

AFRREV STECH

An International Journal of Science and Technology
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Vol.1 (3) August-December, 2012:134-141

ISSN 2225-8612 (Print)

ISSN 2227-5444 (Online)

Promoting Safety Environment for School Sports

Aluko, Kehinde, Ph.D

Institute of Education
University of Benin,
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the safety environment under which school sports programme is organized in Nigeria schools. The paper noted that poor environment under which PES is administered militated against smooth attainment of physical education and sports in schools. In this regard the paper explored how to overcome these shortcomings so as to promote safety. Essentially the area explored is in provision of facility and equipment and the role of sports personnel. These are major factors in promoting safety in school sports. It is also in this vein the strategy likely to promote sports safety were proffered.

Introduction

The school sports programme is expected to provide every child in the school system the necessary opportunity to participate in various types of games and acquire basic motor skills and values. It is also in this wise that it could be said that the state of sport facilities equipment provided in the sports programme has its influence on how well the objectives of the physical educations and sports (PES) can be achieved. The school sports programme or PES is organized as a tripod; as instructional, intramural and extramural programme (Ojeme, 2009). Notably though, with the exception of instructional phase, the intramural and extramural phases are movement oriented and operates on quantity and quality of sports infrastructure. Even at that, whatever the state of the sports infrastructure provided, the level of safety coupled with the instructional guideline available to the learner need to be assured. In other words what should be uppermost in the mind of the individual with regards to school sports is safety, a situation where risk and accidents in our sports environment is reduced to the barest minimum.

Ugwueze & Anyenwu (1998) have defined safety as a condition which provides a suitable arrangement for protecting participants against hazards. There is no gainsaying that whatever the strategy put in place during sports movement, accidents may and do occur. However, the severity may be minimized by proper planning and adopting safety measures in advance. Such proactive response strategies tend to reduce the level of injury sustained.

Recent findings have revealed that what seems prevalent by way of school sports facilities is grossly inadequate and at other time, substandard. According to, Aluko (2010), sports facilities and equipment are oftentimes poorly provided in the schools. While the safety of the few available is poorly maintained, the safety of the users is out rightly neglected. This was ably corroborated by Uchegbu (1993), when he observed that most secondary schools in Nigeria not only suffer from lack of necessary sports facilities, but also the provision of safety in their sports environment. This has created the obvious lapses for accidents and injuries. It is also in this regard that it becomes imperative to question the extent to which poorly maintained facilities and equipment can achieve school PES objectives. Specifically therefore, the crux in this paper is to explore ways to promote safety environment for school sports, and by implication, the facilities and equipment in our school sports programme.

Concept of safety in sports

The occurrence of accidents and injuries are almost inevitable in an environment where people move at a rapid pace especially when there is competition against themselves or others (Chen, Fang, Chien and Hou, 2003). In a situation of this nature, the health of the participants and productivity of the organisation are greatly affected. Particularly when the coping emergency design is not adequate, it is natural that hazards in school sports setting could create apathy and fear among parents and even the children. Oftentimes the lack of safety in sports could result in lack of interest and discourage mass participation to acquire sports skills. In the same vein, when the sports environment is safe, so much so that accidents and injuries are prevented and controlled, school sports will achieve the desired objective. In other words, the popularity in school sports lies in the extent of safety of the environment.

Specifically, Ugwueze and Ayanwu (1998), have defined safety as the prevention of accidents and the reduction of personal injury. In this regard Safety can also be seen as the freedom from danger, hazards and unnecessary risks. In the opinion of Chen, Fang, Chien and Hou, (2003), safety is the deliberate organisation of environment, man and materials to reduce or eliminate danger, injury and risks. Generally, risks are inevitable in the process of carrying on with most of life's endeavour, sports is one of such field. .

Significantly, the issue of safety in school sports actually centres on ensuring a safety environment. This is with regards to curtailing worthless risks with all that pertains to school sports. This entails the provision of emergency plans engaging the services of trained practical staff and above all, provision of standard sports materials. Even when sports facilities are in place, ensuring a maintenance culture is another avenue to the development of quality emergency procedure plan.

