

# **RAISING THE STANDARD OF TEACHING, RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH HPERSD**

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## **Abstract**

**Issues** The quality and quantity of work required to drive any economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, require a healthy and fit citizenry. It is precisely for this reason that ICHPER.SD in collaboration with UNESCO established global standards for quality physical education curricular in schools. Are HPERSD professionals in Africa given the enabling environment? The indication is that programmes are seriously threatened, evidenced by the communiqué from many Congresses in Africa. What is the way forward?

**Description:** A questionnaire was sent to HPERSD professionals in Africa to provide relevant information on the issues, and suggest the way forward based on experience, service and/or advocacy they render.

### **Lessons Learned**

- ❖ Services rendered could be better.
- ❖ Community services are minimal in some areas and from average to good in others.
- ❖ Research in Africa is Internationally driven and does not go to HPERSD programmes.

### **The Way Forward**

- For communities to benefit from research, Government and national companies must provide more funding for relevant research in HPERSD.
- More collaboration among researchers is required.
- Community services must increase qualitatively and quantitatively.
- Workload of academics must reduce to allow time for research and for Town and Gown to effectively meet.

## **Introduction/Issues**

The quality and quantity of work required to drive any economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, require a healthy and fit citizenry. Health and fitness in turn demand quality physical education programmes in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, as well as health and fitness programmes in the community. The responsibility for developing and implementing these programmes lies with Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sports and Dance (HPERSD) professionals, since the hallmark of a profession is delivery of quality services to consumers (ICHPER.SD, 2000).

For HPERSD professionals to face up to this responsibility, the need for physical education in schools and fitness and wellness programmes in the community must be understood by all stakeholders. Physical activity is an important aspect of human life and plays a fundamental role in human development. It should therefore constitute an integral part of the formal education process. (Canadian Physical Education Association, 2009; State of Michigan Board of Education, 2009).

Physical education is composed of two major components namely, human movement and physical fitness (ICHPER.SD & UNESCO, 2002). A physically educated individual is one who has learned the necessary skills to perform a variety of activities. He is physically fit and participates regularly in physical activities. He knows the implications of/and the benefits that accrue from participation in regular physical activities. He values physical activity and its contributions to a healthful life style. (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, AAHPERD 1992).

It is physically educated people that are required to drive any economy and to raise a healthy and fit population who will enjoy a good quality of life. Unfortunately however, the importance and status of physical education in schools throughout the world is increasingly being challenged, manifesting itself in reduction of dedicated time, infringement by other subjects and activities and interference on the quality of physical education curricular (ICHPER.SD & UNESCO, 2002). This view was earlier on expressed by Hardman and Marshal (2000) who stated after conducting a survey that physical education has been pushed into a defensive position, suffering from decreased time allocation, budgetary constraints, low academic status and under-evaluation by authorities.

This challenge is more apparent in Africa than in any other region of the world with exception probably of South Africa. There are primary and secondary schools in urban Africa that lack open spaces for physical education facilities. This is a serious dilemma and if not tackled aggressively, will erode the physical well-being and health of children, adolescents and eventually adults, resulting in inadequate levels of physical fitness to engage in life's functions, increasing incidences of obesity, unnecessary illnesses and premature death. Erosion of physical-well being and health results in erosion of the worlds health (ICHPER.SD & UNESCO 2002).

**It is precisely to prevent this, dilemma, that ICHPER.SD in collaboration with UNESCO established global standards for quality physical education curricular in schools. But in spite of these efforts, the threats to quality physical education in Africa is continuing unabated. What seems to be the problem in**

**Africa? Is it lack of an enabling environment? This unhealthy state of affairs continue to come up for discussion at conferences and congresses in Africa, evident in communiqués coming out of such congresses and conferences.**

At the 4<sup>th</sup> ICHPER.SD Africa Regional Congress (14 – 18 October, 2008), a symposium related to this issue of falling standards tagged “Raising the quality of Research in HPERSD and fitness”, formed part of the Congress programme of activities. The decision to embark on this study was informed by the fallout from the symposium and the communiqué that came out at the end of the congress.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to:

- (i) Determine the status of physical education in Africa.
- (ii) Assess its quality and quantity.
- (iii) Determine problems and
- (iv) Suggest the way forward.

