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Physical Education for Today's Youth

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

A Research Paper

Presented to

Miss Carolyn Moffatt

Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment
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by

Susan Ann Todd

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION
FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

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Thesis Statement

I have dealt with the future trends in health and physical curricula and the problems young people face in physical education today. Each adult had their own ideal of recreation in their time of youth, but today's youth has a will and wisdom all its own. Thus, they must be permitted to see health and recreation in the future as something to look forward to. We must work to make this possible.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

Just previous to the great panic of 1929 society in America reflected the ultimate in security and prosperity. Unemployment was confined to those who did not want to work. Farm land was bought at fabulous prices. This was a golden era in which people felt safe, enjoyed life and had securities.¹

The individual in this society naturally reflected its influence and acted accordingly in its individual manner of buying, selling, and investing. He was absorbed largely in his own interests and in his own welfare.²

These conditions changed almost overnight. Stock markets crashed and banks declared a "holiday," one that lasted in many places for eleven or twelve years.³ Boards of education felt the curtailment along with the boards of health and recreation. All of this, of course, had a direct or indirect affect upon us as citizens. This seemed to be a rude awakening but perhaps a blessing in disguise.⁴

¹Vaughn S. Blanchard, Curriculum Problems in Health and Physical Education (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1942), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 2.

³Blanchard, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴Robert W. Frederick, Student Activities in American Education (New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1965), p. 8.

Every society makes some provision for leading the young from the careless freedom of childhood to the full and responsible participation as a adult in the affairs of the group. No child is ever born, a socialized being; he has to be taught the behavior which makes him acceptable in society. The student's nonclassroom activities are of real and immediate importance.⁵

Society depends on schools to reach out and give physical education opportunities to the youth. Each student must want to be fit and each adult must want to accept the responsibility of providing physical education for young people. But the school cannot help its youth alone. They must have the help of the church, community, and the home. So if the society as a whole will work together, more people will benefit from the efforts put forth.⁶

Physical education is not new or unique in our time. Much of the culture of ancient civilizations is embodied in the natural survival or ceremonial activities of the people. The modern physical education activities are based on the natural physical education activities of the primitive times. Among the contribution of many nations to the accumulated heritage of physical education activities

⁵Delbert Oberteuffer and Celeste Ulrich, Physical Education (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 4.

⁶Charles A. Bucher, Foundations of Physical Education (St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby Company, 1960), p. 1.

were those of the early Greeks of the Homeric era, 1100 B. C.--800 B. C. This included javelin throwing, distance running, discus throwing, and boxing.⁷ The Romans emphasized the spectator sports.⁸ There is no country that has not had some form of physical education.⁹ Physical education in the United States began in the 1870's. Colleges began the first formal physical exercises. Physical education is considered to be one of the oldest forms of education.¹⁰

Physical education was emphasized because the life in large cities cut down on the normal forms of exercise done by children. Health examinations showed the need of correcting physical defects during the early years of school. This was also a good way to use up leisure hours.¹¹

Some curriculum has been developed with the selection of content based solely upon the interests of the child. This is a mistake just as it is a mistake to disregard the interests of the child entirely. Children's interests in

⁷William D. Halsey (ed.), Collier's Encyclopedia (The Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., 1963), vol. 19, pp. 1-2.

⁸William Bridgwater and Seymour Kurtz, The Columbia Encyclopedia (New York: 1963), vol. 1, p. 1658.

⁹The Encyclopedia Americana (New York: Americana Corporation, 1954), vol. 22, pp. 31-35.

¹⁰William Benton, Encyclopaedia Britannica (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1969), vol. 17, pp. 1014-1015.

¹¹The World Book Encyclopedia (Chicago: Field Enterprises, Inc., 1951), vol. 13, pp. 6309-6312.

physical education vary with growth and development, sex, racial characteristics, heredity, and environmental factors. These interests should be weighed and evaluated and then measured against adult judgment as to the consideration that shall be given them when activities are selected.¹² Children oftentimes may like to do things that others see as being harmful because of growth conditions, for example, of which they may be ignorant. There are other likes and dislikes, however, which rise inherently from youth, that many older people forget. Heed should be taken of these lest we err along the lines of superimposition without regard to an environment or a society that has changed quite radically. Each community has its own problems. They have affected the interests of children in health and physical education. That should be considered in adapting the curriculum materials to the interests of the child.¹³

Some teachers succeed in schools regardless of the racial predominance in a given school. Others succeed in one school and do miserably in another.¹⁴ Temperament varies in the Italian, Polish, Jewish, Bohemian, colored and white American races. One may be sluggish and therefore

¹²Clark W. Hetherington, School Program in Physical Education (New York: The World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, 1922), p. 2.

¹³Gladys Andrews, Physical Education for Today's Boys and Girls (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1966), p. 388.

¹⁴Raymond Synder, Professional Preparation in Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1954), p. 260.

require the selection of materials that will stimulate and draw out expression and enthusiasm. Another may be exuberant and overflowing with animal spirits to the extent that materials should be selected so as to avoid over-stimulation. So whatever the case, the teacher must be able to communicate with each child no matter what the color of his skin.¹⁵

All activities in which people engage primarily to enjoy other people are social. The motive dominating the act determines the character of the act and the proper use of the term social. As with all human activities and motivations, nothing is ever pure. Motives are almost always mixed. Physical education offers one of the most fertile fields of the principle of life.¹⁶

Social activities range from a stroll across the campus to a formal ball. When two or more people get together to enjoy each other in any way, a social activity has taken place.

The values which could be achieved through expert management of social activities in the school and in the home are nothing short of richly rewarding in all their

¹⁵Charles C. Cowell, Modern Principles and Methods in Secondary School Physical Education (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1965), p. 150.

