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Physical education for persons with disabilities – current scenario

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Abstract

Physical education is an educational programme which is related to the physical development of the human body. It is one of the main components in the school curriculum helps students develop physical fitness, discipline and confidence. Students with disabilities are facing difficulties in participating sports and games. Adapted physical education is about meeting the unique needs of individuals with disabilities in physical activities. Adapted physical education deals with modifications in procedure, instruction, task, equipment and environment related to physical activities. The objective of this article is to find out the current scenario of physical educational programmes available for persons with disabilities in India. Studies reveal that students with disabilities are partially included in the physical activities conducted in schools. The reasons may be due to lack of awareness among physical education teachers about adaptation, inadequate infrastructure and school environment.

Keywords: Physical education, adapted physical education, persons with disability

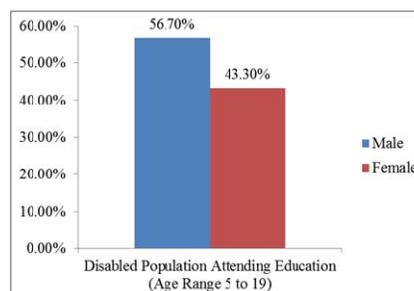
Introduction

“You will be nearer to heaven through a game of football than through the study of Gita”

- Swami Vivekananda

Physical Education is an integral part of school curriculum in India. The aim of the physical education is to develop physical fitness and the ability to perform activities with effective manner. Physical education components are sports, outdoor education, dance, gymnastics, aquatics and games. Inclusion is an approach to include students with special needs to get equal opportunities in aspects. Inclusive education means that all students attend and get education in regular school to learn, contribute and participate in all activities. Equality in education includes provision of educational opportunities for all, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, sex and location. Adapted physical education is about meeting the unique needs of individual students with disabilities in physical activities. In adapted physical education the activities are provided to persons with disabilities by modifying the procedure, instruction, task, equipment and environment. It is important for students with disabilities to participate in general physical education with age-appropriate peers.

According to the Census 2011 data, the disabled population in the age-group of 5-19 are about 65.7 lakh, out of which 40.2 lakh (61.2%) are attending educational institutions. Further, out of 40.2 lakh disabled persons attending educational institutions, 22.8 lakh (56.7%) are males and 17.4 lakh (43.3%) are females.



Source: Census 2011, India

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Review of Literature

Koldous (1964-74) made a longitudinal appraisal of secondary school physical education program in Arkansas. The sample consisted of all 459 white secondary schools and 30 percent of the 140 Negro secondary schools. A detailed questionnaire was devised and distributed to the schools. Questionnaires were returned by 304 schools (61%). The results of the study revealed that many schools 49% of teachers teaching adapted physical education having no adapted background.

Shepherd (1991) ^[5] stated that an increase of physical activity is commonly recommended to those with physical disability, but it is necessary to distinguish competitive sport from fitness programmes, remedial gymnastics and active recreation. Potential benefits of enhanced activity are reviewed. Likely psychological gains include an improvement of mood-state, with a reduction of anxiety and depression, an increase of self-esteem and feelings of greater self-efficacy. Sociological gains include new experiences, new friendships, and a countering of stigmatization. Perceived health is improved, and in a more long-term perspective there is a reduced risk of many chronic diseases. Finally, there is a greater likelihood of employment, with less absenteeism and enhanced productivity. Both the health and the industrial benefits have a potential to yield cost savings that could make an important contribution toward the expense of suitably adapted physical activity programmes. It is concluded that the physically disabled should be encouraged to engage in physical activity, although further large-scale longitudinal studies are needed to determine the optimal type of programme for such individuals.

Dash (1997) ^[1] indicated that most of the children with disabilities can play a number of games without any support or special effort. Little effort is needed to make the games adapted to children with visual and multiple disabilities and children with orthopaedic disabilities could also do the yoga Sans (yogic postures/exercises).

Hardman (1999) ^[2] reported in the World Health Organization that in many Indian schools, lack of qualified teachers and facilities, inadequate inspection, perception of physical education as a non-educational fun activity and inferiority to academic subjects, collectively contribute to either minimal provision or to not even being a feature of the curriculum. Girls are discouraged from participating in physical education clubs in many rural areas especially because of what it will do to their bodies. The Indian sub-continent generally has minimal provision for disabled students. In India, physical education lecturer asserts "there is no special provision of physical education lesson of the students with disabilities in the school. The percentage of students with disabilities in the schools is very negligible".

Singh (2001) ^[6] reported the differences in the educational needs of children with special educational needs. The excessive textual burden and the bulk of exercises in most of the subjects were also found to be irrelevant. The components of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, such as, games and sports, drawing and painting, craft and cultural activities should be an essential part of the curriculum.

Nancy *et al* (2008) ^[4] mentioned that the benefits of physical activity are universal for all children, including those with disabilities. The participation of children with disabilities in sports and recreational activities promotes inclusion, minimizes deconditioning, optimizes physical functioning, and enhances overall well-being. Despite these benefits, children with disabilities are more restricted in their

participation, have lower levels of fitness, and have higher levels of obesity than their peers without disabilities.

According to the School Health and Fitness Survey conducted by Edu Sports, a school sports and physical education company, 40 % of children in India do not have healthy Body Mass Index. The survey was conducted during the academic year 2013-2014 and covered 1, 15, 559 students in the age group between 7 to 17 years in 287 schools across 85 cities in India. Further, it revealed that the score of non-metros was better than metros in terms of BMI levels and fitness parameters. According to the survey, "The current generation of school children in India, regardless of age group or gender, look to be heading towards an unhealthy future with health and fitness levels lagging".

