

Physical and Health Education Teachers' Job Demands and Resources, in Exercise Programming for Fitness and Wellness of School Children in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Teachers of Physical and Health Education (PHE) have a mission of improving school children's physical fitness and wellness by implementing well-structured physical activity (exercise) programmes for improving all the dimensions of wellness. Programming (designing and implementing programmes) for physical fitness and wellness exerts certain physiological and/or psychological costs known as job demands. Teachers should possess adequate resources for meeting with the costs of programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children in accordance with the 'Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model' in order to avoid the development of serious stress, with its attendant debilitating ill- health. The resources needed by teachers in programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children were identified in this paper to include being physically fit and well-coordinated, patient, approachable and enthusiastic, excellent in oral communication skills, possession of good sense of rhythm, and the ability to motivate students, among others. It is concluded that there is need for a research to determine the extent to which PHE teachers are in possession of these resources for meeting with the job demands of programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children. Such a research should reveal how to make PHE teachers more efficient in programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children, without developing any serious stress that is capable of eliciting debilitating ill health.

Keywords: Physical fitness, wellness, Job demands, Job resources, Exercise programming, debilitating ill health

INTRODUCTION

Teachers of Physical and Health Education (PHE) have the goal of delivering that integral part of the general educational system which, according to Wuest and Bucher (2003), contains systematized forms of activities designed to promote all round development of good physical, mental, emotional, moral, and social attributes of school children. Ojeme (2002) had opined earlier on that PHE teachers are charged with the responsibility of making school children physically fit, morally fit, skilfully fit, intellectually fit, socially fit and aesthetically fit. In other words, teachers of physical and health education are responsible for making school children develop all the dimensions of human wellness. It could be for these reasons that Nabofa (2010) stated that Physical & Health Education plays an important role in the physical growth and development of school children. Through PHE, school children acquire the knowledge, skills, right attitudes and values towards the pursuit of a lifelong physically active and healthy lifestyle that helps to develop self-management skills, social and co-operative skills and build positive character dispositions for themselves in the larger society.

The extent to which the teachers are achieving these objectives in Nigeria have become arguable in recent times, because PHE teachers appear to be failing in creating the desired physically active lifestyles of people in the society, as an offshoot from early school days

experiences. This assertion is supported by the findings of Frantz, Phillips and Amosun (2003) that sedentary lifestyle patterns begin early in life and progresses to inactive adulthood. The failure of PHE teachers in delivering on their goals is evidenced in the fact that our society today is witnessing a wide variety of health problems that range from infectious diseases to a gradual preponderance of hypokinetic diseases like obesity/overweight, stroke, etc (Nabofa, 2010). The United States Centre for Disease Control (USCDC, 2003) had since demonstrated that physical inactivity is a common underlying determinant of the relentlessly growing health crises globally and one of the leading causes of preventable deaths. So, the fact that PHE teachers appear to be failing the society in the expected development of fitness and well-being of school children, could be seen from the approximately 3.2 million deaths and 32.1 million disability-adjusted life years (DALY) that are due to insufficient physical activities as recorded by Henry, Lightowler and Al-Hourani (2004). The link established between current sedentary lifestyle and lack of regular exercise on the one hand, and the high prevalence of hypertension, diabetes and obesity in Nigeria on the other hand, as recorded by Onabanjo, Olaide, Chineze and Oguntona (2012) is also another pointer to the fact that PHE teachers are (virtually) failing in our country.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The fundamental objective of this paper is to stress the fact that if the cardinal aim of physical and Health Education (PHE) is to achieve the physical fitness and wellness of school children, then the prerequisite conditions needed by the PHE Teacher must all be put in place, by ensuring that Job- demands and Job- resources are in the right ratio.

STUDY DESIGN

This paper is an Amalgam of a Review and Position Paper. The tripod scope under which this paper has been discussed includes:

- a. Job Demands in Programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children.
- b. PHE-Teacher Job Resources, in Programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children
- c. The interactions between PHE – Teacher Job Demands and Job Resources, in Programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children.

Job Demands in Programming for Physical Fitness and Wellness of School Children

Physical activities are considered in an appropriate environment when programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children. Nabofa (2010) observed that physical activities occur or can be made to occur, at different intensities, duration, frequency and mode. He noted that not all physical activities are usable by teachers for the improvement of physical fitness and wellness of school children. It is therefore necessary to use physical activities that are planned and, structured to make use of repetitive movements for the improvement of physical fitness and wellness in school children. Specifically, designing and/or maintaining the components of physical fitness and wellness is described as programming for physical fitness and wellness (Hoeger & Hoeger, 2002; Housh, Housh & de-Vries, 2004).

The structured physical activities that are currently being utilized in PHE classes include basic fundamental movements such as walking, running, jumping and climbing, in games and sporting activities like athletics, boxing, wrestling, swimming, ball games, racket games, gymnastics, dancing, camping, canoeing, mountaineering and other physical activities (Wuest & Bucher, 2003). In utilising these physical activities in programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children, consideration should be made to ensure that they are age-

specific, and stage -of -growth specific, if they are to succeed in eliciting desired physical fitness and wellness benefits. Physical activities must therefore be well planned, executed, monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, if PHE teachers are to succeed in programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children.