¹⁶"Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education," Bureau of Education, United States Department of Interior, Bulletin No. 35, Washington, 1918.

many phases.¹⁷ Social activities serve to transform the awkward, shy, boisterous, and crude youngster into a relaxed, knowledgeable, skillful, and attractive adult who is a good companion, a sensitive lover, and a satisfying partner in marriage.¹⁸

Educational authorities are quite properly, and by necessity, concerned with the management of social activities.¹⁹ The symptoms, causes and effects are always difficult to unravel. About these educationists can do little directly--which may suggest that Americans have lost faith in education as a way to peace, security, quietude, and a good life. Without seeking to find answers to the problems of physical education for youths today, we will be facing dangers that could be destructive to our nation.²⁰

Throughout the world, man appears to be living a more and more inactive life.²¹ He rides instead of walks, sits instead of stands, and watches instead of participating.

¹⁷ Jackson N. Sharman, Modern Principles of Physical Education (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1937), p. 171.

¹⁸ Carl E. Willgoose, Evaluation in Health Education and Physical Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961), p. 215.

¹⁹ Education and the Good Life, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1926), p. 123.

²⁰ Frederick, op. cit., p. 58.

²¹ Bucher, op. cit., p. 87.

Dr. Robert Milliken, a Nobel prize winner in science, has said, "The age of invention brought the age of discovery; the age of discovery brought the age of power; the age of power brought the age of leisure with its many unsolved problems."²²

In this twentieth century atomic world it seems that Americans are becoming more and more "sitdownish." People dream of times when laborsaving devices will give them more leisure hours. The nation's technology is directed toward this end, but how does the public spend these leisure hours? If this country is to be strong, society has the responsibility of seeing that man spends this leisure time in a manner which will be conducive to his well-being.²³

It is not difficult to see the trend in men's lives with atomic development. Forecasts may be made for more luxurious ways to travel, more efficient laborsaving devices, and a thousand and one gadgets which will free man from arduous duties and give them more free time. The day of air travel which exceeds the speed of sound, the day of 150 miles to a gallon of gasoline, and the day of vast conveyor systems that will carry people from point to point is at hand.²⁴ One man has said, "Man can half control his doom." The future of this country in the atomic era will

²²Frederick, op. cit., p. 88.

²³Eugene W. Nixon, An Introduction to Physical Education (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1947), p. 148-153.

²⁴Frederick, op. cit., p. 95.

depend to a great extent on how these added leisure hours are spent. In ancient Rome, ill-spent leisure was a contributing cause to the fall of a great civilization.²⁵ Physical and mental decay resulted because this ancient people became victims of inactivity and suffered from indulgence. Is America going to follow the way of ancient Rome? Physical education cannot in itself prevent American civilization from taking this road, but it can be a contributing factor toward the better use of leisure time and the leading of a vigorous and healthier life on the part of everyone, especially our eager youth.²⁶

Man is finding it very difficult to adjust his nervous system and his emotions to the fast pace he lives in modern-day America. He finds it difficult to free himself from hate, worry, and fear. He finds it difficult to adjust himself to the bright lights, the screeching noises, the jostling crowds, and the rushing madness of urban and city life. He finds it difficult to refrain from engaging in a highly competitive race for a higher salary and better position than his fellow worker. He finds it difficult to relax and enjoy living.²⁷

Today, however, man is a victim of his mode of life. He cannot stand the mad pace and, as a result, it is literally

²⁵Frederick, op. cit., p. 89.

²⁶Ibid., p. 90.

²⁷Ibid., p. 95.

"killing him off." Physical education activities may contribute considerably in relieving the tension of modern-day living.²⁸

The utter futility of prognostication when the entire world is at war is self-evident. What the future may hold is pure conjecture. Therefore, what the program of health and physical education may be one, ten, fifteen, or twenty years from now cannot be foretold with any degree of accuracy. It is only possible to point out certain pertinent facts and conditions that may or may not be indices of future trends. Such facts are still based on the assumption that democracy will live in this country.²⁹

It has been stated that physical education curricula have always reflected the society of any given period. This has been true in Greece, Rome, Germany, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, and the United States.³⁰ It is probably safe to predict that this will hold true in the future. When a nation is faced with a serious emergency all the forces of that nation are gathered to combat the situation. As this country rallies to national defense problems of mechanization and man power, health and physical education faces a challenge of conserving and improving the physical fitness of school boys and girls.

²⁸ Jay B. Nash, Physical Education--Its Interpretations and Objectives (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1963), p. 186.

²⁹ Mabel Lee, The Conduct of Physical Education (New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1937), p. 1-15.

³⁰ Bucher, op. cit., p. 97.

Play and exercise should not be put away with one's commencement gown and mortarboard when high school or college is finished--they are not solely the possession of youth. Regardless of sex and regardless of age, they should be part of one's routine throughout life. They will supply many mental, physical, and social dividends which will contribute in great measure to a rich and full life.³¹

America was built on faith in man and in his ability to make his future all that it could and ought to be. The gradual cosmic demotion of man and his planet--however much it may have induced abandonment of hope in adults--has failed to convince the young that there was no fun to be had in living. Youth, it appears, has a wisdom and a will all its own. Adults must learn to trust the young, to teach them concern for the welfare of all men on a personal and planetary scale, and to guide their actions in the conviction that the future will indeed be bright.³²

³¹ E. D. Brinley, The Physical Educator, Phi Epsilon Kappa Fraternity (Educational Press Association of America, March, 1969), vol. 23, no. 1.

³² Frederick, op. cit., p. 104.

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