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## Contents

Acknowledgement	iv
Editorial	v
<b>Part One: Addresses to the Conference</b>	
<b>1 Presidential Address</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Dr. E. O. Morakinyo,</i>	
<i>Department of Physical and Health Education</i>	
<i>University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria</i>	
<b>2 Welcome Address</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Professor Omoniyi Adewoye</i>	
<i>Vice Chancellor, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria</i>	
<b>Part Two: Lead Papers</b>	
<b>3 Teaching Physical and Health Education in Schools: Problems and Prospects</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Professor J. A. Oyewusi</i>	
<b>4 The Tragedy of Health Education as Teaching Subject in Nigeria Schools.</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Professor C. O. Udoh</i>	
<b>5 The Teaching of Physical and Health Education in Oyo State Schools: Problems and Prospects.</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Dr Yomi Awosika</i>	
<b>Part Three: Exercise Physiology Based Papers</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6 Enhancing Students Physical Fitness through Physical and Health Education</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>- Dele Ladipo</i>	
	<b>30</b>

7	Motor Development in Nigerian Nursery/Primary Schools, Physical Education to the Rescue – A. O. Abass	36
8	Enhancing Students Physical Fitness Through Physical and Health Education Teaching – S. O. Ayeni	42
<b>Part Four: Health Education Based Papers</b>		47
9	Teaching Health Education Effectively in Schools – O. A. Moronkola	48
10	Selecting Methods and Materials for the Teaching of Health Education in Oyo State Schools – B. O. Ogundele	56
11	Psycho-Social Therapy in the Management of Obesity – T. A. Olarenwaju	64
12	The Problems and Prospects of Teaching Health Education – P. U. Ademiju	71
13	An Evaluation Approaches/methods in Teaching Health Education Part I – C. O. Olokor	78
14	Environmental Health: A Basic Requirement for Good Living – A. A. Ayeni	84

- 15 If Cigarette Smoking is Dangerous to Health  
How can the Addicted Youths be helped out of  
the "Hook"?  
– *Olatilewa Layi* 92
- 16 The Role of Health Education in Promoting  
Safety in Nigerian Industries  
– *O. U. Udoh* 100
- Part Five: Physical Education Based Papers** 108
- \*17 Improvisation: Solution to the Dearth of Sports  
Equipment in Schools and Colleges  
– *P. O. Okpaku* 109
- \*18 Functional Planning of Sports Faculties  
Advocating for Multiple Use  
– *E. O. Oloyede* 115
- 19 Effective Guidelines for Utilizing Resource  
People in Physical and Health Education Teaching-  
Learning Situation  
– *T. A. Olaiya and B. S. Adebayo* 122
- 20 The Values of Physical Education and Sports  
in Schools  
– *T. T. Omnaboka* 127
- 21 Trends in Assessment Developmental and  
Challenges in Teaching Physical Education  
– *K. O. Omolawon* 135

- 22 Utilization of Adequacy Theory in the Provision and Management of Faculties in Sports and Physical Education  
 – *F. O. Ibikunle* 140
- 23 Determinants of Choice of Career Among Physical Education Majors of Two Nigerian Universities  
 – *Mrs Mopelola Akin-Taylor* 145
- 24 Utilization of Counselling Services in Selected Sports in Borno  
 – *Okopi, F. Stephen, H. and Amina, K.* 151
- Part Six: Psycho-Social Based Papers** 155
- 25 Awareness and Preparedness of Senior Secondary School Examination in Physical Education in Odeda Local Government  
 – *Ben Edegbai* 156
- 26 Retro-Active Inhibition in Players Performance of Badminton and Tennis Skills  
 – *M. A. Ajayi and Fadoju, A. O.* 165
- 27 Motivational Factors Available to Physical Education Teachers in Public Secondary Schools As Issue in Job Satisfaction  
 – *O. S. A. Ikhioya* 170
- 28 Analysis of Selected Physical Educators Opinion on Identified Job Related Motivation Factors  
 – *O. O. Omotayo* 182



