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Professionalising Skills in Teaching and Learning Physical and Health Education to Adults with Special Needs

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Abstract

An attempt is made to stress the importance of education as vehicle to human development. Hence it is seen as human right that needs to be given to everyone regardless of whatever background. The paper went further to look at teaching as another important aspect that can impart education or knowledge. Teaching therefore, is an attempt to influence learner to make desirable changes in human behavior. The benefits of physical and health education as it affects productivity are thoroughly looked into. Adapting physical exercise and games for different categories of persons with special needs as a key factor of the paper is not left out. Challenges such as lack of awareness from both public and government on the need to engage the adults with special needs in sport and games are also featured. The paper finally recommended for a day or date to be set aside for fitness day as that of sanitation day, among other recommendations.

Keywords: Special Needs Education, Physical and Health Education, Adult Education, Inclusive Teaching, Adaptive Pedagogy

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right that must be guaranteed to each and every citizen regardless of race, gender, religion, ethnic background and age. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) is of the view that Education is compulsory and right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiarity of individual. The Policy further indicates that persons with special needs (adult inclusive) should not be left out. Hence the policy's aim on this is to provide access to education for all persons in an inclusive setting, equalize educational opportunities for all persons irrespective of their generic composition, social, physical, sensory, mental, physiological or emotional disabilities, provide adequate education for all persons with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation. In this scenario therefore, adults with special needs must be given opportunity to acquire education of whatever type so long as it is not against the law. Hence the paper will attempt to address issues on concepts of teaching and learning as they relate to adults with special needs, strategies to adapt in teaching Physical and Health Education (PHE) to adult with special needs, benefits of PHE to persons with special needs and factors hindering the success of PHE for persons with special needs.

Conceptual Clarifications

Teaching is one of the noble profession known in human history as well as the most difficult profession. But if done well, it is indeed most rewarding. Teaching is said to be difficult, because it deals with human behavior which is complex and once it is established it is hard to modify and not easy to change, and more so if one is not well equipped to do so. Therefore, the term teaching according to Olaitan and Ogusio (1981) in Shika (2019) is an attempt to bring about desirable changes in human learning, abilities and behavior. The aim of teaching therefore, is to influence learners to make those desirable changes in their behavior that contribute to better living. Teaching therefore, can be seen as an act of imparting knowledge, skills and attitude from a matured and more

experience person to less matured and experienced person with the aim of bringing some changes of behavior and belief. The matured and more experience person here, refers to the teacher. Shika (2014) observed that teacher in professional usage is a person trained, recognized and employed to help learning in and outside classroom situation, in order to achieve predetermined goals, while Adeniyi (2002) in Shika (2014) defines the term teacher as referring to anybody who impart information or knowledge or merely instructs to others. Teacher therefore, is a person who facilitate in imparting knowledge, information and values to learners so as to bring permanent changes in behavior and belief. Teacher is the one who has acquired the knowledge, skills and methodologies of imparting the said knowledge, information and values. However, a teacher cannot perform successfully without a learner, hence teaching and learning goes together like light and thunder. As without a learner, where is the teacher going to impart whatever he has acquired. What then is learning? It is a process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and beliefs which is carried out by a teacher.

Concept of Adults with Special Needs

To successfully define this, there is the need to explain who is an adult learner? An Adult learner is the person that is psychologically matured and is involved in different forms of learning. According to Lawal (2023) an adult learner is anyone who takes part in any form of adult education activity. Adult learners in most cases are those that had a break due to some reasons, but later on want to continue. Therefore, an Adult learner with disability or with special needs can be described as persons with learning difficulties, who enrolled into adult education programme to learn some skills that will be of help to him and the community. In a related development, an adult learner with disability is defined as a person with disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity (Information, Guidance and Training on Americans with Disabilities Act, 2024).

Benefits of Physical and Health Education (PHE) to Persons with Special Needs (Adults)

The place of physical exercise on good health and productivity in individuals is too enormous to be neglected. According to Haruna (2013) there is substantial evidence that physical inactivity and lack of regular exercise have negative influence on health. This phenomenon has of recent tailored our interest to physical fitness and health result from participation in physical activities''. For the health benefits of physical and health education, it cuts across both ages and gender as well as persons with and without disabilities.