### **Study Design**

The design of this study is purposive. It is a qualitative interpretative study utilizing selected and experienced HPERSD professionals in various parts of Africa, professionals that have consistently worked in HPERSD and related areas for a decade or more. This design was selected as it allows evaluation of status and suggestion for the way forward.

## **Methodology**

A questionnaire was developed and sent to HPERSD professionals in various regions of Africa. The questionnaire addressed issues relating to the challenges that physical education is facing in Africa. Specifically, the questions addressed issues relating to the status, quality and quantity of programmes offered in institutions, the type of community services rendered, the quality, quantity and relevance of research undertaken by HPERSD professionals in Africa.

## **Questionnaire Retrieval**

Although professionals in West, East and South Africa were reached, some did not return the questionnaire. This could be attributed to:

- Low status accorded to physical education by African Government and University Administration.
- Ignorance of the value of physical education.
- Low moral and lack of enthusiasm and/or interest on the part of HPERSD professionals as a result of the attitude of Government and institutional administrators.

## **Results/Lessons Learned**

### **Institutional Programmes**

The quality and quantity of physical education rendered in primary, secondary and other institutions could be better, given the number of HPERSD professionals turned out from tertiary institutions every year. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria train HPERSD

professionals that man primary, secondary and tertiary institutions as well as sports centers, sports clubs and health and fitness centers (Table 1). Although many of these professionals graduate each year, not all of them take up teaching or appointments related to HPERSD. Many end up working in establishments not related to the profession. This is inspite of the fact that programmes in HPERSD that are offered in most African tertiary institutions are accredited and the professionals and programmes are also evaluated regularly.

**Table 1**  
**Summary of Responses from HPERSD Professionals in Africa on Institutional services**

S/N		West Africa	Botswana
1.	HPERSD Professionals are trained for the following positions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Schools</li> <li>• Secondary Schools</li> <li>• Tertiary Institutions</li> <li>• Sports centers</li> <li>• Sports Clubs</li> <li>• Corporate fitness</li> <li>• Others, specify</li> </ul>	√ √ √ √ √ √ √	√ √ √ √ √ √ √
2.	Are HPERSD professionals fully utilized in all of these areas?	No	No
3.	Who evaluates HPERSD professionals?	Peers	Peers, Head of Department, Students.
4.	Who evaluates Academic Programmes?	Government Agencies	Government
5.	How often are programmes evaluated?	Every four years	Every five years
6.	Workload of HPERSD professionals is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light</li> <li>• Moderate</li> <li>• Heavy</li> </ul>	√	√
7.	Facilities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate</li> <li>• Inadequate</li> <li>• Non existent</li> </ul>	Inadequate & non existent in a few places	Inadequate

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## Community Services

Data from this study show that HPERSD professionals are involved in community services that include:

- Advocacy and NGO activities e.g. HIV/AIDS/STDs programmes.
- Facilitation of workshops and seminars.
- Organization and officiating of sports.
- Evaluation of physiological profiles of National athletes and teams.
- Psychological consultancy to athletes and sports clubs. (Table 2)

Results also reveal that although these services are rendered, they are minimal in many places while in other places services rendered are average. Only in a few places that services rendered could be called good.

These services are usually funded by that ask for the services rendered, or the NGO, or institution or group who desire to deliver a particular service (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Summary of Responses from HPERSD Professionals in Africa on Community Services**

S/N		West Africa	Botswana
8.	HPERSD Professionals render the following services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy/NOG activities e.g. HIV/AIDS/STIs.</li> <li>• Facilitation of workshops/seminars</li> <li>• Organization and sports officiating</li> <li>• Evaluation of physiological profiles of National Athletes</li> <li>• Psychological consultancy to Athletes &amp; sports clubs</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ - ✓
9.	Who sponsors community services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• NGO's for their own activities</li> <li>• Other groups/institutions</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓



According to responses from respondents, most research in Africa is internationally driven and very little of the funds go to fields in HPERSD. Funding from African sources are limited. This is because the culture of sponsorship of programmes and research is still at its infancy in Africa. A lot of advocacy is required. Universities in Africa are poorly funded and cannot therefore afford to fund research. They depend on external donors and these donors dictate the tone (Table 3).

