

**APPLICATION OF GAMING TECHNIQUES: A QUALITY TOOL FOR TEACHING
PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AMONG PRIMARY
SCHOOL PUPILS IN CALABAR EDUCATION ZONE
OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The paper focused on the application of gaming techniques: a quality tool for teaching physical and health education among primary school in Calabar, Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Gaming technique is regarded as a teaching where by useful educational tools are used to teach pupils in order to promote and adapt mentally retarded population and other individuals with learning deficits. The paper x-rayed the need for implementation of games in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, the advantages, need (reasons) for games in teaching and learning of physical and health education. some constraint were outlines in the use of gaming techniques.. Though viewed by learners with negative attitude and hatred, the paper reveals that the use of games and activities can make the physical and Health education enjoyable. In the paper, practice, motivation, understanding and suppression of anxiety are some of the reasons behind the use of games in physical and Health education teaching and learning. Since Physical and Health Education is regarded as a dreaded subject to most learners, the paper concluded that basic facts must be learned before moving to basic application and each level of application should build on already learned materials.

Keywords: Application, Gaming Techniques, Quality Tool, Teaching, Physical, Health Education

INTRODUCTION

The uses of games in teaching are very important to the overall growth and mental development of a child. Medically, games are the most important techniques for teaching and learning. This is because it creates a perfect balance on the part of the learning. Based on the saying that “all work without play makes Jack a dull boy”. Thus at the kindergarten and primary level, games are inevitable tool for enhanced learning. In gaming techniques, a teacher presents an activity to a child who is always the learner which is aimed at teaching the how to play and introduces him or her to socially established ways of a game action.

Game activities begin to evolve actively in early childhood and its basic elements formed in this period will have an impact on the success of game development in the future. The leading role in the early age educational process belongs to parents. Their competent behaviour geared towards the interests of their child's developing personality is the basis for future success. This implies that game is a structured activity with set rules for play in which two or more students interact to reach clearly designated instructional objectives (Harbor-Peters, 2001).

Participation in games in child starts to develop at an early age. This implies that they must be actively involved in the gaming activity so as to help develop their cognitive, affective and psychomotor mental. The most important condition for successful development of children's gaming activity is the participation of a sports teacher who will help to nurture their game skills. Gaming skills being an integral part of an adult's gaming positions allow them to operate basic game elements.. Inadequate development of parents' gaming skills is a barrier to the establishment of children's gaming activity.

Implementation of Games in Primary School Curriculum

Curriculum planners are always making efforts to include different types of methods and strategies for teaching and learning of the subject, but always forgetting games. There are doubts as to whether secondary school teacher education programs in Physical and Health education pay any attention to helping prospective teachers of the subject acquire necessary competencies in designing and using mathematical games (Kankia, 2008). It has been revealed by Adeniyi (1988) that 98% of Physical and Health education lessons in Nigerian junior secondary schools are conducted using either development or practice activities, while only 20% of the lessons involve games methods.

However, persistent practice in physical and Health education activities are often burdensome, tasking and creates considerable tension. It makes learning unpleasant, less stimulating and less motivating. But games relax tension; clear boredom and foster environment where teaching and learning are pleasant, interesting, exciting, stimulating, motivating and at the same time improve student's performance in Physical and Health education (Crowe, 1973). Games develop fun, pleasure, satisfaction and a sense of competitiveness in the learners. They also improve and promote creative skills, problem-solving ability and bring about effective and retentive learning. Hence, there is every need to place special emphasis on teaching and learning through games (Mesch, 2006). Akpan (1988) asserted that educators could improve the teaching and learning of the subject through games particularly at the early stage of education. He further stated that, "children are natural lovers of games, hence it could be a good strategy to incorporate and consolidate teaching and learning with games" (pp.22-23).

Children develop knowledge in part through their play and exploration of the world around them. This implies that for learning to be swift, game must be involved. Mesch (2006) posit that a learner remembers one-fifth of what he hears, one-half of what he sees and three-quarters of what he does. With games learners will understand, remember and perform very well in not only physical and health education but also in other subjects

Advantages of Using Games in Teaching-Learning

Teaching/learning helps learners find meaning in their environment. As they learn to reason, connect ideas, analyze situations and think logically, they gain important tools and concepts for making sense out of a real life situation (Encarta Encyclopedia, 2002)

Firstly, game remote parent-child interaction as well as opportunities for exploring ideas and more opportunities for communication and discussion that is normally available in the classroom. Games also help to stimulate the use of mathematical language, especially if this is pre-structured. It is important that physical and health education activities are enjoyable, both in order that the parents and children can relax while engaged in a mathematical activity, and so the motivation to continue will be high.

Secondly, Games are highly motivating because the child is actively participating and is in control. Thirdly, it involves immediate feedback and an element of competition. Also, games have well-defined limits and directions. Again, games are meaningful experiences, somewhere between concrete reality and the abstract world. Finally, Games can be used to consolidate class work or to encourage and enable a child to extend his or her skills. From the researcher's point of view, experiences shows that ideally games should meet the following criteria:

- a. Enjoyable
- b. Allow equal competition or co-operation between child and parent
- c. Easy to understand
- d. Flexible and allow extension
- e. Encourage discussion
- f. Not look like school work
- g. Attractive
- h. Well packaged and easily kept together

i. Inexpensive.

