

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROVISION OF GAMES AND SPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AT THE BASIC EDUCATION LEVEL IN KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The paper is a critical analysis of the standards of games and sports that are provided for learners with Physical Disabilities at basic education level in Kenya. Basic education refers to the education offered to learners in pre-school, primary schools and secondary schools in Kenya. The average age of these learners is three to eighteen years. Kenya's education system is non-discriminative and it offers education for all regardless of race, gender or disability. Games and sports which form part of co-curricular activities are part and parcel of the Kenyan school curriculum. The games and sports are provided for in all levels of education with Physical Education (P E) being a compulsory subject. The paper defines what games and sports are, discusses the benefits of the same. It narrows down to discuss the benefits to learners with Physical Disabilities. It explains how the sporting activities are provided for and organized. It ends with a critical review of the sporting activities as they are provided for learners with Physical Disabilities and concludes by emphasizing on the need for these activities to be given more attention by not only the Government of Kenya but all parties in Kenya i.e. teachers, students, parents and communities.

**KEY WORDS**

1. **Games** - refers to structured playing, usually undertaken for enjoyment and sometimes used as an educational tool.
2. **Sports** – all forms of usually competitive physical activity which through casual or organized participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical ability.
3. **Physical Disability** – a limitation on a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina
4. **8:4:4 Curriculum**- Kenya's system of education which came into being in 1985
5. **Physical Education**- an educational course related to the physique of the human body both at primary and secondary school level.
6. **MOEST** – refers to Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

A game is structured playing, usually undertaken for enjoyment and sometimes used as an educational tool. Games are distinct from work which is usually carried out for remuneration and from art, which is often an expression of aesthetic, ideological elements. However the distinction is not clear-cut and many games are also considered to be work (such as jig saw puzzles or games involving an artistic layout such as Mahjong, Solitaire, or some video games). Components of games are goals, rules, challenges and interaction. Games generally involve mental activity or physical stimulation, and often both. Many games develop practical skills, serve as form of exercises or otherwise an educational, simulation or psychological rate.

Games and sports have been defined as any or all forms of physical activity which are competitive, which through casual or organized participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical activity, ability and skills while at the same time entertaining participants (Shahni, 2009). There are several sports that exist, from those requiring two participants to those that require hundreds of participants. Sports are usually governed by a set of rules and regulations. This is meant to ensure fair competition and allow consistent adjudication. There are several ways of determining a winner in sports. It can be through scoring goals, crossing a line first or by determination of judges who are elements of sporting performance.

In Kenya games and Sports are part and parcel of the school curriculum. The Basic Education Act 2013 defines a curriculum as ‘all the approved subjects taught and programmes offered and includes all the activities provided at any institution of basic education (Basic Education Act Kenya - No.14 of 2013). School curriculum is therefore incomplete without games and sports and other outdoor activities such as P.E, drama and Music to name just but a few. The same Act states that every child has a right to free and compulsory basic education. This means that all children including those with disabilities are entitled to an education that is all inclusive, ie not only classroom instruction but also games and sports or any other co-curricular activities provided in the school. In all schools including those ones for learners with special needs, Physical Education (PE) should not only be timetabled but also taught. The schools should also offer games and sports after school as a form or recreation.

## 2.0 BENEFITS OF GAMES AND SPORTS

Healthy mind can be found only in a healthy body. In a weak body there cannot be a healthy and active mind. Physical exercise is critical for a healthy body. Without physical exercise, our body will grow weak, lethargic and dull. Development of mind and body are equally important in any good education system. Good health and sound body are also a must to face the challenges of life. Therefore, games and sports are an integral part of school education. (Ishita,2009)

The survival and success of man depends on his mental and physical energy. All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental wellbeing and social interaction such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sports and games are geared toward a holistic development of an individual. (UNOSDP, 2014). According to History, only those nations that have excelled in sports have been able to gain supremacy over others. In order to gain supremacy over others, many nations of the world gave a lot of attention to games and sports. Sports and games provide opportunities of physical exercise and also enjoyment. It is very true that healthy people make a healthy nation and nobody can deny that, “Health is wealth”. Sports are popular among all classes of people because they influence a man physically, mentally as well as morally. In all kind of

sports, the muscles of the body are engaged and so the body is developed. During sports, all parts of the body are exercised and therefore the eyes become more focused, the ears become more alert, the brain is refreshed and becomes younger. The whole body is rejuvenated. As Hippocrates said, "sport is a preserver of health" (Michael, 2006). Games and sports have several advantages. They give us an opportunity to socialize and much more. For example, when people intend to play football, they do it in groups. This gives them team spirit and a chance to identify with each other very well and make friendships and relationships. Games and sports help the participants release their energy, reduce stress and learn skills that they need in life such as swimming.

