

Physical Fitness of the Teacher: A Panacea for Effective Teaching

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Abstract

The paper reviewed the relationship between physical fitness and effective teaching. Physical fitness as the ability to carry out daily task or activities with vigour and alertness and still reserve energy to combat emergencies is required by the teacher for effective teaching. The study also showed how inevitable physical fitness of the teacher is to effective teaching. Effective teaching requires among others that a teacher possess at least health related indices of physical fitness. Effectiveness of a teacher requires: strength, some levels of muscle endurance, flexibility, cardio-respiratory endurance and body composition. These contribute towards a healthy mind and body of a teacher. As physical fitness is paramount to effective teaching, related activities such as jogging, weight lifting, resistance activities are recommended for every teacher for sound mind in sound body. Therefore, the study concluded that physical fitness of the teacher is a panacea to effective teaching.

Keywords: *Physical fitness, the teacher, effective teaching*

Introduction

The importance of physical fitness to effective performance cannot be over emphasized. All over the world there is growing evidence that physical fitness is required for effective work of performance of which teaching is one. World Health Organization (WHO) (2010), explain physical fitness of an individual as a state which characterizes the degree to which a person is able to function effectively. It implies the ability of each person to live most effectively within his/her potential. Umeifekwem (2011), viewed physical fitness as the total fitness of an individual. He commented further that physical fitness is the ability to last, to bear up and persevered under different circumstances where an unfit person would give up. World Health Organization (WHO) (2002), postulate that physical fitness includes adequate degree of good posture, physique body weight normality, proper functioning of vital organs, muscular strength and muscular endurance. Physical fitness has several definitions depending on whether it is being defined by a physical educator, a physiologist, a cardiologist or a military recruitment officer.

In most cases, we refer to the physical fitness of individuals as a phase of physical fitness which includes flexibility, body composition, cardio-respiratory

endurance muscular endurance and muscular strength. Poor performance of teacher some time is associated with poor physical fitness of the teacher. This is often the result of too little physical activities. So, there is need for teachers to be physically fit and to be physically fit one needs go get involved in physical activities and exercise regularly which is the best investment in health.

Within the framework of activities for all, fitness can be viewed as a two-component concept, "Performance Related Fitness and Health-Related Fitness". Performance-related fitness refers to traits or abilities that predispose to good performance. Each activity has specific fitness requirements, and the test batteries of fitness vary accordingly. Health-related fitness, on the other hand, refers to those traits or abilities that are pertinent to health status. These abilities can be improved by exercise, and they are, at the same time, associated with health outcome. The health-related abilities are typically more universal and less activity specific than those of performance-related abilities.

In the context of this paper, physical fitness is the reflection of an individual's ability to work with vigour and pleasure, without undue fatigue, with energy left for enjoying hobbies and recreational activities, and meet unforeseen emergencies. It relates to how you look and feel. Ability to function depends upon the physical, mental emotional social and moral components of fitness, all of which is related to each other and is mutually dependent; this paper looked into the relationship between physical fitness of a teacher and effective teaching, how the fitness of a teacher serves as a panacea to effective teaching.

Concept of physical fitness

Several elements have been included as components of physical fitness. The particular components emphasized or omitted depend on the viewpoints or discipline of the discussant. Physical fitness has however been divided into two main components. Health related component and skill related components (Hamzat 2000). The skills related components include speed, balance, coordination and agility. The skill related components of physical fitness are appropriate to sports performer who may wish to develop some of them through additional physical training. The health-related components aspects also have their role to play in the performance of various sporting activities and these cannot be ignored (Nahas and Sanusi, 2006). The health-related components were examined for the purpose of this paper which comprises of cardio-respiratory endurance, strength, flexibility, body composition and muscle endurance. This contributes towards a healthy body and mind of a teacher.

Teacher in sound mind and body will perform effectively in teaching. This paper viewed and recommended some physical fitness training programs for teachers at all level for their alertness in physical fitness and effective teaching.

