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Global Best Practices in Human Kinetics and Health Education: Focus on Teacher Preparation

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ABSTRACT: Most of us have a sense of what is best practice in learning and teaching of Human Kinetics and Health Education, based on centuries of educational practice and research. Best practice remains however, elusive and dependent on contextual factors understood by individuals differently depending on their individual perspectives. This paper endeavors to look at the concept of best practices, Human Kinetics overview, skills required to become a Human Kinetics and Health Education Teacher, developing best practice and Human Kinetics and Health Education curriculum. It was concluded that, Human Kinetics and Health Education curriculum should be redesigned to promote active student-centered learning and also empowering individuals to develop life-long skills. It was therefore recommended among other things that, Human Kinetics and Health Education Teachers should be trained on the use of instructional technology in the area of Human Kinetics to enable them to be effective in the teaching of the subject to the learners.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, the central aim of the developmental programme of any Nation in the global world is focused on how to raise the quality of life of its citizen by acquiring best practices in all areas in which human kinetics is not left out. Physical activity and sports occupy and play an important role in the society. Sport for all and physical education in schools are considered important tools in promoting a healthy lifestyles and preventing the negative effects associated with a sedentary way of life. According to Loland (2012), competence in sport field has been based on experience and best practice models and that since 1960s, an increasing awareness of the potential values of sports has led to an interest in research and evidence-based practice. We all know that, the study of Sport, Physical Education, Training, Exercise, Dance and even outdoor education has developed into a professional academic field broadly referred to as Human Kinetics and most European States have established relevant University departments and even more specialized Universities. Lots of Human Kinetics societies and Associations have

emerged. Best practice seems to originate in the professions of Law and Medicine as well as in the fields of Government, Administration and project management. Liem and McInerney (2008) refer to best practice as the most efficient and effective way of accomplishing a task based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time. It is efficient because they require minimal amount of resources (time and effort) and it is effective as they promise to deliver best results. They further explained that the phrase best practice is used to describe solid, evidence-based and state-of-the-art work in a particular field that has proven to reliably lead to a desired outcome.

BEST PRACTICES

The 21st century world will be different from the one in which we were educated. To be able to survive in a new globally competitive world today, teacher will need creativity, problem solving abilities, a passion for teaching, a dedicated work ethic and lifelong learning opportunities. All these abilities could be developed through instruction based on best practice teaching strategies.

Best practices according to Friedman (2006) are the inherent part of a curriculum that exemplifies the connection and relevance identified in educational research. He further reiterated that best practices motivate, engage and prompt students to learn and achieve. Such student who receive a balanced curriculum and possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to transfer disciplines will be successful as measured by standardized tests and other indicators of student success. If a professional is following best practice standards, he or she is aware of current research and consistently offers clients the full benefits of the latest knowledge, technology and procedures. For instance, if a doctor does not follow contemporary standard of medicine and a case turns out badly, peers may criticize his decisions by saying 'it was simply not the best practice. In fact, some veteran teachers would even deny the need for a current research-based standard of instruction, but still, if teachers are people who take ideas seriously, who believe in inquiry and who subscribe to the possibility of human progress, then our professional language must label and respect best practice. So, this is why Zemelman, Daniels and Hyde (2005) have imported the term best practice as a shorthand emblem

of serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, and state of the art teaching. In view of this, virtually all the authoritative voices in governments and all the stakeholders in education sectors are calling for schools that are more student-centered, active, experiential, authentic, democratic, collaborative, rigorous, and challenging.

HUMAN KINETICS OVERVIEW

Human Kinetics is the study, practice and appreciation of the art and science of human movement (Harrison, Blakemore & Buck 2001). They also posited that while movement is both innate and essential to an individual's growth and development, it is the role of human kinetics to provide instructional activities that not only promote development and proficiency, but also enhance an individual's overall health. Human kinetics does not only fulfill a unique role in the total education but it is also an integral part of the schooling process. Significant changes in the field of human kinetics have taken place over the past four (4) decades with a gradual transition from our traditional sports to a broader emphasis on health-related fitness and lifelong physical activity (Bocarro, et al. 2008; Jago, et al. 2009; McKenzie & Kahan, 2008). However, throughout the world, physical education programmes are being reduced or outright elimination of the subject from elementary and secondary curriculums (Hardman & Marshall, 2009). Due to the technological advancement that increased leisure time and ultimately increases sedentary living, it is apparent that the value of human kinetics programmes are being tested the world over.