The persons with special needs (adults) need to participate in nation building through been productive. To be productive one has to be able to produce goods and services efficiently. No nation can develop without its citizen being healthy and for one to be healthy he has to participate in physical exercise and physical fitness. Haruna (2013) opined that in China more emphasis has been placed on physical fitness of citizens for economic purpose. According to Mao-Tse-Tung 'for a nation to develop economically, the citizens must be healthy'' and for workers to be highly productive, they need to be physically fit''.

- a) Furthermore, participation in physical exercise by persons with special needs (both children and adults) can be of benefit through the following according to (Aminu, 2022):
- b) Significant health benefits can be obtained by including a moderate amount (minimum of 30 minutes) of physical activity on most, if not all days of the week through a modest increase in daily activity by so doing we can improve our health and quality of life.
- c) Regular physical activity is necessary for maintaining normal muscle strength, joint structure and joint function.
- d) Low levels of activity, resulting in fewer kilocalories use than consumed, contribute to the high prevalence of hypokinetic diseases.
- e) Physical activity appears to relieve symptom of depression, anxiety and improve mood.
- f) Strength developing exercise should be completed at least twice per week for adult in order to improve muscular skeletal health, maintain independence performing the activities of daily life and reduce the risk of fall.

In a related development, however, (Murphy, Christian, Caplin and Young, (2000) in Sani (n. d.) observed that "the primary goals for increasing physical activity in persons with disabilities are to reverse deconditioning secondary to impaired mobility, optimize physical functioning, and enhance overall well-being." They continue to note that "regular activity is essential for maintenance of normal muscle strength, flexibility and joint structure and function and may slow the functional decline often associated with disabling conditions" the special needs persons (children and adults) need to participate in sports and physical exercise for the fact that their psychological well-being improves through the provision of opportunities to form friendships, express creativity, develop a self – identity and foster meaning and purpose in life.

Similarly, it will be of interest to note that many diseases that are so common to old age (adults) both with special needs and without needs can be curtailed or reduced through regular exercise such diseases include: obesity, hypertension, heart failure, stroke cardiovascular diseases (CVD), diabetes, cancer etc. to illustrate how PHE can

be of help to any of the above-mentioned disease let take one. Obesity, which is seen as a body weight that exceeds the desirable level for a given age, sex and skeletal frame by more than 20%. Sharkey (1997) in Haruna (2013) is of the opinion that “obesity can also be defined as a condition in which a person has a high percentage of body fat often resulting from physical inactivity. It is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that might have an adverse effect on health.” Haruna and Venkateswarlu (2012) observed that physiologically, the obese individual requires more blood vessels to circulate blood to all the working muscles, the heart must pump harder to meet up with the required Blood, which increase blood pressure, the individuals’ weight can be tough on the muscle skeletal joint, causing other problems including the risk of cancer.

Given this, the affected individual either with special needs or without needs has to engage in regular physical exercise as weight can be managed or lose successfully. In addition, physiological functions and physical performance become improved. Sheldahl (1986), Shaekey (1997), Pomer and Howley (1997) in Haruna (2013) said several potential benefits that can be obtained by obese individuals with exercise training. In addition to possible body composition changes, exercise may increase aerobic capacity, high density lipoprotein, cholesterol, decrease blood pressure, increase insulin sensitivity, reduce psychological stress and improve one’s sense of well-being.’ As a matter of fact, regular physical activity can improve the mental health by reducing depression and anxiety particularly to adults with Special Needs. In the same vein daily living skills can be boasted through physical exercise. Okplenye (2008) in Odok and Edim (2016), reported that sports participation leads to development of body parts and proper bone formation. Furthermore, the heart is stronger, healthier and pumps blood better, and circulation of blood is faster and smoother because of physical activities. Based on these submissions and others not mentioned, persons with special needs (both children and adults) stand to benefit by engaging in sporting activities. They need to be healthier because of their disabling conditions.