Planning is the starting point in programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children. The next point is designing and executing the programmes, followed by monitoring of how the programmes are performing, with respect to delivering physical fitness and wellness benefits to school children. Determining when and how young Nigerians are trained in PHE should be the starting point (Abdullahi, 2008). Gallahue and Doimelly's (2003) had insisted that any form of meaningful physical training should be 'age specific' and 'stage of growth and development' appropriate. It is therefore necessary to determine the stage of growth and development of children where maximum benefit could be derivable from training in any given sport or physical activity (Nabofa, 2010a). This is because children's body sizes and ability to control their body movements change steadily from infants' first spontaneous waving and kicking movements, to the complex adaptive control, locomotion and complex sports skills.

Children's body proportions and performance of motor skills ability vary as they grow, age and mature. Boon (2006) reasoned that these variations are due to the fact that the bigger the brain and body structure, due to growth and development, the better the child's abilities to perform motor skills. PHE teachers must, therefore, take into consideration the stage of growth and development of their school children when planning, designing and executing programmes aimed at improving physical fitness and wellness of school children.

Planning, designing and implementing programmes for the improvement of physical fitness and wellness of school children; and monitoring how the programmes are performing usually a lot of demand or stress, on PHE teachers physiologically and psychologically. The physiological and/or psychological costs of efforts put into planning, designing, executing and monitoring programmes for physical fitness and wellness of school children are referred to as PHE teachers' job demands. Other job demands include scheduling of scheme of work, lesson notes, classroom, activities, playground activities, evaluation/ assessment of children and teacher activities, and further improvement of the whole programme.

Teacher Job Resources in Programming for Fitness and Wellness of School Children

Programming for physical fitness and wellness requires that PHE teachers possess certain resources if they are to succeed in delivering physical fitness and wellness benefits to school children. These resources were identified by Ojeme (2002) to include being physically fit and well-coordinated, patient, approachable and enthusiastic, excellent in oral communication skills, the possession of good sense of rhythm, and ability to motivate students among others. Certain tangibles in the form of physical facilities and equipment for teaching the different array of physical activities are also resources needed by PHE teachers in programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children.

Interactions between Teacher Job Demands and Job Resources in Programming for Physical Fitness and Wellness of School Children

The interactions between PHE teacher job demands and resources in programming for physical fitness and wellness are definite and predictable with the aid of the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R) (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003). Programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children is an arduous task that requires a whole lot of psychological and physiological resources for coping, and for succeeding. It has already been established that PHE teachers in Nigeria are not succeeding in transforming school children

into physically fit adults, with high levels of wellness. The high prevalence of hypokinetic diseases in Nigeria these days according to House (2007) can only be explained by the postulation that PHE teachers do not have adequate resources to deliver on their goals in accordance with the Job Demands-Resources Model.

The failure of teachers in programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children due to lack of adequate resources may actually be pre disposing PHE teachers to serious stress. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model as put forward by Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli (2003), every task has its own specific risk - factors associated with job stress, and these factors are classified into two main categories; job-demands and job - resources. The physical, psychological, social, and/or organizational aspects of the task that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) stressor skills (costs) were what Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, (2003) referred to as job demands. Meeting with these demands requires that there is an abundant supply of psychological, physiological; social, and/or organizational resources (job resources) for coping with the specific tasks. According to the JD-R Model, when job demands (psychological and physiological costs) are more than the job resources (psychological and physiological resources) at the disposal of an individual, such an individual is bound to develop serious occupational stress, leading to debilitating ill health (Bakker, Hakanen & Demerouti, 2006). The psychological and physiological resources for coping with the challenges faced by PHE teachers in programming for physical fitness wellness of school children may be responsible for making them develop serious job-related ill health which in turn has negatives impacts on their job- output for school children.

The chances are rife that they may be suffering from serious stress as they struggle to achieve results with little or none of the required resources. Many studies have implicated stress in the aetiology of a number of physical and psychiatric ailments, coronary heart disease, ulcers and so on, among teachers generally (House, 2007). In addition, job stress can hinder effectiveness at work and can lead to low performance, job dissatisfaction, poor motivation, absenteeism and low turnover. Reglin and Reitzammer (2008) and Tnetteman and Punch (2005) opined that, teachers, regardless of the level at which they teach, are exposed to high levels of stress. In some extreme cases, they may suffer from burnout, as well (Seldman & Zager, 2001).

In Nigeria, the issue of teachers' stress has hardly caught the attention of our educational planners, and the signals, and the effects of such stresses are obvious in our educational system (Adeoye, 1991). The reason for this lukewarm attitude is not farfetched. Everyone, except the teachers themselves, think that teaching is simple, and therefore not stressful. The misconception is fully demonstrated by the fact that it has been reduced to an all-comers', and even never-do-wells' profession, and treated with so much levity that nobody wants to be a teacher.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that, in spite of the virtual non-recognition and low esteem of the teaching profession, every PHE teacher knows that teaching PHE is one of the most demanding jobs around; and more so in the Nigerian context. Any job that is directed at shaping the behaviour of young children up to adult life in the midst of stressful and frustrating conditions cannot be easy. It is therefore recommended that there is need for a research to determine the extent to which PHE teachers are in possession of those resources needed for meeting with the job demands of programming for physical fitness and wellness of school children. Such a research should reveal how to make PHE teachers more efficient in programming for

physical fitness and wellness of schoolchildren, without developing any serious job-related stress that is capable of eliciting debilitating ill health among the said teachers.

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