Provision of safety sports facilities and equipment

A typical school sports programme has specific aims and objectives that can best be achieved practically. In essence, school PES is mostly practical oriented. More importantly, it is only in a *stimulating environment* rich in sports facilities and equipment that the objectives of school PES can be attained. As Turner (1979), has rightly observed, the provision of safe teaching facilities is the responsibility of the school. Significantly, whatever

facilities are provided should reduce the risk that could come by way of legal and moral problems. It therefore behoves on schools to put in place preventive safety measures. .

Although many schools and sports practitioners recognizes the needs for safety in sports administration, and the need to accord it due priority, however, in actual practice many hints which are basic in safety practices like, instructional guidelines and standardized sports facilities and equipment are ignored. The issue of safety is further compounded by careless actions of staff. When internationally laid down policies and procedures in the administration of sports is ignored, the consequence to follow is no doubt accident and injury. This in the opinion of Ugwueze and Anyanwu (1998) is very common in the case of Nigeria, where facilities and equipment are inadequate and where available are substandard. Yet what is available is poorly managed. These inadequacies usually lead to the sports environment being unsafe and expose the participants to accident and injury.

Sports personnel and safety

The administration of PES should be left in the hands of educated and qualified sports personnel. Uduk (1992) observed that the quality of engaged staff will not only enhance standard, but will equally ensure that his wealth of training and professional preparation is brought to bear, by being sensitive proactive in envisaging potential danger even before it occurs. According to Akintunde (2001), many accidents and injuries witnessed in PES programme are avoidable if only trained sports personnel were in charge. In other words, the success of PES programme in terms of the realization of the objectives and to a large extent depends on the state of safety environment. Essentially too, no matter the extent of adequacy in terms of planned PES programme, facilities and equipment if there is lack in terms of safety, much may not be achieved as desired goal. Such are some of the prevalent pit-falls that oftentimes hinder the attainment of PES objectives.

As previously mentioned the risk of accident is real during sports participation. Such accidents could also lead to undesirable end. Such undesirable occurrence may not be completely eliminated even with the most qualified personnel, however, to a large extent can be ameliorated by professionalism and expertise, in the area of sports safety. Only a professional will see the need engage check on venue and facilities/equipment. In this regard Olatilewa (1993), has advised that sports practitioners should be conscious of appropriate guidelines in the practice of

sports as well as implement such guidelines. A good sports administrator is concerned about the welfare of his athletes, in this case, the learners who are basically neophyte and are still exploring and processing motor skills. This also implies that their movement and body manipulation if not properly guided may expose them to accident. Importantly too, Ojeme (2009), has noted that quality of the school games and mistress is quite crucial in effective skill acquisition in sports as well as in the control of accident and risks, for safety environment in PES.

Promoting safety in school physical education and sport (PES)

The PES programme is aimed at providing basic skills in sports activities in the school system. This can only be achieved when the enabling environment is created through safe facilities and equipment. It is worthy to identify areas of importance which need to be focused on requiring education and particular areas of potential accidents and what to do in order to promote safety.

The obstacle impeding safety in sports environment are numerous however there is the need to continuously plan and provide education for personnel (games masters and mistress) who manage these facilities. This is one way of correcting potentially dangerous situations. This should be treated as a priority and consistent practices will no doubts promote safety. It is in this context that the knowledge of the managing and administrative personnel of sports programme is crucial in preventing and controlling of accidents.

The state of facilities for a PES programme is essential. Foremost of all is the construction, design, of the various facilities. It should be appropriately situated to eliminate potential problems usually associated to PES. Further to this, adequate instruction at every station must be unambiguously spelt out with competent personnel to conduct the sports programme (Chen, Fang, Chen & Hou, 2003). Significantly, the various playing surface should be adequately maintained; such that potholes, and uneven surface riddled with dangerous objects are eliminated.

