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The indispensable role of physical education and sports in ensuring sustainable democracy in Nigeria

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A B S T R A C T

This paper examined how a developing country like Nigeria can achieve sustainable democracy through physical education and sports. The paper began by discussing the concepts of physical education and sports- including the objective of physical education and sports, it highlighted on the role of physical education and sports in ensuring sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The paper also advanced some pitfalls in the sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Finally, efforts were made to recommend a few things that would foster the roles of physical education and sports in enduring sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

Introduction

Education is a process devised by society for its own perpetual and continuity. It is the most important catalyst to all socio-economic and political development. Nigeria, since her independence in October 1, 1960, has /w other national problems disturbing the nation and her leaders so much other than the national unity and sustainable democracy. According to deters (1981) in Eze (2004) education is the transmission of what is worthwhile to individuals to make them knowledgeable and contributing members of the society. Physical education itself from earliest time has played an important part in man's life. The knowledge of physical education and sports is indispensable /or the constructive

use of our bodies. The valuable role of the two in the development of a nation cannot be over-emphasized. Physical education and Sport have served various purposes for different nations at different times as it concerns Nation Building and sustainable Democracy. Sports is a very pervasive phenomenon, and therefore, a very effective means whereby any government can both reach the hearts of the citizens as well as project itself outside.

Concepts of Physical Education and Sports

Voltmier and Esslinger (1974) defined physical education as the process by which

changes in individual are made possible through the movement experiences.

Bucher (1979) saw physical education as the process of education that concerns activities, which develop and maintain the human body. Physical education according to Eze (2002) is an integral part of general education which aims at complete development of an individual physically, socially, morally and perhaps intellectually, hence sustainable democracy cannot take place without the above outcomes.

Physical education is that phase of education achieved through selected human activities (Onah, 2004). Physical education cuts across many allied areas of studies such as Biomechanical, Kinesiology, Anatomy and Physiology and therefore has a wide application than as may be ignorantly regarded by the society. Sports according to the Roundhouse Dictionary (1967) are athletic activities requiring skills of physical powers and often of a competitive nature.

Edward (1973) defines sports as activities having recorded history and tradition which stress physical exhaustion through competition, within the limit of predetermined rules and regulations and earned out by individuals who represent organised groups who want to win honour and glory by defeating the opponents.

He also reported that sports are mirrors of a society because they mirror or show the fundamental values of any given society.

In Nigeria today, even the most myopic observers is aware that competitive sports have been connected with the social turbulence of our time and has become a part and parcel of political and economic struggles. Sports are being taken as fun and recreation or as play (Eze, 2002).

Objectives of physical education and sports

The language of physical education and sports is "movement" and it is through this language that the four aims and objectives of physical education and sports can be attained; these include as outlined by Ackland (1981) in Fze (2004):

- (a) Physical development.
- (b) Mental development
- (c) Emotional development and
- (d) Social development. The physical development is concerned with the:
 - (i) Growth and development;
 - (ii) Competence in body management;
 - (iii) Physical skills and body mechanics;
 - (iv) Safety skills and attitudes.

The outcome of the mental, emotional and social development is the experience in accepting the defeat and victory in wholesome manner. In other words, through meaningful programme of physical education and sports, an individual cum the society have fine opportunities and avenue to develop socially and emotionally.

Sustainable Democracy

In the first place, democracy is said to be government of the people by the people and for the people. Democracy may mean a game of politics that guarantees freedom of expression by all. It equally guarantees association of like-minds. Then, sustainable democracy represents change, which connotes "progress" and hence contributes to the upliftment of the quality of human life through governance. Therefore, a developing nation like Nigeria can utilize physical education and sports to achieve a sustainable democracy.

The Role of Physical Education and Sports in Ensuring Sustainable Democracy

The following roles need to be emphasized:

1. Physical education contributes to an inquiring mind. An inquiring mind is essential to an individual, for the motor mechanism of the individual enables him to explore to cruise, and to see his environment.
2. Physical education contributes to democratic living. The physical educated citizen believes in the democratic way of life and his every action is symbolic of his loyalty to its ideals. It has the tools with which to create a truly democratic society.
3. Physical education contributes to the knowledge of health and disease. To a great degree, a sustainable democracy is dependent upon the health of the citizens. The citizens' state of health, physical fitness will determine to a great extent whether or not they succeed in realizing their potentialities.
4. Physical education contributes also to skill as a participant and spectator in sports. Physical education and sporting activities are important parts of our culture, thereby enhancing a sustainable democracy
5. The acclaimed roles of sports in the society bothered around physical fitness development, development of character, mental, social and psychological development.