The Teacher

A teacher is expected to have a total commitment in teaching the students the type of education that will lead to growth and development. A teacher is a person who is qualified in every way as a professional teacher to teach in schools

especially in his/her area of specialization. A teacher's personality types should be divergent, enduring and stable enough to help learners solve their problems. No educational system can be stronger than the caliber of the teaching staff. Biddle and Gorely (2004), define teacher as an expert who is capable of imparting knowledge that will help the learners to build, identify and to acquire skills that will be used to face the challenges in life.

The teacher also provides to the learner knowledge, skill and values that enhance development. Biddle and Gorely (2004), define teacher as a person who is capable of imparting knowledge and shaping the youth to the wider scope of knowledge. In recognition of this fact, the Federal Republic of Nigeria National policy on education (2008) stated, that "all teachers in our educational institution from primary to university level will be professionally trained and physically fit for efficient discharge for their duties. The teacher is the prime mover of the educational system. Corbin and Lindsey, (2002) emphasized that the teacher as an input operator in the educational system, plays a major role in the conversion of raw materials particularly students into finished products (graduates). The teacher cannot do that without requisite physical fitness component which enables him/her to carry out day to day teaching responsibility.

Qualities of a good teacher are universal. Every teacher is expected to have such qualities in order to be regarded as a true teacher. These qualities include;

- Knowledgeability in subject matter: A good teacher is the one who knows exactly what he is teaching with adequate understanding of his course contents. A teacher who is knowledgeable will be able to teach confidently.
- Sense of humour and love in teaching; Sense of humour and love will make someone a successful teacher which will attract pupils to love their subject and the teacher as well, pupils will be interested to listen to a lovely teacher.
- Positive teaching attitudes: Positive attitude is most important thing in teaching profession and life in general, having positive attitude will enable a teacher to overcome the problem that occurs in the course of teaching.
- Teaching and learning Evaluation: A good teacher normally expects much from his/her pupils or students; prepares the pupils/student so that they have high expectations in relation to their academic achievement.

However, to possess these qualities, teachers requires physical strength which contributes to healthy, sound and effective teaching

Teacher's strength and effective teaching

The general term for applying a force against a resistance and the three types of strength has been identified which are; Maximum strength, Dynamic strength, Endurance strength. The greatest force the neuromuscular system is capable of exerting in a single maximum voluntary action. Dynamic strength is

the ability of the neuromuscular system to overcome resistances with a high speed of contraction. Endurance strength is ability to repeat exercise continuously without fatigue. Muscle also resist fatigue or continue to contract for a long period of time without becoming tired which is the strength most appropriate to health-related fitness (Tancred, 2008). The primary purpose of strength exercise for teachers is to improve muscle function (Fujitani, Ishikawa, Abai, Kakurai 2007). It will also develop strong bones, tendon and ligaments and enable a higher and effective performance in teaching. It also reduces the risk of medical problems including low back pain, illness such as diabetes mellitus and degenerative problem like osteoporosis.

Regular strength training for the teacher is not only to increase their daily energy expenditure, it also boosts the resting metabolism (Kakurai, et al 2007). It encourages muscle endurance and promotes effective teaching.

Teacher's muscle endurance and effective teaching.

Muscle endurance is the ability of the teacher to withstand fatigue or continue to contract muscles for a long period without becoming tired. This is a type of strength most appropriate to health-related fitness. It is also essential to the teacher towards the end of a teaching or when a teaching goes into extra time. Teacher who has better muscle endurance will be in a favorable position to deliver effective teaching, (Ishikawa, et al 2007).

It is also the ability of a muscle or group of muscles to continue contracting over a period of time against a high resistance (Hamzat, 2000). A teacher having good muscular endurance has the capacity to work or teach over an extended period of time without tiring quickly. Desirably high levels of muscular endurance are usually more important for effective teaching. As muscular endurance influences almost all vigorous performances, method of increasing it are important. The teacher strength contributes to his/her muscle endurance; in fact, there is a very high correlation between muscular strength and muscular endurance (Hamzat, 2000). Stronger teachers are usually able to continue teaching for longer hours than weaker ones. Physical activities for muscular endurance are recommended for teachers effective teaching. Activities such as, pull-ups and bar dips, flexibility exercise, sport participation, jogging and walking are all effective for developing endurance and flexibility of muscle, (Hamsat, 2002).

