

THE ROLE OF SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A MECHANISM FOR CONTROL OF DEVIANT ACT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on deviant activities among students vis-à-vis sports as panacea for the deviant problems by students in Nigerian secondary schools. The vices that stigmatize the secondary schools today are traceable to the uncontrolled behavior of students. School authorities and concerned Governments over the years have applied measures to check the excesses of students in schools without noticeable success. Sports stand to provide the needed solution to this lingering problem of deviance in schools. Sports are perceived as wholesome pursuits for students in secondary schools which channel their thinkings and dispositions towards worthwhile goals. Sports provide students the opportunity to cultivate sportsmanship qualities, which is necessary for school discipline. The educational values of sports include self-discipline and control, obedience and cooperation with constituted authorities. Similarly, sports provide students with safety valve for letting off excessive energies, which ordinarily could have been mischievously channeled towards acts that are opposed to school discipline. The importance of sports programmes organization in schools was highlighted. The components of a sound physical education and sports programmes in Nigerian secondary schools from which students can benefit in building up desirable behavior were also discussed. Finally, recommendations were made on how participation in sport and physical education by student can help solve the problem of deviant activities in Nigerian secondary schools.

Keywords: Deviant, Indiscipline, Misconduct, Sportsmanship, Panacea.

INTRODUCTION

Deviant acts in Nigerian secondary schools today are of great concern to the school authorities, government and the society at large. Most acts of indiscipline in schools are traceable to deviant activities of students. Deviant activities by students are on the increase in Nigerian schools and have been a source of worry for teachers, parents, teachers, school authorities, the government and the society at large. Ekeh, 2002 noted that deviant acts by students soared high that the resultant indiscipline has culminated in misconduct of various degrees.

Deviant acts in Nigerian secondary schools today has become a matter of concern for all Nigerians. In recent times, it has become the topic for discussions in the public for a, symposia, debates and talk shows. Our schools are infested with many indiscipline acts. This canker of deviant acts affects indeed the whole fabric of all the secondary schools both private and public schools in Nigeria (Ammah and Orunaboka 2004).

According to udoh (1999), moral decadence which is an act of deviance in Nigerian secondary school system has reached a worrisome state that all stake holders in the education industry are in the search for possible solution. He opined that deviance among students arises partly from lack of opportunity for sporting activities. A reflection of the colonial secondary schools years reminds one of an ideal school environment where students were well behaved according to laid down norms. Secondary schools were places where the characters of the adolescents were molded. The adolescent in schools were trained to develop self control, character orderliness and efficiency. One of the ways which this was achieved was through participation in sporting activities. There is a general notion that sporting activities are capable of assisting in solving the problems of deviance in schools. There is a widely held belief that a considerable proportion of delinquency among students in schools stem from misuse of leisure times. The vices of deviants' behavior could be many but engagement in sports activities could absorb most of these criminal tendencies among the secondary school students. Amuchie (1989) predicted that the acts of indiscipline will be on the increase, having observed the current trend of increasing misuse of leisure times by students in secondary schools as at then. He further stated that there would be increase in the number of drunkards, psychotics,, drug addicts, armed rubbers and juvenile delinquents. Sports activities in schools could be the safety valve through which these problems could be addressed.

It is against this background that this paper intends to examine the role sports could play in the control of deviant acts in Nigerian secondary schools. This paper therefore, focuses on the following areas:

- ❖ State of sports in Nigerian secondary schools
- ❖ Potentialities of sports controlling deviant acts in Nigerian secondary schools.

The deviant acts and indiscipline have spread through the rank and file of the Nigerian schools which is the number one concern of the public. Students today are less respectful; less obedient and less willing to live in accordance to bullying, petty, stealing to drug abuse, violence, robbery, sexual abuse and rape in recent times. Focus in physical education and sports, it takes the form of riots, violence, assaults of referees and players, hooliganism, profanity, cheating, doping, indecency and vandalism. And it is rather unfortunate, bearing in mind the goals, and purpose of physical education, and what sport does for the school and society.