**Table 3**

**Summary of Responses from HPERSD Professionals in Africa on Research**

S/N		West Africa	Botswana
10.	Who determines what research is to be done <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institution</li> <li>• Donor Organization</li> <li>• Lecturer</li> <li>• Government</li> </ul>	Institutions Donor organizations for what they want done In most cases in order to keep afloat (publish or perish culture in academia).	✓ ✓ ✓
11.	Who funds research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University</li> <li>• Government</li> <li>• Donor organization</li> <li>• Individuals</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

## **Discussion**

### **Institutional Programmes**

The main reason for the decline seen in the quality and quantity of programmes across institutions is lack of an enabling environment. This lack impacts on services rendered and creates a ripple like effect that affects all programmes.

Information gathered from this study also shows that space for erection of facilities are inadequate and non existent in some places. There are secondary schools in urban Africa that have no spaces at all. A fall out from this situation is that HPERSD professionals are made to teach other subjects. Time allotted on the time table for physical education is thus utilized for other subjects. This situation results in HPERSD professionals abandoning physical education for other subjects. There is thus, loss of enthusiasm, for sometimes HPERSD professionals are hired only on the condition that they can teach another subject.

Government is not sensitive to this situation. In Africa now, emphasis is on science and technology. The belief is that they hold the key to economic growth. There is no doubt that science and technology are important and need to be pursued vigorously, but this must not be to the exclusion of other aspects of education. Marginalization of physical education as is seen in African institutions now, violates the integrity of education, an all round education which is the right of every child is compromised when education policy favours one subject or field to the detriment of others.

Something has to be done to address the declining status of physical education in African schools. The quality and quantity of professionals will be adversely affected with time if nothing is done. Interest in HPERSD profession will dwindle, translating into a decrease in number, and in the caliber/quality of professionals trained.

### **Community Services**

According to the results, community services are inadequate. This can be attributed to a number of reasons like, inadequate funding, work overload and lack of interest by stakeholders. Data in Table 2, show that in some places, government fund community services, in some other places people who require it fund it, and in others NGO's fund whatever they want to advocate. Most NGOs fund HIV/AIDS/STIs related programmes. Government funding is minimal in HPERSD programmes because of the bias mentioned earlier in this paper. Programmes related to science and technology now receive most of the allocation.

As regards teaching load, HPERSD professionals are overloaded and have very little time left for community services. The result is that they do little or nothing at all. The overload is in turn due to the number of professionals hired and the fact that they in many cases teach courses not related to their profession in addition to their normal physical education courses.

Overload also impacts on quality and quantity negatively. Stakeholders do not show sufficient interest, probably because they are ignorant of the contribution HPERSD programmes make to the community. This lack of interest translates into little or no

funding and/or support for the programmes. Dwindling funds and/or programmes that are not qualitative lead obviously to youths and adults that are not physically educated, people whose health and fitness status is low. Such people are incapable of work productivity that can effectively drive African economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

## **Research**

Research in Africa is externally driven. African private sector institutions have a poor culture of funding, so most funding comes from outside Africa, and programmes funded by these external forces are not always informed by need. They are also not HPERSD related. The few HPERSD related funded programmes are limited to occasional seminars and workshops run for a few days or weeks for coaches of sports clubs. These programmes attract only a few HPERSD professionals who help resource people brought in from outside by funders of such programmes.

The problem that HPERSD related research face is multifaceted. In the first place, the discipline does not enjoy the same status as other academic disciplines and this is part of the reason that African universities are unable to run all the sub specializations in the discipline. Besides, government and university administrations are reluctant to provide support for the new areas because they do not appreciate the value of these areas of specialization.