Importance of Physical Activities to Persons with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are less physically active than students without disabilities. Students with disabilities may also have the secondary conditions like medial, social or emotional problems in nature. Many of these problems can be cured or controlled by physical activities. In addition to that physical activities play an important role in the day to day life of students with disabilities. Through the physical education class they can develop social skills, communication skills and emotional health. These skills are directly or indirectly helpful for independent living of students with disabilities.

Problems faced by Persons with Disabilities in Sports and Games

Inclusion is the practice of ensuring the participation of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Program activities should be selected to promote and enhance the skill development of the student. Teaching methods and instructional strategies must be designed to meet each student's unique learning style. Making developmentally appropriate adaptations and modifications to physical education activities such as exercises, games, rhythms and sports in order to provide the opportunity for students to be successful is the purpose of adapted physical education. The various research results showed that the following problems are the barriers for providing better adapted physical education programme for students with disabilities in India.

- The qualified physical education teachers are not aware about the process of adapting games and sport activities for disabled students.
- Most of the Indian schools are not having the adequate infrastructure and equipments to include students with disability in the physical activities.
- The curriculum prescribed for physical education contains very few information about the adapted physical education. Only one paper deals with curriculum adaptation for students with disabilities. In many universities this paper is given as elective paper.
- After the school education, there is no provision to select physical education course for persons with disability. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) provides reservation seats for handicapped persons as per the rules of the State Government concerned. But the actual scenario is most of the universities were not providing admission for handicapped persons in the B.P.Ed and Diploma courses.

Government Initiatives International Level

‘Every human being has a fundamental right of access to physical education and sport, which are essential for the full development of his personality. The freedom to develop physical, intellectual and moral powers through physical education and sport must be guaranteed both within the educational system and in other aspects of social life’ - International Charter of Physical Education and Sports, UNESCO 1978.

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, adapted physical education programme is appropriate is for the following disability categories, namely

- Visual impairment/blindness
- Traumatic brain injury
- Mental retardation
- Speech or language impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Other health impairment
- Autism
- Serious emotional disturbance
- Orthopedic impairment
- Multiple disabilities
- Hearing impairment
- Deafness

National Level

National Policy on Education, 1968 stressed that games and sports should be developed on a large scale with the objective of improving the physical fitness and sportsmanship of the average student as well as of those who excel in this department. Where playing field and other facilities for developing a nation-wide programme of physical education do not exist, these should be provided on a priority basis.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched the UNITWIN/UNESCO chairs programme in 1992 to promote international inter-university cooperation and networking to enhance institutional capacities through knowledge sharing and collaborative work. UNITWIN/UNESCO chair in Inclusive Adapted Physical Education and Yoga (1004), established in 2012 at Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University (India). The specific objectives of this chair are to:

- carry out research in inclusive physical education in collaboration with partners, and disseminate research results widely;
- design an orientation programme in inclusive adapted physical education, and provide training to staff working in schools and colleges;
- organize seminars and conferences to facilitate networking and the sharing of knowledge and good practices; and,
- Strengthen links and cooperation with local and international institutions active in the field of inclusive adapted physical education, to achieve the above objectives.

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports formulated a scheme for promotion of sports and games among disabled. The objective of the Scheme is broad-basing participative sports among the disabled. The Scheme of Sports and Games for the Disabled has the following components:-

- Grant for Training of Coaches
- Grant for holding District, State and National level competitions for the disabled.

Special Olympics Bharat, designated as the Nodal Agency for conduct of training of community coaches and sports

competitions at district, state and national level, is being given grants for conduct of training programmes for training of community coaches and conduct of sports competitions for differently-abled children at district, state and national levels. Budgetary allocation of Rs. 4 crore has been made for the Scheme of Sports and Games for Persons with Disabilities during 2016-17.

The NEP 1986 Policy had rightly recognized the role that Yoga can play in the healthy development of the mind and the body. Yoga, which originated in ancient India, was the integral part of a civilization which led the world in every sphere of human activity for millennia. In recent decades, the international community is rediscovering Yoga and the part it can play for the healthy development of the body and mind. Indeed, only very recently, on the initiative of the Government of India there is renewed recognition of Yoga as a healthy human practice, through the declaration by the UN of the 22nd June of every year as International Yoga Day.

Change the word "adapted" to "modified" and you have the idea of Adapted Physical Education. It is GOOD teaching which adapts (modifies) the curriculum, task, equipment, and/or environment so that ALL students can fully and meaningfully participate in physical education.

- Colorado Department of Education 2007, 10)

Opportunities Available for Persons with Disabilities

Deaflympics – The Deaflympics are an International Olympic Committee (IOC) sanctioned event at which deaf athletes compete at an elite level. The summer and Winter Deaflympics are among the world's fastest growing sports events.

Special Olympics – Special Olympics is the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, providing year-round training and competitions. Special Olympics competitions are held every day, all around the world-including local, national and regional competitions, adding up to more than 108,000 events a year. These competitions include the Special Olympics World Games, which alternate between summer and winter games. Special Olympics World Games are held every two years.

Disability Commonwealth Games- The Commonwealth Paralympic Games are international, multi-sport events involving athletes with a disability from the Commonwealth countries.

Paralympic Games - A multi-sport event for athletes with physical, mental and sensorial disabilities. This includes mobility disabilities, amputees, visual disabilities and those with cerebral palsy. The Paralympic Games are held every four years, following the Olympic Games, and are governed by the International Paralympic Committee.

Conclusion

Physical education is an important component of school education meant for all children including students with disabilities. Educational institutions should provide appropriate adapted games and sports to students with disabilities to develop physical fitness. Students/ persons with disabilities must utilize the sport opportunities given by the government and private organizations.

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