29	Effects of Leisure Time Activities on Cognitive and Affective Domains of the Visually Impaired Persons	190
	– <i>J. O. Olukotun</i>	
	<b>Part VII - Sports Law Based Papers</b>	198
30	Tort Liability and The Control of Risk Factors in Physical Education	
	– <i>G. O. Opatola</i>	199
31	Liability of Physical Education Teachers in Oyo State Schools for Negligence	
	– <i>E. O. Morakinyo</i>	206
	<b>Part VIII – Recreation Based Papers</b>	212
<del>32</del>	Selected Factors Influencing Students Participation in Recreation and Physical Fitness Programme in Tai Solarin College of Education, Ogun State	
	– <i>O. O. Odedeyi</i>	213
33	Computer Mediated Communication Instructions: A Panacea for Students ‘At Risk’	
	– <i>Olusegun O. Fajola</i>	221
	Communique Given at the End of the Meeting	232
	Guidelines for Submission of Articles for OYO-JONAPHER	233

# Enhancing Students' Physical Fitness Through Physical and Health Education Teaching

By

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## Abstract

*This paper critically examines the ways by which students' physical fitness can be enhanced through the teaching of physical and health Education. A student of physical and health Education should be physically fit if the objectives of the subject were to be met. The paper emphasizes that there is need to develop both the health related physical fitness components and performance-related physical fitness components of students through chalkboard classroom teaching, practical teaching of various games and sports and during training for school sports. The benefit of physical fitness is not limited to an individual but it is also an index to any Country's National posture. The vigour of any Country is no stronger than the vitality and will of her Country men.*

## Introduction

One of the sub topics to be thought in physical Education as a subject is physical fitness, likewise among the objectives of Health Education is to produce a physically fit citizen (Nat. Curri. 1985). Physical fitness is an important phase of Physical Education as well as just a phase of total fitness.

Formal education in Nigeria during the Colonial era recognised the importance of Physical Education as an integral part of the total education process. Thus in the first Physical Education syllabus of 1933 (Gen. Pub. 1957) emphasis was placed on physical Training (P. T.). Latter the heads of institutions as well as government supervisors realised the educational benefits that can be derived through organised physical Education programme for both the young and old in our schools. This ideal created the impetus that brought physical Education to focus during the 1969 National Educational Conference (Ojerinde & Falayajo 1984) where the idea of the new national policy on education was invited. It was agreed at that Conference that

Physical Education should be given its rightful place in the scheme of things at all levels of our educational systems and it was boldly emphasised in the New National Policy on Education. However, in enhancing student's Physical fitness, physical and Health Education should be thought and practiced because of the many components of physical fitness.

### **Paths to Physical Fitness**

Bucher (1975) outlined paths that lead to physical fitness as prescribed by the American Medical Association. They are:- proper medical care, nutrition, exercise, satisfactory work, health play and recreation, rest and relaxation.

*Medical Care:* To be physically fit requires medical examinations, immunization against communicable disease and prompt treatment by qualified medical personnel Treatment of dental carries and proper mastication.

*Nutrition:* "You are what you eat" is a common saying. What you eat has much meaning in regard to physical fitness. The right type of food should be eaten in the right amount and at the right time.

*Exercises:-* The main thing that can bring about a sound body is physical exercise. Whatever be the age there is need for various sorts of simple activities.

*Healthy Play and Recreation:-* To achieve physical fitness there is need for play and recreation in an atmosphere devoid acrimony and fair but has its by-products as fun, companionship and happy thoughts.

*Rest and Relaxation:-* After a successful day's work, there is need to rest all the body organs which had been working continually during the various activities that we perform. After this resting period the body will be physically fit again to engage any new work to be done.

*Physical Fitness:-* Udoh (1982) asserted that physical fitness in its simplest form can be defined as "The individuals ability to endure exertion and stressful physical activity beyond that required by his/her normal day to day occupation. Therefor a physically fit person is one who can efficiently handle his or her daily tasks without undue fatigue so as to have energy for family hobbies any leisure time activities and a physical reserve in case of emergencies.

The two broad areas of physical fitness components should be worked towards during our teaching of physical and Health Education. The health-related physical fitness components which are needed for survival regardless of a persons's sex or age. This will enable them to function optimally during their class work and they will still have ample energy for play.

Hence our teaching of Physical and Health Education should tend towards the above stated conditions of physical posture, physique, body weight proper functioning of vital organs, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, body control and cardiovascular endurance (Circulorespiratory health) condition of the heart, Lungs and blood vessels.

From the time immemorial the ultimate objective of Physical Education is to achieve survival. Likewise in the time of primitive people, in order to survive in the hostile environment in which they lived they maintain an optimal state of physical fitness, though not well organised but they kept their body fit and alert.