Secondly, physical education programmes are made up of academic and practical programmes. Professionals in the area are few compared to the amount of work to be done. They are over burdened with heavy teaching load (Table1). They teach large

classes theory and practical and are therefore not able to give a lot of time to research. Even where they are able to develop new relevant areas like wellness and fitness programmes, they are unable to attract funding. The stakeholders do not appreciate the value and do not therefore lend support. It is like a vicious circle, one thing leads to another.

African universities on the whole are poorly funded and this adversely affect all programmes but particularly programmes in HPERSD discipline. Research coming out of this discipline is scanty and are not abreast with current developments internationally. Because funding is low, resources are limited and so is collaboration with researchers in and outside Africa. Funding research and peer collaboration are necessary to fan scientific break throughs, and provide opportunities for professional growth in Africa.

Some African universities suffer from brain drain. Because there is little funding, and scarcity of resources, highly qualified professionals are attracted to institutions with better funding and resources outside. This is a problem that must be tackled to arrest the decline in the status and the quality and quantity of programmes.

### **The Way forward**

Several things have to be done and must be tackled concurrently. Suggestions gathered from respondents of this study list advocacy as a very important place to begin. All HPERSD related professional organizations and associations in Africa must develop advocacy strategies, suitable to their unique circumstances, and address this to

government, administrators of tertiary institutions, parents, ministries of education and sport. Advocacy must aim to:

- Bring back into focus UNICEF declaration on the right of every child and adolescent to a standard of physical mental, spiritual, moral and social development essential to engage purposefully in lifes functions. (UNICEF 1990).
- Remind them that a quality physical education programme has the potential of developing a healthy and physically fit citizenry.
- ;Point out that ICHPER.SD in collaboration with UNESCO has developed global standards identifying essential knowledge and skills for a quality physical education programme (ICHPER.SD & UNICEF 2000). These standards need to be adopted and implemented in Africa as has been done by the rest of the world.
- Remind them that a quality physical education programme is the right of every child and should be within the reach of every child and adolescent irrespective of status. (UNICEF, 1990; ISESCO, UNICEF & IOC, 2005).
- Let them realize that quality physical education and related programmes in schools and the community require funding and necessary resources to run them effectively.

Advocacy must be sustained to keep the attention of stakeholders and funding sources open. Funding is the hob, the springboard from which new ideas, initiatives, programmes and relevant research can take off. To this end, African governments, institutions, businesses, and international organizations must increase funding. If

advocacy is effective, and enough awareness is created, funding will increase. More funding will result in:

- ❖ Better and more attractive HPERSD programmes in tertiary institutions.
- ❖ Reduction in brain drain (number of HPERSD professionals leaving Africa in search of greener pastures).
- ❖ More professionals will be recruited to deliver quality programmes in institutions and in the community.
- ❖ All sub-areas in HPERSD profession will be fully developed in tertiary institutions. When more and better trained professionals are available, there will be reduction in workload with more time available to conduct relevant research.

In terms of research, what is needed is research relevant to Africa, based on needs.

The discipline is multifaceted. The scientific sub specializations which at the moment are in their infancy or have not yet developed must be embraced. Research projects must focus on all areas. This will improve service delivery. Post graduate training needs to be strengthened, with adequate infrastructural support, manifesting in well equipped laboratories and facilities.

Collaboration among professionals is lacking. Collaboration fosters sharing of ideas, research findings and visions. It also helps in attracting funds from national and international sources.

## **Summary**

In summary, this study was carried out to determine the status of teaching, research and community services in Africa, how it can be raised through health physical education, recreation, sports and dance programmes. Data gathered from the study revealed a drop in quality and quantity of services delivered. The way forward is a consolidated effort by professionals, to undertake serious advocacy, to raise awareness and motivate stakeholders to support and fund better programmes in tertiary institutions. This will translate into better professionals, who will ultimately raise the quality through research and qualitative programmes in institutions and in the community.



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