Reasons for Using Games in Teaching Physical and Health Education

Games in teaching are important based on the following reasons

Practice: Using games to teach ensures that pupils are practicing facts and formulas, even if their practice is limited to the classroom. Students not only recite formulas through games, but they learn how to put the formulas into practice in common applications. Such practice helps students develop the ability to solve problems and build on their knowledge for higher level processes.

Motivation: Many students find learning tedious and boring. Using games to teach generates excitement, making learning a fun subject for students. When the subject is interesting, students are more willing to study. In addition, games that allow for competition in class motivate students to study because they want to do well in the competition. This is especially true in younger students who may be motivated simply by the prospect of learning.

Anxiety: To most people teaching of physical and health education is a subject that creates anxiety for students of all ages. Because games focus on fun, rather than performance, games are excellent method of reducing Math-related anxiety in students. In addition, games allow students to see that other students are at various levels of competence in physical and Health education, which helps to ease the anxiety that comes with the fear of being behind other students.

Understanding: Students may not fully understand certain Physical and Health Education concepts or they may be able to understand concepts without being able to apply them. Using games to teach can help students develop a better understanding of both concepts and applications.

Other Benefits of Using Games in teaching

The advantages of using games in a mathematical programme have been summarised in an article by Davies (1995) who researched the literature available at the time.

- i. Meaningful situations - for the application of mathematical skills are created by games
- ii. Motivation - children freely choose to participate and enjoy playing
- iii. Positive attitude - Games provide opportunities for building self-concept and developing positive attitudes towards physical and Health education , through reducing the fear of failure and error;
- iv. Increased learning - in comparison to more formal activities, greater learning can occur through games due to the increased interaction between children, opportunities to test intuitive ideas and problem solving strategies
- v. Different levels - Games can allow children to operate at different levels of thinking and to learn from each other. In a group of children playing a game, one child might be encountering a concept for the first time, another may be developing his/her understanding of the concept, a third consolidating previously learned concepts
- vi. Assessment - children's thinking often becomes apparent through the actions and decisions they make during a game, so the teacher has the opportunity to carry out diagnosis and assessment of learning in a non-threatening situation
- vii. Home and school - Games provide 'hands-on' interactive tasks for both school and home
- viii. Independence - Children can work independently of the teacher. The rules of the game and the children's motivation usually keep them on task.

Few language barriers: an additional benefit becomes evident when children from non-English-speaking backgrounds are involved. The basic structures of some games are common to many cultures, and the procedures of simple games can be quickly learned through observation. Children who are reluctant to

participate in other mathematical activities because of language barriers will often join in a game, and so gain access to the mathematical learning as well as engage in structured social interaction.

Hints for Successful Classroom Games

These tips for successful classroom games according to Alridge and Badham (1993) are as follows;

- i. Make sure the game matches the mathematical objective
- ii. Use games for specific purposes, not just time-fillers
- iii. Keep the number of players from two to four, so that turns come around quickly
- iv. The game should have enough of an element of chance so that it allows weaker students to feel that they a chance of winning
- v. Keep the game completion time short
- vi. Use five or six 'basic' game structures so the children become familiar with the rules - vary the physical and Health education rather than the rules
- vii. Send an established game home with a child for homework
- viii. Invite children to create their own board games or variations of known games.

Constraints of using games in teaching

One of the constraints in the use of games could come from lack of re-enforcement on the part of the teachers that will go all out to produce games that will match the concepts in their scheme of work. Most teachers feel it is a waste of time teaching with games because according to most of them, it is time consuming and too cumbersome.

SUMMARY

Games cannot be left out in the teaching and learning of all subjects in school. This is because of its medical implication to all. Without game, learning will not be stimulated and achieved. It is a well known fact that the human brain requires a little of exercise and such exercise can only be achieved through games. The cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain of learning requires mental exercise to achieve maximally, games are important in our quest for academic success. Most advanced countries in the world rely on games for survival. Thus physical and health education is the basic solution for enhanced learning. Using games to teach Physical and Health Education helps learners in several ways. It helps in making teaching/learning more interesting to the students and less stressful. By observing other students and listening during the games, students will develop the understanding they may have missed during tedious lectures and homework. Hence there is need not only to formulate policies attracting games in the school curriculum but to fully implement gaming techniques in all academic undertakings in schools.

CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, the use of games either frequently or sometimes is a term for consolidating already learned concepts. This paper has shown that if games were widely available and teachers were exposed to the theory and construction of games, they would happily consider them as an effective and necessary instructional approach. It will sensitize teachers, researchers, and parents to take up creative art of designing Physical and Health Education games that will stimulate pupils' interest in studying physical and Health Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from some of the games reviewed in this paper the researchers are of the opinion that if the recommendations highlighted below are taken into consideration they will go a long way to reduce to the barest minimum the constraints:

1. Policy makers should have a clear vision concerning Physical and Health Education and its place in the society.
2. Introduction of games in the teaching/learning all students irrespective of their area of discipline will help improve the learning situation.
3. Students' should be motivated, with the use of games.

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