The provision of sporting equipments ought to be done within regulated standards with age of users as a major consideration. Intramural equipments provides allowances for improvisation, in the absence of standardized equipment, however, such equipment should be consistent with rules and regulations of the various governing bodies; of Soccer, Basketball, Tennis etc. While the few available equipment in the schools if any, should be

regularly polished, maintained and stored to ensure they are in good condition.

There is no gainsaying that the potential for accident in sports arena is very common. On this, Ugwueze and Anyanwu (1998) have noted that whatever the effort at preventing and controlling accidents, the danger is still very much there for sports injury. This has made the availability of first- aid and emergency care imperative in sporting arena. It is equally important to ensure that student's health records are properly kept. This is in addition to records of accidents previously recorded in sports arena. Such documentation helps to note where particular accidents are prevalent.

Finally, there is need for regular risk management workshop for sports personnel and students. This keeps them informed of possible sports risk and accident. They are also educated on rules and regulations guiding the practice of each sports and possible protective gadgets that could be used. It is in this bid to improve school sport practice as well as promote safety sports that Chen, Fan, Chen & Hou (2003), have provided possible guidelines that may help to improve safe environment in the school PES programme. They have noted that the following may also be helpful when adopted in the organisation and administration of school PES.

- i. School to engage professional sports personnel
- ii. Trained personnel to handle sports facility/equipment.
- iii. Organisation of sports to be handled by trained personnel
- iv. Running and practice of sports should be in accordance with relevant laws, regulations and standard
- v. Adequate instruction at every facility for safety and maintenance
- vi. Personnel should have capacity to deal with potential danger
- vii. Clear user instruction for equipment facility
- viii. Engaging trained personnel
- ix. Daily periodic inspection observation to be documents
- x. Medical history of students should be documented
- xi. Provision of first aid kits

- xii. Organize risk management workshop for staff and students
- xiii. Emergency first aid back up to be provided.

Conclusion

Finally, the present status of safety environment for school sports in Nigeria cannot be adequate. Although much may have been done to improve school sports participation, same may not be said on the improvement of safety environment. Accidents and sports injury is a common feature on our sports ground. This most times stem from poor facility and equipment and instruction. This has resulted in a negative disposition toward school sports especially amongst most parents and guardians.

It is in this context that this paper seeks a revisit to promoting safety environment in school sports.

Reference

- Aluko, K. (2010). Benchmark Assessment of School Sports Programme in Secondary Schools in Edo State. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis University of Benin.
- Akintunde, P. G (2001). Administration and Organisation of Physical and Health Education, Sport and Recreation. Ibadan: Yew Printers.
- Chen, Y. C. Fang, H. M. Chen, C. C., Chien, J & Hou, F. H. (2003). *Improvement of the safe environment of America University Indoors Sports Facility*. DAEGU: Universiade conference, facing the Challenges Korea 651 -654.
- Ojeme, E.O. (2009). Enforcing the Three Dimensions of School Sports. *The Nation Newspaper* 30/8/2009. Lagos: Vintage Press Ltd.
- Olatilewa, I. (1993). Health and Safety in Secondary School Sports: The Concern Challenges. *Nigerian Journal of Health Education*. 2 (1).
- Patton, R. W., Corry, J. M., Gettman, L. R., & Graf, J. S. (1989). Implementing Health Fitness Programmes. Champion II Human Kinetics.
- Turner, C. L. (1979). Turner's Personal Community Health,; St Louis: The C. V. Mosby Co.

- Uduk, I. E. (1992). Organising A Competency Based Intramural Programme in *Secondary School Manual of Nigeria Academy of Sports Administration (1)* 45 – 49.
- Uchegbu, N. J. (1993). Athletic Injuries: A Conceptual Framework for Safety Education in Sports Industry. *Nigeria Journal of Health Education 2* (1) 149- 158.
- Ugwueze, F. C. & Anyanwu, S. U. (1998). Safety Provisions in Secondary School Reporting in Nigeria. *JONADHERSD-* 67 -77.