

GUIDING CHILDREN TOWARDS SPORT FOR ALL

Physical education in schools is not usually concerned with leisure time. The author proposes new approaches to the school curriculum, designed to ensure that P.E. teachers have the right training for promoting sport for all.

If a class of physical education in the last years of primary school or in secondary school is studied carefully, it is generally found that the teacher is not in fact training his pupils to enjoy their leisure time by joining the growing movement of active people, which in various countries is known as 'sport for all' or 'mass sport'.

Sport for all has been appearing in many recreational forms (Calderón, 1983) and, as Ramírez mentions (1983), the broader and more imaginative use of public facilities has been leading to a substantial improvement in the quality of life.

Ever since the "cycle-paths" or "road closure" programme was launched in Bogota, a group of us connected with physical education, sport and recreation has been studying possible ways of developing this fine idea, which was introduced by the mayor of the Colombian capital.

Various sporting and academic groups organized demonstrations of gymnastics and sporting events to improve people's physical fitness, popular sports activities, etc.

I was asked a lot of questions. Do city dwellers need to improve their abilities, skills and knowledge in order to take a fuller part in the physical and sporting activities which the cycle-paths programme offers for their free time? The answer is obviously yes. Did the persons asking the questions wish to be instructed, however? Here the reply was no.

This refusal on the part of a series of persons I interviewed was based on the fact that all they wanted to do on Sunday mornings (the time set aside for the cycle-paths programme) was to take it easy. They could not contemplate coming to teaching sessions during the week either, because their work and studies did not leave them enough time.

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If we consider carefully the replies given by these people interviewed spontaneously as we chatted to them on Sundays, it appears that their views are in no way opposed to the philosophy of the "Leisure Time Charter" (Calderón, 1983), which says in Article 2: "Every individual has the right to enjoy his free time in complete freedom."

According to the fifth article of the Charter, leisure time should not be organized in any rigid way, in the sense that neither the official authorities, town planners, architects or any other groups should decide how people should enjoy or use their free time.

Nevertheless, Article 6 establishes quite clearly that everyone has the right to learn ways of enjoying their free time and, on the basis of Article 4, which defends a person's right to take part and join in every type of recreation, it casts doubts directly on the formal system of physical education in schools.

TEACHER TRAINING

In the light of the above ideas, the objective of this paper is to put forward alternative theories, which are open to testing, for the training of physical education teachers by means of a curriculum, a methodology, combined with a change of behaviour and vocation to meet the challenge of sport for all.

In support of this proposal and after consulting a number of authors, I have assumed that physical education is the academic discipline which is aimed at integral personal fulfilment, through suitable activities and means, with a view to improving the quality of life.

Sport for all or mass sport may be understood to signify a series of free activities, without requirements, performances or standards, adaptable to every individual in search of social-affective and physical-mental improvement. According to Ferrier (1983), it is nothing more than a revolt by mankind against sedentary civilization, against urbanism, against the discipline of work and against the pressure exerted by the world situation.

The curricula and study programmes of universities and colleges which offer a physical education career reveal very little concern with fulfilling the aims of popular recreation as a social service, which were outlined by the sports authorities of Canada (1983) as follows:

- a) assisting the individual and the community in their development;
- b) improving the quality of life;
- c) raising social efficiency.

For years now, many study programmes have warned that teacher training is geared to the present and not to the future, an approach which avoids providing future teachers with the necessary tools to adapt to new technological developments in sport and recreation (e.g., isokinetics, effort testing of fitness machines), to the new tendencies of the consumer society (spas, aerobic dancing, individual jogging, etc.) or to mass sports movements (such as mass marathons, sports popular activities, etc.).

The proliferation of programmes and products to improve citizens' health, such as "fitness packages", gymnasia to work on weight or muscles, diets and drugs to achieve the same effect, energy drinks, or high-performance clothing and footwear, should be taken into account in the new teacher training curricula. Otherwise, youngsters influenced by the publicity media at the end of their school years will easily fall victims to anyone "selling" health and exercise, without any quality control or proper preparation.

The curriculum of physical education teachers, as part of its interdisciplinary approach, should ensure that the pupil identifies, interprets, plans, organizes and evaluates the objectives of mass sport and free time, such as the search for socializing, gaiety, communication, health, relaxation or movement by participants.

The teaching strategy employed for students in physical education schools should take into consideration the main condition of sport for all: what it offers for men and women of different ages and potential, within a free and independent framework.

By making future teachers aware of sport-for-all objectives, such as the social improvement of people and the principle of solidarity, their right to sport and to the use of their free time, the relief of their worries and their adaptation to the stress of modern life, or the sublimation of their instincts, etc., the scope of their profession can be effectively extended.

