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APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND EXTRACURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

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Many of you here today are, I know, involved partly or fully in the education and training of students at various levels. I know too that many of you are distinguished authors, scholars and writers in the field of education at various levels. I am, therefore, particularly pleased to be invited to join you at this conference and to speak to you on the subject of

"Appropriate Physical Education and extracurricular activities in schools, Colleges and Universities."

I have a particular responsibility for this area within the University of Malaya and Ministry of Education. In recent years I have directed a number of ventures in cooperation with the professional associations for physical education including your own, in an endeavour to establish the basis of a rationale for course design with regard to initial training in our subject.

During recent years I have made visits to England, Europe and to a number of schools and colleges in our country about three-quarters of which are significant suppliers for our subject of physical education and sports. These visits have been of great interest and professional value to me.

Let me start with my own experience derived from visits to the various schools, Colleges and Universities in our country.

THE PLACE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS IN SCHOOLS

Physical Education and sports in schools in Malaysia is structured and organized at various levels. The pattern of organized activities moves from a general compulsory level which caters from the mass to a specialized level which concentrates on nurturing the particularly gifted individual.

Firstly, there is the physical education programme which is integrated into the formal school curriculum. This is Physical Education proper where a class period is set aside for all students in the school. This level aims to help the mass develop a wide variety of physical activities.

Secondly, there is the extra-curricular sports activities programme which is organized at variance with schools. This programme may consist of games clubs or junior and senior house teams. Student membership may not be compulsory. Interested individuals take the initiative to join in these activities. This programme thus caters for the interested individuals who may or may not be exceptional in a particular physical activity.

Thirdly, there is a programme concentrated on the special ability groups. These consist of budding sportsmen and women whose potential need to be discovered and groomed. The Malaysian Schools Sports Council organises

a number of sports competitions during each school term. The students with exceptional abilities have opportunities to participate at these sports tournaments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In recent years modernisation, from an agricultural, rural-based society to an urban, more individualised one with improved communication and transportation and a marked population increase has thrust the trend of education toward the centralization of primary schools. These developments have influenced the role of P.E. at primary school level. For children in the early years of schooling, physical education has an important part to play not only in its contribution to physical development and bodily awareness, but also in the opportunities which it provides for the reinforcement of basic concepts through movement. Young children will have opportunities to learn more about themselves and the space around them and their co-ordination are developed by the movement tasks which include the handling of both large and small apparatus.

The intended programme in physical education includes all aspects of movement and this will provide the basis from which the gymnastics, dance, swimming, games skills and athletics of the middle years can be developed. The method used in each of these activities in the early years involves the setting of tasks which enable each pupil to develop at his own pace and within his own ability. The experimental stage during which the children are discovering possible solutions to the tasks set would always be followed by selection and repetition to develop real skill and quality of movement. It is therefore important that the work should be carefully structured with clear progression. The skilful teacher should observe, assess and praise effort and individual improvement at all levels and, by providing opportunities for demonstration and observation, will help pupils to appreciate the work of others.

There is still considerable disagreement about the appropriateness of major games for all children below the age of twelve years although most experts agree that during curriculum time the aim is to develop games skills for all to the highest possible level. Development proceeds from the very early years, when efforts are made to give children the opportunity to handle and to use a wide variety of balls and bats in guided play, through the stages of skill development working individually, in pairs, and in small competitive situations to reach the enjoyment of suitably modified versions of major games by the age of twelve. During the normal school day, the aim is to provide a programme of physical education taught by methods which will make appropriate demands on each child and contribute to his total education, but these methods make great demands upon the teacher.

Most states in Malaysia have been reticent about pressing for improved physical education programmes in primary schools because of inadequate staff. Across the country the typical primary school teacher has only a general training, with little physical education, and the overwhelming proportion of teachers at the primary level are women.

There are benefits when a class teacher is responsible for the total education of the child, but these teachers need much in-service help to enable them to develop confidence and to gain the knowledge required to challenge and extend the children in their classes. There is often more initiation than development and difficulty is experienced in observation, assessment, progression and development of standards.