Teacher's flexibility and effective teaching

Flexibility is an essential component of physical fitness just like muscle endurance, good performance and effective teaching. It means an adequate range of movement in all articulations of the body (Hamzat, 2000). Teacher with good flexibility will be able to move easily. General movement is not limited, whereas poor flexibility often hinders movement because of low fitness status. Limited joint flexibility often contributes to postural problems and increases the risk of developing low back pain problem (Hamzat, 2002). It is therefore

imperative that teacher should be encouraged to participate in regular flexibility programmes to help offset the loss of elasticity.

Inactivity causes muscles and connective tissues to lose their normal extensibility, thus reducing performance and flexibility. Inactivity may also contribute to body fat accumulation, which further restricts flexibility. Flexibility can be increased by regularly stretching the muscle and the connective tissues. The teacher physical fitness contributed a lot to teaching effectiveness and performances (Gorely et al, 2004). By increasing the range of movement around a joint the amount of power that can be generated by the muscle is potentially increased and by improving the dynamic flexibility, the risk of connective tissue damage is also reduced (Corbin et al, 2002). Regular exercise that promote body flexibility play a vital role in checking and regulating body composition which can also boost effective teaching.

Teacher's body composition and effective teaching

Body composition as is the case with flexibility is an important part of the concept of health-related fitness. The body mass is made up of lean body mass plus body fat. The body composition can thus be defined as the relative ratio of body fat to lean body mass and is assessed and presented as percent body fat. On the average men carry 12-15% fat and women 18-20% fat (World Health Organization, 2002). When people get fatter, they become overweight and, in some cases, obese.

35-40% of the body fat is situated deep inside the body while 60-65% is between the skin and the muscle (WHO, 2010). The percentage of body fat is usually estimated by measuring skin folds at specific sites on the body using a skin fold caliper and taking care not to include muscle tissue. The reading from the caliper is then used to estimate the percent body fat using tomograms (Honeybourne, Hill, Moor 1996). Therefore, teacher needs to burn fat for normal body weight which will go in a long way to aid effective teaching and performance of the teacher. Regular exercises are therefore recommended to reduce body fat for adequate physical fitness. When body composition is checked, regulated and moderated it will have greater influence in cardio-respiratory endurance and effective teaching

Cardio-respiratory endurance and effective teaching

Cardio-respiratory capacities are important in both conditioning and health related fitness. To a great extent maximum oxygen uptake determines performance in any endurance type of activity, and ability of a teacher to take in and use oxygen, allowing a participation or teaching in prolonged periods of continuous sub maximum and effective teaching for cardio-respiratory capacity, sporting programme like swimming, running, jogging, cycling and rowing and recommended for effective teaching (Fasoyin, 2001).

The teacher cardio-respiratory capacity depends on three factors.

- Effective External Respiration
- Effective internal (Tissue) Respiration

- Effective use of oxygen within the cell (mechanism)

The term muscular endurance and cardio-respiratory fitness work together for teacher's effectiveness, (Nahas & Sanusi, 2006). Cardio-respiratory fitness ensures that the heart, lungs, and blood vessels work longer and more efficiently during teaching on the other hand, good muscular endurance make sure that the other muscles in the body do the same. This work longer and more efficiently during teaching (exercise). The two terms are complementary; to have good muscle endurance requires some cardio-respiratory fitness (Welk, et al 2002).

Conclusion

This paper showed that physical fitness is a panacea for effective teaching. As we know that teachers require fitness in carrying out their daily activities effectively without fatigue, and also influence their effectiveness in teaching. Some physical fitness activities like jogging swimming, cycling, walking and weight lifting are recommended for teachers at all levels to acquire health related components for teaching effectiveness.

However, healthy mind in healthy body will aid teacher's teaching effectiveness which requires strength, some level of endurance, flexibility and body composition. In conclusion, Physical fitness of the teacher is a panacea for effective teaching.

Recommendations

The paper recommended that;

1. Nigeria teacher institutes should provide more effective physical education programmes that can enhance the physical fitness of the teachers which will also assist their effective teaching.
2. Ministry of education should introduce compulsory training and re-training physical fitness programmers for teachers at all level.
3. Ministry of education should organize workshops, seminars, and symposia for teachers to understand the importance of physical fitness to performance and health in general.

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