Bucher (1975) pointed out that Chinese people included in their education the art of "Kung-fu" martial arts as far back as 2698 B. C. When they realised that inactivity is causing them diseases. Also spartan education contained physical fitness programme as a means of building a strong and powerful armies, and as a means of the survival of their Kingdoms. Women were not excepted, they were expected to be fit so that they could give birth to strong sons who would be able to defend their nation against external invasion.

Every country today is aware of the importance of physical fitness and is constantly being given added impetus by various institutions. Armed forces have started to lay off Military men who are weak and indolent. This indicated that physical fitness is an index to any Country's National posture hence the need for an effective administration of physical fitness programmes in our schools and colleges.

### **Enhancing Physical fitness Through the Teaching of Physical and Health Education**

Teaching of Physical Education is expected to be both through chalkboard classroom work and that of practical demonstration on the field of play. During the classroom work students should be made to understand the concept of physical fitness, components of physical fitness and how to test for these components. The field work should be well planned for from the warm-up period, which should include activities that will help the body of the students to work towards achieving the expected physical fitness level. For endurance, stamina or cardiorespiratory fitness activities can range from

- (i) Jogging
- (ii) Filling the basket
- (iii) harvardstep

power activities can include sargent jump, standing broad jump, 50 meter dash, squat jump, frog jump.

*For speed:* 200m and 100m dash can be included.

Strength can include:- pull up and pres up.

*For Agility:* Shuttle run, fill-in-the basket can be included. While coordination should include activities involving throwing and catching with hands or kicking and trapping with legs.

The main skill teaching can still assist in achieving any of these above mentioned components during the teaching of athletics, gymnastics and swimming.

The warming-down period (or depletive) can include stretching activities which will help in flexibility of the body activities such as:-

- (i) Back stretch
- (ii) Hamstring stretch
- (iii) Groin Stretch
- (iv) Abdominal stretch
- (v) Hip stretch.

The above physical activities though were grouped under performance related component headings. It does not mean that performance related fitness can be achieved with mere classroom teaching but the foundation can be laid to be build upon when preparing for competition.

After the lesson, rules of health must be maintained which should include

- (i) Proper body cleanliness
- (ii) adequate rest
- (iii) good diet to compensate for all that have been exhausted during the practical class.

There is a clear relationship between fitness and health and welfare of individuals. If students are allowed free movement education; to run, jump and move about freely they will possess little or no health problem and they will be able to develop certain aspects of their physical fitness. Unlike their contemporary that was not given the opportunity who live sedentary life and less mobile they will be unhealthy and have serious health problems because they lack the essential components of physical fitness development. Upon all, their future physical fitness level at adulthood depend on what they gain at school level. The performance related physical fitness components are important too as they are expected to take part in some competitive sports from Inter House Sport Competition to Inter School (Unit) competition, Zonal Competition to State Competition and national Competition of School age under Nigerian School Sports Federation. The training season to prepare for competition can be divided into four:

- Pre-season
- Early season
- Mid season and

– Late season

The pre-season should include activities like:

- (i) Fatlek training
- (ii) Interval training
- (iii) Circuit training

The above pre-season training programmes are mainly to develop muscular endurance, muscular strength, circulo-respiratory endurance and flexibility. That is pre-season training period should be devoted to Health-Related Components.

While during the remaining three seasons performance related fitness should be focused on. Despite this, the earlier health-related components that had been developed shall continued to be improved upon. Performance-related physical fitness components though do not directly affect the health of a person but will help the student as an athlete to perform in his chosen sport. Hence he must first of all develop the health-related components and in addition, he will need to develop any of those performance-related fitness components that are necessary in the performance of his event. Even there is an assurance that as the student is training towards the competition the body will be developing on the two component areas.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to provide guidelines for enhancing students' Physical fitness throughout Physical and Health Education Teaching. The focus was on three areas:

1. Chalkboard classroom teaching where the concept of physical fitness should be explain to the students
2. Developing physical fitness of students during practical class on the field in teaching of various games and Sports and
3. Enhancing the development of students' physical fitness during training towards schools' Sports Competition.

It was also noted in this paper that both the Health-related physical fitness components and performance-related physical fitness components should be developed to enable the students to live fit and perform most now and when they grow into adulthood. If students were nurtured from youth to develop high level of physical fitness they will be able to contribute maximally to the economy of our great Country.

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