Primary physical education has been caught in a vicious cycle that recently has shown signs of being interrupted. At the bottom of the cycle has been a lack of professionally qualified personnel and lack of support from headteachers, district and state education departments..

Facilities for physical education at this stage are largely variable. In small village schools there are fairly satisfactory playing fields outside. In urban situations the indoor gymnasium is more suitable for physical activities but very few schools are equipped with appropriate climbing apparatus and generally the playgrounds are small and grass areas, non-existent. These variable facilities cause problems since the curriculum has to be adapted to meet the particular conditions.

LOWER AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Secondary school physical education has improved steadily in the past fifteen years with progress due largely to the professional leadership and preparation offered by teacher education programmes. Teachers with supplementary and major training in physical education are assigned to this level, though a number of schools are still short of physical education majors. Thus the class teacher who has had basic background in physical education is assigned to teach this subject. These non-specialist physical education teachers are generally not in the position to undertake physical education classes, as the courses in their teacher education curriculum did not offer a wide spectrum of physical education activities. Whatever activities in which they have been trained may prove insufficient or unsuitable to the pupils' needs and interests.

The physical education subject committee of the Ministry of Education has organized a number of workshops and seminars for physical education teachers in secondary schools.

The findings have yielded certain objectives which have been given importance by the teachers involved in physical education. They are as follows:

- (1) To attain proper physical growth and development and hence ensure physical fitness.
- (2) To establish certain basic skills in sports and games and hence, encourage sports participation.
- (3) To provide situations and opportunities (through sports participation) whereby personality and social development is nurtured.

Among the girls, an emphasis on "movement" has been introduced.

Frequently referred to as "fundamental movement" or "movement education" the aim is to teach the correct and proper use of the body. This term includes the basic movements, through to creative dances. Gymnastics also forms an integral part of the programme and basic agility provides the foundation that progresses to vaulting and apparatus work. Malaysian folk and cultural dancing, as well as the individual and team games of basketball, volleyball, softball, soccer, hockey, badminton and track and field are to be provided in the curriculum. Where possible, swimming is included in the programme. However, very few schools have swimming facilities.

CARRY OVER ACTIVITIES

Increased emphasis on the problems of leisure has increased the emphasis on carry over activities. Activities such as boxing, conditioning, wrestling, outdoor education, squash, tennis, golf, archery and fencing add variety to the school programme. In certain schools, where facilities, equipment and personnel permit, emphasis is placed on such sports as well.

The time allotment for physical education in the secondary and primary curriculum is scheduled with a minimum of 90 minutes for the former and 60 minutes for the latter on a per week basis, but this is not always indicative of what actually exists. Local conditions, such as lack of physical education teachers, lack of facilities, overcrowded schools, or school administrators who are unwilling to overcome these difficulties, frequently result in a situation where the actual opportunities for physical education fall below the Ministry's recommendations. The larger, well-equipped schools adhere most closely to the recommendation, whereas the smaller schools tend to deviate.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The general philosophy in Malaysian schools emphasize sports for all but this has not been practised widely as yet. Thus the curriculum programme in physical education is of paramount importance, followed by the extra-curricular and finally by the interschool programme.

EXTRACURRICULAR SCHOOL PROGRAMME

The extracurricular school programmes are coordinated in line with curriculum programme. In the extracurricular sessions the pupil may select an activity, which he or she is particularly interested. If he or she has acquired sufficient skills, it may enable him to practice the chosen physical activity within the school. This activity is generally carried out during the pupil's leisure time.

In urban areas, for example, certain off-site specialist facilities are made available for pupils from secondary schools and the activities offered at this stage may include a selection from those already discussed plus judo, silat, fencing, archery, sailing, canoeing, orienteering and a number of other activities.

INTERSCHOOL SPORTS

Interschool sport provides for those who excel in specific sports and this can hopefully contribute as a medium for developing esprit de corps in a school. The team sports common to interschool competition are hockey, football, basketball, cross-country, track and field, wrestling, netball, volleyball, and soccer. When schools have the necessary facilities, a swimming competition may be organized. Again, location and population are factors; urban centers naturally provide the means for competition that is frequently not available in rural areas. Student bus transportation creates problems in rural areas as well.

MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS' SPORTS COUNCIL - INTER-STATE SPORTS ACTIVITIES

All the thirteen states in the country have divisions of the department of physical education and sports and their sports activities are governed by the Malaysian Schools' Sports Council. The council has made progress in organizing inter-district and state level competitions for the superior athletes. Various age groups are involved in such competitions. The council has realized that such competitions for a wider variety of sports activities are essential to cater for the personality and social characteristics of the athletes. Such competitions are valid and essential in the Malaysian milieu. In order to integrate the multi-ethnic cultural composition of the younger population, sports activities on the playing field and outside will inculcate an atmosphere of friendliness which permits not only respect and consideration for all but also for one's self-fulfillment and for enriching individual and group relationships.

TEACHER EDUCATION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION - COLLEGE LEVEL

The organisation of teacher training has seen some significant change with regard to physical education. In the 60's the Ministry of Education designated certain colleges to organize supplementary courses in physical education in their two year teacher training programme and a one year specialist course in physical education at the Specialist Teachers' Training Institute for qualified teachers. Presently, a three year teacher training course has been introduced. Students study two main subjects (physical education with English, etc). The students who are enrolled in these colleges have completed eleven years of schooling.

At the Specialist Teachers' Training Institute the preparation of physical education Specialist teachers in to cater for:

- (i) teaching at secondary schools.
- (ii) serving as physical education organisers with the state education office.
- (iii) serving as lecturers with the Malaysian Teachers' Colleges.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS AT THE UNIVERSITIES

Physical education basic instruction or service programmes are limited in all the five universities in Malaysia. Three rather important issues directly affect these programmes. The first is the traditional, essentialistic philosophy of higher education found in Malaysia; the second is the increased pressure of enrolment in higher education with a concomitant shortage of staff and the third has been the lack of programmes in physical education and the resulting absence of teaching assistants and coaches.

The essentialistic tradition of Malaysian education has had many ramifications for physical education. This trend, if not completely propagating a mind-body dichotomy, has certainly left physical education as a second-class category in the universities. Although basic skills courses are rarely available to the general university student, in many universities the physical recreation and extracurricular programmes provide basic instruction in sports on a non-credit basis.

TEACHER EDUCATION IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

Teacher education is placed within the university in an education faculty, where preparation for secondary teacher training is emphasized. Two basic approaches are taken to teacher certification for secondary schools, both of which emphasize a broad arts and science programme with specialization in a subject-matter area, as well as in professional education course work, leading to a Bachelor of Science/Arts with Education.

The alternative programme involves a four-year honours degree with broad arts and sciences study including specialization in a particular major area. Upon graduation from university, the prospective teacher attends a school of education for one year where emphasis is directed to teaching methods, history and philosophy of education, educational psychology, and practical teaching. Teacher certification is granted upon graduation from this education unit. Thus, there is a vertical separation and a consecutive as opposed to a concurrent approach to professional preparation.

Undergraduate degree courses in P.E. in the Universities of Malaysia has a short history. The first programme was established at the university of Agriculture in 1974. In the 1970's, three other universities instituted basic and supplementary courses on P.E. in the teacher education curriculum. Currently, University of Agriculture has a first degree programme in P.E. The first batch of 18 graduates received their degrees in 1982 whilst the second batch of about 28 received theirs in 1983.

Post-Graduate degree courses in physical education are now available at University of Malaya. Adequate facilities and staff are available for post-graduate studies at this University. The education staff are capable of conducting research, teaching and validating work and examining on courses when invited to do so by those in authority within the University and Ministry of Education.

Extracurricular physical activities exist in all the five universities of the country though facilities are often limited. There has been increased student involvement in squash, tennis and swimming and the university authorities are willing to back the development for such facilities primarily for physical recreation in some universities.