What sports does for people

Wilkerson and Dodder study (as cited in Wuest & Bucher 1999) conducted research to find out what sport does for people. They came out with seven functions of sports in society:

- ❖ Emotional release: Sport is a way to express emotions and relieve tensions, it acts as a safety valve and catharsis to relieve aggressive tendencies.
- ❖ Affirmation of identity: Sport offers opportunities to be recognized and to express one's individual qualities.
- ❖ Social Control: a means of control over people in a society where deviances is prevalent
- ❖ Socialization: Sport serves as a means of socializing those individuals who identify with it.
- ❖ Change agent: sport results in social change, new behavior patterns and is a factor that changes the course of history. For example, it allows for interaction of all kinds of people and for upward mobility based on ability.
- ❖ Collective consciousness: sport creates a communal spirit that brings people together in a conclusive manner in search of common goals.
- ❖ Success: sport provides a feeling of success both for the participant and the spectator when a player or a team with whom one identifies achieves success. To win in sport is also to win in life.

State of Sports in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Sports programme in Nigerian secondary schools is currently organized at three levels. Ojeme (2002) specified the levels to be:

- ❖ Instructional sports programme: This promotes acquisition of basic knowledge and skills in different motor activities. Skills acquired in instructional programmes are applied in intramural sports. This programme ensures that students in secondary schools learn basic skills of sports. However, it appears not much has been achieved as the programme is plagued by inadequacies of facilities, equipment and personnel. At the instructional level, the rules and regulations of sports are taught and these experiences could be carried outside outside the classroom. Edwards (1973) stated that good character and good behavior learned within sports context, can be transferred from the school community to the society at large.
- ❖ Intramural sports programme: This promotes broad-based participation in sports activities. This programme democratizes sports participation by all students. In the schools, however, it appears that intramural sports activities in Nigerian secondary schools are no longer effectively organized. The development of intramural sports will enables majority of the students to engage themselves fully in any sports activities of their choice. Students who are involved in sports are constructively engaged and their attention will be diverted from deviant acts. There will also be possible transfer of fair play in sports to other aspects of their school life and this makes sports an indispensable instrument for controlling deviant acts in schools. If intramural sport activities are properly organized, they will enhance the social relationship among secondary school students.

❖ Extramural Sports Programmes: This programme provides opportunities for the most athletically talented students in the schools to excel in their chosen sports through organized sports competition. Ekeh (2002) maintained that well organized extramural sports provide certain educational values such as reaction under pressure, quick thinking, immediate decision and response to emergencies on the field of play. Students also learn to play according to the rules of the game and obey constituted authorities. Consequently, secondary school students who have the opportunity to acquire these values are likely not to act deviantly.

Factors Influencing Students Participation in Sports

It is however important to analyze some fundamental factors influencing students' participation in sports in Nigerian secondary schools. The issues boarder on the following:

- i. Sports Awareness: It seems that a great number of Nigerians secondary schools administrators are ignorant of the value of sports. As a result, planning sports programmes is a waste of time to them. In some of the schools where sports programmes are present, a great number of students and staff alike are ignorant of the potentials of sports. They are either too busy to play or regard sports participation as a waste of precious time.
- ii. Perception of Sports in Secondary School Curriculum: The National Policy on Education places physical education of which sports is an integral part as optionally compulsory subject in the secondary school curriculum. The attention given to sports is far below that required and consequently there is low students participation or no participation at all. They viewed sports and physical education as non academic; they are for non doing well students.
- iii. Perception of Sports by Parents: Most parents have wrong conception of sports programmes in schools. They not only discourage their wards from studying physical education as a subject but even go further to forbid them from participating in sports and games. Most parents feel that time for sports should be spent on other academic activities. This is a misconception and these parents need proper education on the potentials of sports.
- iv. Sports Facilities and Sports Personnel in Secondary Schools: If students in Nigerian Secondary schools are to be gainfully involved in sports at all, there must be that enabling environment. Sports facilities, equipment and sports personnel are factors that make participation in sports worthwhile. Sports facilities, equipment and sports personnel are required for planned sports programmes in schools. Sports facilities in Nigerian secondary schools are in pitiable situation and in most cases they are not in existence.
- v. Formation of Sports Clubs: it is rare to find sports clubs being organized in Nigerian secondary schools. Sports clubs if formed will bring students together to play under one healthy environment. Team spirit and understanding for each others' differences will be built.