Games and sports have several gains. First and foremost, sports are necessary in order to maintain good health, for enjoyment, and greatly contribute to a country's economy. Sports make people healthy and fit. According to several researches done, 70% of middle aged people who did not do sports in their youth are now struggling with the problems such as high blood pressure, trouble with blood circulation and easily become tired (studymode, 2013).

Sports are required for daily living. They provide an opportunity for different people from different nations to meet, learn from each other, create strong bonds and help in creating mutual understanding hence enhance global unity. Sports capture people's attention, unite and provide opportunities for enjoyment. Sometimes overwhelming life conditions may be unfair and make one unhappy. However, if there is a sport activity when one is unhappy, one can watch, laugh and end up being happy, motivated and refreshed. This should be the most important benefit of sports because many people do sports for this reason. Have you ever wondered why millions of people watch World Cup? While there might be several reasons, the most important one might be the excitement and enjoyment of sport. Football matches are exhilarating because they give the audience pleasure to watch.

The final but not least advantage of sports is that they are a huge market for a country's economy. The country's economy is boosted by sporting activities such as when there are sports and many people go to the stadiums to watch various activities, hence the country's economy is boosted. If one takes the football industry as an example there are more than a thousand professional teams and at least these teams have 25 players. If this is calculated, there are approximately 25000 players without working staff, scouts, coaches and managers. This should be the largest industry which employs many people. This leads to development of buildings which leads to expansion of towns and economies.

In the Kenyan context, games and sports fulfill some national goals of education of fostering unity and cultural heritage. Kenya being a multi-ethnic country, games and sports serve to unite the different ethnic communities as they meet during the sporting championships. It enhances togetherness and provides opportunities for different communities to identify together as one. Most importantly, games and sports have placed Kenya in the world map as many of its athletes have excelled in different international championships therefore earning a name and respect for Kenyans and Kenya as a country.

## **2.1 BENEFITS OF SPORTS TO LEARNERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

The term "participation" is defined by the World Health Organization as the nature and extent of a person's involvement in life situations and includes activities of self-care, mobility, socialization, education, recreation, and community life (World Health Organization, 2008.) Participation in activities is the context in which people form friendships, develop skills and competencies, express creativity, achieve mental and physical health, and determine meaning and purpose in life (WHO).

Children with disabilities tend to be more restricted in their participation than their peers, a gap that widens as children become adults. One way in which health care professionals can assist children with disabilities to participate fully in the lives of their families and communities is by promoting participation in sports, recreation, and physical activities in the least restrictive environment (Paediatrics.aappublication.org).

The primary goals for increasing physical activity in children with disabilities are to reverse reconditioning secondary to impaired mobility, optimize physical functioning and enhance overall well-being. Regular physical activity is essential for the maintenance of normal muscle strength, flexibility, joint structure and function and may slow the functional decline often associated with disabling conditions. Children with cerebral palsy (CP) are significantly weaker than age-matched controls and strengthening and weight-bearing programs are recommended. Moreover, female adolescents with CP have a lower self-concept than their counterparts without disability in the domains of physical appearance, social acceptance, athletic competence, and scholastic competence. Adequate levels of muscular strength and endurance are associated with increased bone mass, reduction in injury from falls, and a greater ability to complete activities of daily living. A strength-training program for young patients with CP demonstrated increased strength, improved mental well-being, and better overall function. Another example is that of children with Down syndrome; although they have less muscle strength than typical children, they show increased exercise endurance and work capacity after participation in a specialized aerobic training program. (Pediatrics 2008; 121; 1057)

The current epidemic of obesity associated with inactivity is a global health care concern for all children, including those with disabilities. Children with disabilities are more likely than other children to be sedentary, placing them at higher risk of obesity and associated health conditions. In fact, children with certain developmental disorders have higher prevalence's of being at risk of overweight and being overweight than do children without developmental disorders. Physical consequences of inactivity for persons with disabilities include reduced cardiovascular fitness, osteoporosis, and impaired circulation. In addition, the psychosocial implications of inactivity include decreased self-esteem, decreased social acceptance, and ultimately, greater dependence on others for daily living. Overall, the participation of children with disabilities in sports and physical activities can decrease complications of immobility. (Pediatrics 2008; 121; 1057)

Sports participation enhances the psychological well-being of children with disabilities through the provision of opportunities to form friendships, express creativity, develop a self-identity, and foster meaning and purpose in life. Special Olympics participants show heightened self-esteem, perceived physical competence, and peer acceptance when compared with nonparticipants. Parents of Special Olympians reported that their child's participation promoted social adjustment, life satisfaction, family support, and community involvement. Such events provide a much-needed venue for informal peer support and sharing of experiences among families of children with disabilities (Murphy, 2008). Mildly strenuous exercise has been shown to reduce stereotypic movements, maladaptive behaviors, and fatigue in children with disabilities.