The human kinetics teacher is increasingly being called upon to demonstrate how students can proficiently develop the skills to achieve a healthy active lifestyle. We now live at a time that our lifestyle lead to obesity and overweight, especially among children and youths. Obesity has become a major health concern on a worldwide basis (International Obesity Task Force, 2009; World Health Organization, 2010). It has been well documented that patterns developed in one's childhood will in fact, carry forward to one's adult life (Freedman, Srinivasan, Berenson,& Dieta, 2007). The emerging epidemic of obesity among children and youth thus becomes a concern for future adult populations. The challenge is a complex one that requires more holistic and multidisciplinary thinking to

address the problem. Health, leisure and physical education professionals worldwide have a key role to play in formulating strategies to address this problem. There is a need to employ new forms of integrative health and physical education programmes in a more effective fashion, support the development of healthy active lifestyles, explore ways to employ technology in the teaching of physical education, link school-based activities to informal community programmes and review the way in which physical education teachers are prepared (Edginton, Kirkpatrick, Schupach, Philips, Chin, & Chen, 2011).

Skills Required to Become a Human Kinetics Teacher

The job of a human kinetics teacher may appear to be easy but the position requires a great number of skills and proficiencies. Certain academic achievement is a prerequisite, but in addition to it, a human kinetics teacher must be able to accommodate and serve a variety of need from students and from the school in which he/she is employed. Before you can successfully apply to fill a position as a Human Kinetics teacher, you must complete a Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) in Physical Education and a Bachelor of Science degree in an area related to athletics, such as Athletic training, Exercise science, Adapted physical education or Health education.

Human Kinetics teachers must be prepared to deal with and successfully intercede in a wide variety of situations. Instructing students in the realm of sports and athletic activities, presents challenges that can be very different from those faced by classroom teachers. A Human Kinetics teacher must be able to think on his/her feet, react quickly to an emergency or injury without panicking, and be physically fit enough to keep up with each class throughout the school day. If you are out of shape or become cranky after explaining a task five times, it will show during your instruction and will diminish your helpfulness to students.

The academic credentials necessary to become a human kinetics teacher are only the beginning. If your desire is to teach students how to play and compete in a variety of athletic sports, which might include basketball, gymnastics, running, and tennis, one will need solid experience in each of those areas, while it is impossible for one person to have extensive

experience and expertise in every sport. One should try to attain expert status in at least one or two areas. Make sure you also have a general understanding of the purpose and value of physical fitness and how individuals can best perform exercises without harming themselves or others.

DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICE

Most of us have a sense of what is best practice in the teaching and practice of Human Kinetics based on centuries of educational practice and research. Best practice remains, however, elusive and dependent on contextual factors, understood by individuals differently depending on their individual perspectives. Our knowledge is also often implicit and we tend to rely on intuition rather than systematic enquiry to develop best practice. When asked to **share** our best practice, the challenge is to bring the rationale and method to a communicable, explicit level which whenever possible is presented in a form that is perceived as achievable to the receiving human kinetics teacher. In this article, when considering how to become more effective as a teacher, the following key principles should be applied to the process.

Situational analysis in Human Kinetics and Health Education

The situational analysis in human kinetics is a necessary pre-requisite for a decision to change from the old fashioned techniques to modern trends in teaching and learning. Teachers must have identified a need for adjustment to their existing practice and know why that change makes sense, for all those involved, within their context.

Relevant theory and research in human kinetics and health education

Best practice can only be developed through a consideration of relevant theory and research. Good practice in human kinetics might emerge from practice but if it is to become best practice, there is needs to be a theory and, or, research base to inform the creation. Educational theory and research provide a useful starting point, but often publications in our particular discipline are also a framework for our thinking. There are many examples in the literature of ways in which human kinetics teachers have applied disciplinary perspectives to their practice. A human kinetics and health education teacher in higher education are all in a research-oriented

culture and have systematic research skills which we should apply to our educational practice.

Experience

Our decisions to change our teaching should also be informed and reinforced by experience. Human Kinetists who have been around for a long time often underestimate the extent to which we use our experience-based understanding to adjust our practices. Whilst experience cannot replace theory and research, often it is the powerful combination of these knowledge sources that enable us to develop best practice and, importantly, avoid painful and long-winded trial and error attempts. By using our experiences of teaching and of our own learning, we can ensure that we are not creating what McLaughlin (1999) described as 'lethal mutations' – changes to our practices that have negative and severe consequences for us or for the students. Indeed, Trowler, Saunders, and Knight (2003) recommend that small, incremental changes are preferable to more sweeping attempts to improve practice.