- vi. **Recreational Activities:** Recreational activities in Nigerian secondary schools seem to be neglected and this is because recreational facilities are lacking. It appears that no meaningful effort is made in the direction of providing these facilities.

Potentialities of Sports in Controlling Deviant Acts

Today, it appears that a considerable proportion of deviant activities in Nigerian secondary schools arise from wrongful use of leisure time by students. As the old adage goes, “the devil finds work for the idle hands”. Deviant acts in most secondary schools in Nigeria seems to be by products of idleness and so every effort should be made to ensure that properly planned sporting activities to engage the students’ free time are put in place. According to Amuchie (1998), most students in Nigerian secondary schools do not participate in sporting activities because they do not have the opportunity to participate or do not realized the importance of participating in sports. He further observed that students engage themselves differently in various deviant activities which are anti-social in nature.

Well planned sports programmes in Nigerian secondary schools could sblimate and satisfy the students’ energies and drives by channeling them towards worthwhile activities. This will leave them with little or no time for hatching any mischief. It is believed that sports under good leadership have the unique capacity to gainfully engage the students in schools and free them from deviant acts.

CONCLUSION

The acts of deviance such as cultism, rape, robbery, disobedience, hooliganism, examination malpractices, gambling, truancy, drunkenness and others have recently assumed an unprecedented dimension in Nigerian secondary schools. This development has rendered the schools unsafe for normal academic activities. This unhealthy development in the schools as a result of the deviant activities of students has spilled over to the wider society. The incidences of deviant acts within and outside the schools are of great concern to school authorities and parents alike. Properly planned and administered physical education and sports activities would provide opportunities for students to fully participate in wholesome sports. It is strongly believed that students participation in holistic sports activities will provide the much needed opportunities for molding their characters and shun all anti-social behaviours that characterized the secondary school system today. Sports can definitely be used as an instrument for controlling deviance in schools, particularly Nigerian secondary schools where deviant activities of students appears to be assuming an alarming rate.

However, in schools where boarding facilities exists,, adequate sports facilities for competitions and recreational activities that will attract students engagement at their leisure times should be provided. Facilities when built should be enticing and appealing to attract their fair and regular utilization.

Finally, all hands should be on deck to put all machineries in place to ensure that participation in sports by students in Nigerian secondary schools yield the desired result of controlling deviant acts by students.

In view of the discussion and conclusion of this paper, the following recommendations are hereby advanced and if implemented could salvage the Nigerian secondary schools from their present predicaments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) The use of law enforcement agents or intimidation to enforce law and order in Nigeria secondary school should be minimized, instead sporting activities that suits the interest of students at all times should be introduced by the school authorities. There should be good communication between school authorities and students.

(b) Adequate attention should be given to intramural sports activities by the school authorities. The school authorities in partnership with the parents/teachers associations of schools should build sports facilities.

(c) Proprietors of schools as a matter of necessity should provide sports facilities and equipment for intramural sports and recreational activities. If adequate facilities and equipment for sports are provided in secondary schools to serve all students. It will offer them opportunity to occupy their time outside the class period and keep them away from deviant activities.

(d) The Ministry of Education in various states of the Federation should make annual inter house sports competition mandatory for all secondary schools. The ministry should introduce monitoring teams to supervise and checkmates competitions to ensure that all schools comply. The principal/school heads should ensure that students, teachers and parents take sports participation in schools by students seriously.

(e) The National Policy on education should revisit its stand on Physical Education being optionally compulsory for students in secondary schools. Physical education and sports should be made core compulsory subject for students.

(f) All secondary schools should have sufficient number of physical educators and sport coaches. Government at all levels and various school authorities should ensure that professionals are employed to handle the organization of games and sports at all levels.

(g) The entire student population in school should be educated through organized seminars and workshops on the importance of sports in maintaining proper individual adjustment.

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