Other four broad roles of sports include:

6. Integration mechanism - Sports have become one of the ways in which an individual achieves patriotism, nationalism which may eventually lead to internationalism, and world peace, hence a sustainable democracy is ensured.

7. Goal Attainment - Sports serve certain specific groups and some individual benefits. Sports teach courage, patience, fortitude, determination and perseverance.
8. Pattern Maintenance - This means that sports try to perpetuate the status quo of any given society. In other words, sports try to maintain the culture of the society it exists in. This is true to the extent that the sports field has become a place of indoctrinating the youths with the ideal of the society. Politics have very much influence on determining the nature of structure and organisation of sports in a given society. Therefore, any attack that is being made on sports is attack on the society itself.
9. Tension Management - There is a general belief that sports release emotional tension, let off the steams or that sports develop the spirit of give-and take, via sustainable democracy.
10. Sports are education and teach more things such as fitness to face life situations, leadership, harmony and peace among the participants and spectators. And also in Okay and Okay (2005) sports play the role of providing a powerful force for control of violence and have actually been used in the past either consciously or unconsciously.

Pitfalls in the Sustainable democracy in Nigeria

The sustainable democracy in Nigeria are like sea waves, they rise and fall. It had many problems to contend with which include:

1. The delay of Nigerian government to recognize fully physical education and sports as noble profession, According to Amuchic (2005) up to date Nigerian Educational Administrators still look at the subject and those operating it with

- disdain and suspicion.
2. The government's failure to always sponsor the operations of Nigerian Association of Physical, Health Education and Recreation. Spoils and Dance (NAPHER, SD) such operations as holding of regular meetings, annual conference, workshops and publications which tutor the Nigerians on sustainable democracy.
 3. Failure to play decent politics by Nigerians. To say the least, in a country where leadership has always belonged to those who have the wherewithal to take it by hook or crook, where it does not matter whoever it voted into power, where whoever would be the leader has been decided long before any election. (Okcy, 2003). This tells much about what is in store for Nigerians in a democracy without choice where a group of people will sit down and decide what must be.
 4. Our leaders' failure repeatedly to learn lessons from history. This is as a result of greed for material wealth and lust for power.
 5. Bid to rule for second term syndrome. The Nigerian leaders' bid to rule for second term or to rule for life has made the sustainable democracy in Nigeria virtually impossible.
 6. Refusal of the Nigerian army and ex-army to leave politics in Nigeria is a big problem for sustainable democracy. This set of men since they tested power has refused to leave politics for those who are trained to rule.

Recommendations

If physical education and sports are to play any role in nation's sustainable democracy, serve as a factory in producing sports men and women, then their footing must be strong, especially in our primary and

secondary schools. All hands must be on deck to put in all resources at our disposal in order to realize fully the prospects and goals of physical education and sports. The following could contribute to reach our goals.

J. There is *the need to examine how the factors which normally influence curriculum*, has influenced the education of the primary and secondary school physical education students and teachers.

.2, The federal and state governments should make physical education and sports compulsory at the pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. This, if done, would enable them acquire the traits needed for sustainable democracy in the country.

3. There is the need to train enough physical education and sports teachers who can or have the capacity to generate ideas, to forecast the future, interpret the ever-changing society needs. However, this can only be developed through the qualitative training of teachers.

4. There should be need to developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education, a strong commitment to sustainable democracy

Conclusion

Physical education and sports play vital roles in the provision of the skills and knowledge valuable in day-to-day living, continuing education for youths and adults and sports as a unifying factor.

In the schools, the physical education and sports programmes provide unmistakable, ample and excellent opportunities for all students to share and train for leadership.

In all physical education classes from kindergarten to university, the teacher must

rotate ample opportunities for the children to share leadership. The rationale behind this is that no one knows who is a good leader until he is given a chance to lead his group as a captain or squad or team leader (Amuchie, 2005). It is a known fact that during P.E. and Sports classes all children are trained to be both good leaders and followers since both are reciprocal. A leader within each group must be democratically elected by his or her followers, hence sustainable democracy is inculcated right from childhood and that becomes part of life of every Nigerian.

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