness.

Government policy on education has to make clear provision for the training of competent physical educators and enshrined in the National Policy on Education. In this regard the National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and other professional associations such as NAPER SD (Nigerian Association of Physical Health Education, Recreation Sports and Dance) should work together in achieving the above stated goal.

Facilities For Physical Education Teacher Preparation

It is an established fact that no educational enterprise can succeed without adequate facilities, equipment and supplies. In physical education teacher training, like any other professional course, the need for the availability of functional training facilities and equipment such as courts/pitches for sports, computers, video sets, stop watches, nets to name a few. Experience has shown that lack of facilities and equipment in physical education hampers students achievements particularly in the psychomotor domain.

The availability of instructional facilities and equipment can be said to be one area where physical education in Nigeria has generally lagged behind. The issue facing physical education is that the general public do not appreciate the values it offers. This present attitude results from lack of facilities, equipment and supplies, education of the masses, indifference on the part of the teachers, poor financial backing and bad management. If actually the programme of physical education is generally understood, the support it will enjoy will certainly change and the development of physical education in this country will improve.

In the physical education teacher training of the present 21st century, more advanced instructional facilities, equipment and supplies are needed and every P.E. teacher is expected to know how to use them in instruction. In order to solve this problem, present teachers' knowledge has to be up dated. Summarily, it is feared that the present P.E. teacher training may not be able to fulfill its mission in the near future unless the earlier suggestions are implemented to the grass-roots.

Man-Power Supply And Curriculum Development

Man-power training and supply has been a major impediment to the rapid development of physical education in Nigeria. It is true that many P.E specialists have been produced by different institutions but the question is how many of them the skills have and how many of them are employed by different establishments. There has been a lot of inventions, modernization and breakthroughs in the scientific, technological, cultural, educational and other sphere of human endeavour. It is imperative that some skills, systems, formations, tactics and strategies in sports and games are likely to become obsolete in future.

Since the curriculum development usually reflects the changing needs and times, it becomes imperative that the education of the P.E. teachers must be constantly up dated to keep abreast with the current issues, facts, inventions and developments. Thus, the need for a workable staff development policy that will influence the retraining of physical educators whose skills will turn out to be unmarketable. Staff development will have to centre on new knowledge for classroom and practical instructions. This goals is achieved through seminars, workshops, coaching clinics, reading of current journals and becoming members of professional bodies.

Research And Method Of Instruction

There are myriads of content areas in physical education which have remained unharnessed. However, evidence show that a number of research works have been conducted in this area by P.E. majors.

Institutions and professional bodies should organize conferences and seminars where several relevant empirical papers are presented. Results of such investigations, should be integrated in the curriculum of teacher education to enhance performance.

Conclusion

It has been proved beyond all reasonable doubts that the success of any organization be it school or industry to name a few depends on the calibre of personnel and the administration. Therefore physical education teacher training should aim at producing competent personnel to meet the challenges posed by technological breakthroughs and varying needs of the society.

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