Teaching methods and systems, as we shall see in a moment, and the use of educational means and resources should also undergo appropriate changes in the field of physical education, in order to arrive at a point where everyone takes part in "sport for all", unlike what happens in competitive sport, where many are spectators and few take part.

Even though informative campaigns have been launched for the benefit of participants in sport-for-all programmes through government institutions, universities and the media, there still remain a number of problems which are jeopardizing a positive outlook for this activity. The public itself is aware of the shortcomings, although their inability to overcome them or avoid them and their notorious lack of concern continue to give rise to a series of factors which affect their own personal integrity.

PROMOTING CHANGE

As set out by Mechlin (1984) in the conclusion of his empirical investigation into the new concept of fitness, schools should be able to offer a methodology for overcoming the problems of physical fitness, and of sport for all, through a more theoretical, more functional and more effective approach.

It is also useful to look back at the suggestions by Sherler (1979), who tackles the pedagogic objective of simplifying access to games and sport, by motivating the greatest number of people through the discovery of the environment.

Referring to the preparation of future physical education teachers, in the corollary of his study, Friedman (1983) points out



Jordi Aluà, a work in the series "Birth of the Olympic Movement".

that not only the quantity of material learnt is important, but also the process itself. Instead of merely giving instructions and issuing commands in the practice of exercises, university physical education teachers should leave their students free to think and to decide.

Gall (1983) expresses the view that as a consequence of using sport as an instrument to improve the quality of life, priority should be given to new areas and materials in scientific and professional fields, as part of the curricular development of new careers.

To sum up, the individualized prescription of exercises for the public at large which is becoming involved in the growing sport-for-all movement can only result from changes in or adaptations.

METHODOLOGY

Where the formulation of area and subject objectives, such as anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, kinesiology, first-aid, safety, etc., can lead to a technical-scientific structuring of students.

The objectives must be to link the abilities, skills and knowledge acquired by children and youngsters, according to their individual characteristics, with their active

future involvement in sport-for-all programmes. The same curriculum should guide school children in their relation with the consumer society, in the field of exercise, sport and recreation. This would naturally bring about a change of attitudes on the part of school children's families.

As suggested by Combs (1972), informing teachers should not be limited to a process of *teaching to teach*, but it should also be a process of *personal discovery*. Wendt (1983) adds that teacher training should be a process of self-understanding, of growing independence, of improvement of skills and abilities and of opening up new experiences.

If a teacher undergoing training makes a constant effort to change his attitude towards positive thinking and towards personal decisions, he is bound to affect the behaviour of his pupils and will facilitate their learning. In considering these new alternatives, we can use as a reference "Moston's spectrum" (1966), which forges new dimensions in the teaching-learning process.

The use of methodologies which move from direct to indirect, from simple to complex, from command to freedom implies an exchange of decision-making between the teacher and his pupil. The latter should arrive at a conscious discovery of his own responsibility in the process of learning, a situation which is valid in his approach to sport for all.

According to Berliner (1979), a teacher's behaviour serves as an intermediary, facilitating the teaching-learning process. It is essential, nevertheless, to emphasize that it is the pupil's behaviour which is the most important factor in learning.

For this reason, teachers should without delay take a closer interest in the study and "codification" of their behaviour as educators, as there is growing evidence to indicate that their behaviour affects the quality and quantity of children's learning, as well as their attitude and motivation.

Lombardo and Cheffers (1983) expressed the view that the discipline of movement or physical education is the most important vehicle for the development of a valid approach to free time and

for the achievement of objectives of physical fitness. For this reason, physical education should be taught in a context which reactivates patterns of active participation in programmes such as sport for all.

Siedentop (1976) also emphasizes that a physical education teacher must use his behaviour and his methodology to help students strengthen their tendencies towards the learning of physical activities.

The interaction which enables the teacher's behaviour to stimulate his pupils, to accept their emotions, to respond to their questions, to instruct them, to monitor them, to criticize them, to offer them feedback, to supervise them, to talk to them, etc., is one of the main supports of the improvement of the teaching-learning process.

ADAPTING TO LEISURE

The reality of the new developments affecting physical activity in Latin America should encourage changes in the ways physical education teachers are trained, in the use of new instruction systems and in the implementation of new methods in the teaching-learning process.

By adapting objectives, contents, physical surroundings, teacher behaviour and the teaching-learning process in general, we can prepare students by offering them solutions adapted to the problems which people will be facing throughout their lives in relation to their free time.

Rationally, we may then cope with this gigantic wave which is emerging in our streets and parks, carried by people who are aware of the shortage of space to move and breathe, yet needing pedagogic assistance and whatever interest and knowledge we can muster to extend the limits of our teaching framework, whether in schools or in universities, as far as the most marginal fringes of our society. Only in this way can we develop the concept of a "qualitative mass movement".
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