Adaptive Physical Exercise and Games for the Different Categories of Persons with Special Needs

To successfully look at the physical exercise and games to be adapted for persons with special needs, it will be of interest to have a look at the different categories of such persons. In special education literature they are used interchangeably with the persons with exceptionality. They are often referred as those who significantly deviate from normal trends. The deviation can either be physical, sensorial, behavioral or intellectual as a result of the deviation they need special arrangement for their education, which is referred as “Special needs education”, where specialized methods and equipment are involved. Danlami (2020) states that people with special education needs are those who required individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of physical settings, special equipment and materials, special teaching procedure and other interventions, in order to achieve greatest possible independence, self-sufficient, academic success and self-fulfilment. They are those with physical, intellectual, social, emotional, cultural and linguistic characteristics or other conditions that make it difficult for them to be educated in the normal way without special intervention.

The persons with special needs are categorized into three, thus:

- (a) Persons with disabilities (visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical and health impairment, intellectual disabilities, Autisms spectrum disorders, albinism). This category has sensory or physical problem; hence they are being addressed as such.
- (b) At risk children/ Youth: Children of nomadic pastoral, migrant fisherman, migrant farmers, hunters, almajiri etc. who due to their lifestyles and means of livelihood are unable to have access to the conventional educational provision/services.
- (c) Gifted and talented children: These are persons who possessed very high intelligence quotient and are naturally endowed with special traits (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015).

In addition, adapted physical education is a modified physical exercise that was originally made for non-disabled persons. Adapted physical education is physical education which has been adapted or modified, so that it is as appropriate for persons with disabilities as it is for persons without disabilities (APE, 2024).

However, the physical exercise and games that can be adapted to persons with special needs (children and Adults) may include the following: Football, Running, (relay, cross country etc.), Jumping, Golf, Walking, Tennis, Handball, Basket ball, tinko which is carried out by clapping their Hands/palms continuously and reciting tinko tinko, loco tinko etc.

Factors Hindering the Success of Adapted Physical Education

Just like any other field of human endeavor some factors always serve as stumbling blocks, adapted physical education of persons with special needs is facing some challenges. The challenges are:

- a) Lack of awareness from the public and government functionaries as to what significant is health education to the special needs persons. Added to this is that some teachers that are saddled with the responsibility to teach this categories of people have insufficient knowledge in the area, some of teachers consider themselves as not originally come to teach the special needs as such they cannot adapt.

- b) Participation is influence directly by time home environment and child's perceived self-competence and indirectly by social support from schools and community, family demographics and family child preferences (Sani n. d.). Sani also revealed that inactive role models, competing demands and time pressure unsafe environment, lack of adequate facilities, insufficient funds and indicate access to quality daily physical education seem to be more prevalent among persons with special needs. Other factors include:
- c) The public attitudes of people toward persons with special needs such as segregation, negative attitude, societal stereotypes and low performance expectations affects them in participating in physical activities.
- d) Haruna (2013) has enumerated the following among other, that can as well serve as challenges to special needs person participation in special physical activities: poor implementation of work place physical activity and sport programs and policies, lack of inadequate fitness centers, poor implementation of research findings and recommendations about physical activity and sport, lack of experts guidance's on the frequency, intensity, time, and type of physical activities for Nigerians and lack, inadequate, inaccessibility and poor condition of physical activity and sport facilities and equipment in schools and communities.

Conclusion

Education as a fundamental human right that need to be given to everyone, disability and age notwithstanding. In this paper therefore, it looked at teaching as the main vehicle used to impact knowledge. Physical and health education as a major component of the issue at stake is exhausted fully as per its benefits. Different categories of persons with special needs are briefly discussed as well as the adapted physical exercises that can fit in to them. Challenges hampering the development of physical education for persons with special needs are also featured. Finally, recommendations were offered.

Recommendations

The paper proffered the following recommendations:

- a) The general public should be aware that persons with special needs have the same needs with those without special need. Therefore, they should be encouraged to participate in all activities. Through participations they stand to benefit as well.
- b) Since there is environmental sanitation day, fitness day should also be declared through government policy.
- c) Community through associations should design and exercise program to be patronized by members of the communities.
- d) Private sector should be encouraged to establish fitness centers, where a token should be paid by who wish to partake.

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