### **3.0 BRIEF HISTORY ABOUT GAMES AND SPORTS IN KENYA.**

Like mentioned earlier, games and sports in Kenya form part and parcel of the school curriculum as provided for by the Basic Education Act Kenya 2013 and also in the 8;4;4 curriculum which is the Kenya's legally recognized education system( 8:4:4 Education system,1985) .Due to these legal provisions, Physical Education (PE) is therefore a compulsory subject in all schools in Kenya. It

should not only appear in the schools timetable but should also be taught by qualified teachers trained to teach the subject. Apart from Physical Education as a lesson which should be provided for in schools, all schools in Kenya should provide games and sports after school on specified days, at least twice in a week, to allow for other activities such as games and societies and Guidance and Counseling programmes. Games and sports provide for participation at school level and beyond i.e at zonal, sub-county, county, regional and national levels.

In Kenya, there are different Associations that organize the games and sporting activities at different levels. For example the primary schools sports are organized by the Kenya Primary Schools Sports Association (KPSPS), secondary schools sports are organized by the 'Kenya Secondary Schools Sports Association' (KSSSA), sports for learners with Special needs are organized by the 'Special Schools Sports Association of Kenya' (SSSAK).

### **3.1 BRIEF HISTORY ABOUT GAMES AND SPORTS FOR LEARNERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES IN KENYA.**

The games and sports are organized by a body by the name 'Kenya Schools for the Physically Handicapped Sports Association (KSPHSA). The Association came into being in 1995. It was formed by a few teachers from different schools who came together and felt that there was need to provide the learners with games and sports not only at school level but also beyond. The members organized themselves and formed the 'Kenya Schools for the Physically Handicapped sports Association' and took up the mandate of organizing the activities. The activities were organized not only at a national level but also at the grassroots starting from the districts, provinces and then nationals. The activities that the learners participated in included ball games (football, netball, volleyball), Athletics (wheelchair races, amputee races) and track events (throws such as javelin, discuss, short put). At that time, the activities did not have any sponsorship from the Ministry of Education Kenya and sorely depended on the goodwill of well-wishers. Due to the limitation in funding, only a few learners participated. Today, the same association organizes the sporting activities but under the umbrella body of 'Special Schools Sports Association of Kenya' (SSSAK) which organizes the games and sporting activities for students with disabilities at school level in Kenya which include learners with Physical disabilities, Hearing Impairment, Visual Impairments, Mentally Challenged, learners who are Deaf blind and learners with Autism (MOE,2005).Funding is catered for by the Government through the ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

The activities which take part in first term of the Kenyan school calendar mainly January – April start from the sub-county level, to the county, then to the region and culminate in the national games and sports which are held on a rotational basis at different regions. The Special Schools Sports Association of Kenya (SSSAK) came into being in 2005.This was through the initiative of the now retired former Director of Quality Assurance & Standards – Mr. Enos Oyaya who felt that it was important for the various disability disciplines to come together and hold their activities within the same time and at the same region. Prior to the birth of this Association, different disability disciplines used to organize their own games under their own Associations which are still in existence up to today like the Kenya Schools for the Physically Handicapped Sports Association(KSPHSA)

### **4.0 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GAMES AND SPORTS.**

Though the effort made to provide games and sports for learners with Physical Disabilities is appreciated, there are various barriers in this provision which therefore interfere with the standards of the games. They are as outlined below:

1. Lack of enough trainers and teachers to teach Adapted Physical Education. Most of the special schools in Kenya for students with Physical Disabilities and even integrated schools lack trained teachers to teach Adapted Physical Education hence P E as a subject is mainly not taught in schools. The lack of enough trained teachers is attributed to lack of enough trainers at the universities and colleges where the teachers go for 'teacher training'.
2. Lack of appropriate attention to P E as a subject and therefore to games and Sports. Most schools including the special schools for learners with Physical Disabilities' in Kenya do not place much value to Physical Education as a subject. The subject is hardly taught and instead, teachers prefer to use the time allocated for these subjects to teach other examinable subjects such as Mathematics or English.
3. Lack of adequate funds. The only source of funding for games and sports for learners with physical Disabilities is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Kenya (MOEST). The organizing sports association has on several occasions approached various organizations such as banks and parastatals for funding. This effort has never yielded any fruits and so the burden of funding these activities solely rests on MOEST which is not able to adequately fund due to its commitment to other educational programmes.
4. Inadequate games equipment's. Games equipment's for learners with physical disabilities are very expensive bearing in mind that sometimes they have to be tailor made to the specific need of the learner since the learners have diverse conditions. Such equipment include racing wheelchairs, basketball wheelchairs, sitting volleyball equipment to mention just but a few.
5. Inadequate facilities such as sports fields and stadiums. Most of the special schools for learners with Physical Disabilities do not have adequate and appropriate fields for learners to engage not only in P E but also in games and sports. Learners therefore lack enough exposure and practice to the games and sports activities. This is the same case that happens when there are national championships. Activities even at national levels are mainly done in school fields. Most school fields do not have ideal murram tracks and therefore learners with Physical Disabilities are unable to carry out the wheelchair races which are a very important sporting activity for these learners. Most of the stadiums in Kenya were designed with 'normal' learners in mind hence are not ideal for learners with physical Disabilities. When they are used, a lot of adaptations have to be done.
6. Inadequate support from the society. The society in general views learners with Physical Disabilities as disabled and in need of help rather than support. Usually when there are such activities, a lot of people sympathize with participants and see the sporting activities as a punishment to them. Most people are therefore not willing to support the activities and hold the feelings that it is waste of time and money.
7. Lack of goodwill from donors, sponsors and well-wishers. The Kenya Schools for the Physically Handicapped Sports Association has on several occasions solicited for support from willing donors, sponsors and well-wishers for many years and so far, no donor has been identified with these learners.
8. Lack of provision of opportunities beyond school level. The sporting activities for learners with Physical Disabilities mainly end at school level. There are no forums provided for regional meets such as East African games or beyond. Talent though identified does not go beyond primary or secondary school level yet we all know that a lot of people, including those with disabilities have made a career out of games and sports.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

The standards and quality of games and sports for learners with Physical Disabilities have been greatly compromised by the above concerns raised. Despite the efforts of the organizers of these sporting activities to provide quality games and sports for these learners, this remains a myth and is yet to be realized. It is important that this obligation is not only left to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Kenya but rather the whole Kenyan community should take it upon itself to ensure that equal opportunities are provided to all in all areas regardless of physical condition. Games and sports for these learners therefore largely remain more of participation than competition and therefore these learners can never go beyond their border as far as the sporting activities are concerned.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. MOEST should act to ensure that institutions of Basic Education comply with and implement the policy on P. E as provided for in the Basic Education Act 2013 and the Special Needs Education policy of 2010.
2. Special Needs Education SNE, and in particular Adapted Physical Education (APE) should be popularized and made compulsory for all students aspiring to be teachers in Teacher Training colleges and in universities.
3. MOEST in conjunction with schools Board of Managers should come up with strategies of soliciting for support from donor agencies and other partners in education in order to deal with the problem of inadequate funds towards games and sports for learners with Physical Disabilities.
4. MOEST should increase its funding for games and sports activities for learners with Special Needs and provide some basic necessary equipment such as racing wheelchairs and other games equipment.
5. The Government should rehabilitate and adapt all the sports stadiums in the country to make them user friendly for persons with Physical Disabilities.
6. The Government should build at least one 'special' sports stadium in each of the eight co-curricular activities geographical regions to cater for persons with disabilities in the spirit on equality and non discrimination as provided for in the Kenyan constitution.
7. The Association for the Physically Disabled people of Kenya (APDK) should support the games and sporting activities for learners with Physical Disabilities by enhancing advocacy activities for these learners and also helping compliment the Government in purchasing games equipments for these learners.
8. The Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Kenya Sports Council, the Paralympics Kenya and any other bodies dealing with sporting activities especially involving persons with disabilities should come out strongly to supports the games and sports for these learners at school level. The various games and sports committees should view themselves as complimentary bodies and not rivals.
9. Learners with Physical Disabilities who have talents in games and sports should be identified right at school level. Upon identification, arrangements should be made to nurture and develop the talents for future self gain and gain to the Kenyan Country as whole.

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