Reflective practice in the human kinetics and health education curriculum

Researchers and educators in Human kinetics have recently introduced reflective practice as a learning tool to their own curricula. In doing so, they have drawn on the more developed expertise of allied health/education professions for best practice in defining reflection, models, demonstrating the process of reflection and techniques. e.g. Nursing and Ekeburgh (2007); teacher education, Lee, (2007); health promotion, Fleming, 2007; social work, Ruch, (2007) & physiotherapy Donaghy and Marss,(2007). This range of professions (like human kinetics), all have common themes which involve dealing with people (interpersonal relationships); a dynamic and constantly changing practice environment; the ability to make decisions in practice and the need to learn from experience. Reflective practice itself can be viewed in many ways. It is more than simply thinking over and over what has happened. Reflective practice is a cognitive (thinking) process which brings together several stages of *deliberate* exploration of thoughts, feelings and evaluations focused on practitioner skills and outcomes.

HUMAN KINETICS AND HEALTH EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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In general, the curriculum should consist of:
(a) Instruction in a variety of developmentally appropriate motor skills that challenge students to develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally;
(b) Fitness activities that educate and help students understand and improve or maintain optimal fitness levels;
(c) Instruction in concepts that lead to a better understanding of motor skills and fitness development;
(d) Opportunities to engage in experiences that enhance cooperation and develop multicultural awareness; and
(e) Experiences that foster the desire for lifelong participation in physical activity.

More specifically, the elementary curriculum should include many enjoyable activities that lead to the acquisition and refinement of fundamental motor patterns (e.g., running, skipping, jumping, catching, throwing, striking, balancing) that can be applied in game, sport, dance, and gymnastics contexts. The *movement-based curriculum* proposed and adapted by George Graham, Shirley, and Melissa,(1998) introduced skill themes (fundamental motor patterns) and movement concepts that describe how a movement is performed (e.g., speed, direction, relationship). This curriculum pattern teaches children to move while challenging them to explore, modify, and refine motor patterns, and it can be used as a vehicle for teaching human kinetics. The *activity based* approach is the most common curriculum pattern used in both primary and secondary schools. This curricular pattern uses activity units in sport, fitness, and dance (e.g., volleyball, aerobic dance, swimming) to teach human kinetics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is pertinent to state that best practice in human kinetics should be presented whenever possible in a form that is perceived as achievable to the receiving teacher. Focus on content and methodologies that will bring the best on the part of the sport. Human kinetics teacher and student should be the main focus of achieving the desired goals and objectives. In respect of this, redesigning the human kinetics curriculum to promote active student centered learning and empowering individuals to develop

life skills that leads to life long, self-directed engagement in physical activity is inevitable. Our vision of school improvement relies not on new rules and controls, but on improved instructions. The belief is that, schools are clinging to inefficient, ineffective teaching practices that urgently need to be replaced. The idea that doing the same things harder, longer, and stronger will materially improve education should be rejected. It is therefore, assumed that achievement can be elevated by giving students more and more instructions and tests, no matter how 'rigorous'. As one of our agriculturally savvy friends recently commented; "You can weigh the pig as many times as you want; the scale won't fatten him up"

There is an obvious need for performance standards and ways to measure the impact of human kinetics. The need for human kinetics programmes to enable students to demonstrate their basic proficiencies is paramount in an increasingly standardized educational world, Just as there is a need to improve basic skills such as reading, mathematics and science, there is a need to justify the existence of human kinetics programmes.

The following recommendations are therefore suggested:

a) Content and methodologies to develop healthy active lifestyles for children and youth should be focused.
b) Human Kinetics curriculum to promote active student-centered learning and empowering individuals to develop life skills that lead to lifelong, self-directed engagement in physical activity should be redesigned.
c) The importance of co-operation of stakeholders in the community (teachers, administrators, parents, community members, business leaders and others) to advocate, promote, educate and develop individuals to incorporate physical activities into their daily life through formal and informal education should be accentuated.
d) Instructional Technology in the area of human kinetics should be acquired by the teacher to support individualized learning processes and assessment.
e) Qualified professionals in the field of human kinetics should be employed to teach the subject.

f) The acquisition of teaching techniques and strategies for assisting individuals in developing a healthy active lifestyle should be emphasized.
g) Linking the evaluation of students in human kinetics and health education teacher preparation programmes to relevant knowledge, skills and dispositions directly tied to best practice.

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