Inter-varsity sports were conceived in Malaysia as far back as 1955 and the formation of the Malaysian Inter-University Athletic Union in 1965 is the governing body for competitive sports. However, regional differences pertaining to the size of the University has presented some problems for the effective operation of the Union. There are visible efforts to keep sports within the framework of the educational structure; sports scholarships, or grant-in-aid scholarships, are infrequent in Malaysian universities. There are very few full-time coaches, and those who may be classified as such have multiple coaching tasks. Generally coaching goes hand-in-hand with administrative responsibilities.

The lack of adequate sports programmes at the universities of Malaysia has resulted from such factors as: (I) the dominant philosophy of education for the intellect; (II) the inadequate sports competitions at the national, international levels, and (III) the absence of professional sports in the country.

SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS-PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA.

Physical education lecturers from the training colleges were instrumental in initiating action to form the Physical Education Association in Malaysia. It was Primarily through the efforts of these individuals that the Association was established in 1960. The early years were characterized by a small, but hard-working membership. By the early 1970's the Association had a firmer foundation and began influencing developments in physical education. Some credit must go to the Association for early developments in organizing a number of inservice courses, seminars and workshops for physical education teachers, fitness and outdoor pursuits for the youth and community recreation activities and services throughout the country.

A number of sub-committees have been established now, to work in collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Sports so as to upgrade research and promotion of sports at district and national levels.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS

The formation of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports as a government agency has given some stimulus to the field of sports. The Ministry has been partially instrumental in developing and promoting sports for the young and senior members of the society. Most sports associations obtain some form of financial assistance to organize competition locally and their superior athletes do obtain opportunities to participate at international games overseas. The aims of the Ministry are: (i) to assist the development of international and national sport; (ii) to aid in training umpires and coaches; (iii) to provide bursaries for inservice training of personnel; (iv) to aid research in fitness and amateur sport; (v) to arrange conferences in this area of concern; (vi) to provide for recognition of achievements; (vii) to distribute information; and (viii) to coordinate interested agencies in the area of fitness and amateur sport.

NATIONAL SPORTS COUNCIL

The National Sports Council formed by an act of parliament in 1971 is a statutory board with the Minister of Sports as Chairman. Its purpose is to cater for the promotion of high performance sports in the country. The board has designed specific programmes for elite sportsmen and sports women, the training of high calibre sports coaches, umpires and officials.

COACHES AND SPORTS ADMINISTRATORS

Although the Ministry has stipulated very specific and clear objectives as outlined in the above context, dedicated and specialist coaches with sports science studies preparation as a part of their professional training appears to be lacking.

In order to keep abreast with current developments in sport science education, the Ministry should upgrade their staff training programmes consistently. Sport coaches and administrators at the Ministry should be awarded scholarships to study at the local institutions of sports and at selected overseas colleges where they could attend specialist courses pertaining to their interest and needs.

The recommendations for effective and meaningful physical education and sports programmes for Malaysian schools and institutions of higher learning would contain these main points.

Firstly the breadth and depth of the subject demands a high level of specialist teaching in many of the practical and theoretical areas. Without this, courses will lack validity, integrity, interest and quality. In the realm of practical work for example games, gymnastics, swimming and dance, all require the services of lecturers with highly individual specialisms. The same applies to theoretical studies which require specialists in a number of sciences and in mechanics, psychology, sociology and philosophy.

Secondly the subject also demands extensive and appropriate equipment and facilities. The unappealing prospect of poor facilities and programme discourages teachers from conducting proper physical education lessons. It is encouraging that state education departments have begun to appoint co-ordinators with the direct responsibility for developing the school physical education programme.

Thirdly, there are strong grounds for requesting compulsory physical education classes in the school curriculum. Although the subject is compulsory there is evidence to show that administrators tend to cancel classes of physical education on the slightest pretext. As a result of the above, pupils and parents seem to demonstrate little regard for physical education as a subject. To remedy the situation, school administrators ought to demonstrate greater motivation, encouragement and commitment for the physical education programme in their respective schools.

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