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INCLUSION OF MARTIAL ARTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM: IMPORTANCE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Education is the process of the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. In Nigeria education system, martial arts are missing from Physical Education curriculum in primary schools. The paper presents types of martial arts in Nigeria and some of the benefits why martial arts should be included in primary school curriculum which includes self-defense, confidence, discipline and health among others. It also highlighted the approaches towards mainstreaming martial arts in primary school curriculum and 3-step procedure to build it into the Physical Education Curriculum. The paper made some useful conclusions as well as suggestions which are believed can help improve the quality of Nigerian educational system through sports.

Keywords: Martial Arts, Taekwondo, Judo, Karate, Kung-fun

Introduction

Physical education is one of the subjects in both primary and secondary schools which goal is the total development of the individual through physical activities. Educational activities in physical education are designed to promote not only the physical well-being but also the mental and social well-being of the participants. It is an avenue for engaging in developmentally appropriate physical activities designed for children to develop their fitness, gross motor skills, and health. According to Ujuagu, Uzor, Igwilo & Akpu (2020) Physical Education is a course in the curricula that utilises the learning in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in a play or movement exploration setting. In this study, it refers to an instructional program built around basic motor activities, which help achieve the goal of physical, emotional and mental wellbeing for every pupil, student and student-teachers. It includes education in health, hygiene, first aid, personal safety, and the teaching of manipulative skills. It is an integral part of the schooling process.

Today, martial arts are studied for various reasons, including fitness, sport, self-defense, combat skills, self-cultivation (meditation),

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mental discipline, character development, self-confidence, and as a complementary or alternative therapy for some medical conditions. Eran (2020) expressed that there many reasons why martial arts should be taught in school. However, the expense and time dedication of various martial arts tends to reserve the practice only for socioeconomic elites & middle-class that have a surplus of both. In foreign counties that take pride in their history of martial arts classes and competitive teams are offered in public schools, making the practice accessible to all persons. In the United States and most Europe, self-defense is not taught at schools. Yes, schools have after-school clubs with trainers from both inside and outside the school using the gyms and classroom to teach a vast range of martial arts, but schools very rarely have it on their curriculum, let alone as a core subjects. Mahota (2021) stated that new research shows that obesity levels are still rising in the first world at an astonishing rate, some suggesting that martial arts may be a good alternative to help combat obesity and also help children become better adapted to the wider world in terms of self-defense and discipline.

Indiscipline and behavioural issues have become a problem among youths in contemporary society. Physical education is one of the subjects in both primary and secondary schools which goal is the total development of the individual through physical activities. In Nigeria, martial arts are missing from Physical Education curriculum in schools. Martial arts are being practiced mainly at recreational centers and clubs in business to make money and for entertainment. There are many arguments why martial arts are not in the physical education curriculum which includes that martial arts classes might be dangerous because martial art is the act of hitting people. If it was part of a Physical Education curriculum, martial arts could become a popular alternative for students who are not into other sports such as football, rugby, tennis and basketball. In a controlled environment, martial arts are educational, can be safe, exciting and no more dangerous than football, basketball or any other contact sports. There is need therefore for curriculum makers, so as probably to include martial arts in the school curriculum the benefits therein and close this existing gap.

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Martial Arts

Martial arts are combination of various sport skills that compel an individual to use hands and feet for self-defense or attack in other words called combat practices. They are practiced for different reasons such as law enforcement applications, mental orientations, entertainment purposes, self-defense and military purposes among others. The fighting arts of eastern Asia reveals the ancient martial arts. Initially, this combat practice was referred to the European combating system of the early 1550s.

According to Mohta (2021), martial arts is a tradition of combat or fighting sports practiced for a number of reasons, including self-defense; military, law enforcement, competition and even mental and physical wellbeing. Martial arts originated from

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Eastern countries, the practice is also a way of keeping the culture heritage of a region alive. Martial arts are commonly divided into two namely armed and unarmed arts. The armed includes archery, spearmanship and swordsmanship while the unarmed uses the feet and hands to combat. Some popular martial arts include: Karate, kickboxing, taekwondo, judo, Dambe, Wrestling, Kung-fu, jiu-jitsu to mention but a few.

According to Elite Martial arts (2021), martial arts are made of series of different styles and fighting systems which include fencing, sambo, savate, stick-fighting, shooto, systema, taekwondo, jujutsu, aikido, boxing, mixed martial arts, Brazilian jiu-jutsu, Muay Thai, Karate, hapkwo, judo, kravmaga, kickboxing, wing chun, silat, arnis, capoeira, marine corps martial arts, kenpo, shotokan, wrestling, Tai chi and jeetkune Do among others. All these consist of a large number of distinct styles of defense in martial arts but only a few of them are being practicing in Nigeria presently. These kinds of martial arts mentioned below are being practicing in Nigeria purposely for entertainment, self-defense as well as a sports game: boxing, kickboxing, karate, mixed martial arts, wrestling, and taekwondo and judo game.

Type of Martial Arts in Nigeria

1. **Boxing**: On a separate basis, **boxing** as a martial art is a combat sport comprising of two engaged in throwing a striking blow at each other for a programmed set of time in a boxing platform in other words called boxing ring. Competitive boxing today comprises the amateur and professional boxing games which are both Olympics and Commonwealth games known as common fixtures in international tournaments.
2. **Kickboxing** is a group of hand-to-hand combat between two or more opponents taking a standing position while engaging in the fight. It is known to be a competitive fighting combat that involves one on one punch throwing and kicking strategy. This type of martial art got its historical origin from boxing and karate.
3. **Mixed Martial Arts** abbreviated to MMA is a full contact combat sport that permits close fighting techniques and striking as the opponents stand on the ground as they apply several other techniques involved in martial arts for self-defense.
4. **Wrestling** is a type of combat sport that involves grappling with an opponent using different techniques such as takedowns, throws, clinch fighting and other forms of holds to control the opposing partner. In this type of martial art, one of the opponents struggles to hold the other down to the ground according to the code of rules and as well within the predetermined time.
5. **Professional Wrestling,** on the other hand, is a type of sports entertainment combining theatrical performances and competitive sports/games

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that require physical skills, there is another type of wrestling known as **arm wrestling** and is very popular as well in Nigeria.

6. **Taekwondo** is a combat sport, specifically a Korean martial art and a recognised way of life for enthusiast across the globe. It is characterised by jumping and several kicking techniques such as head height kicking, spinning kicking and fast kicking against the opponent.
7. **Judo Game** is modern Japanese martial arts and a competitive combat that allows an opponent to take down the other on the ground using a joint lock technique or chock as a defense mechanism to win the game.

Benefits of Martial Arts in School Curriculum

Martial arts training can benefit people of all ages, from young children to adults. Whether they want to learn self-defense or work toward a black belt, taking a martial arts class can help them both in school and at home. According to Bernardo (2020), there are numerous benefits of Martial arts in the school curriculum which includes the following:

1. **Self-Defense**: Martial arts develop confidence and focus. The most obvious reason why you should learn martial arts is that it teaches you how to defend yourself. It is undeniable that there is violence in the world. It occurs unexpectedly and without regard for who the victim is. Violence can affect all of us. It is important to be prepared for such occurrences, and the crux of training is to learn fighting skills. Not only do you learn specific techniques, but you also develop toughness and stamina needed to endure a physical altercation. This knowledge and conditioning lead to other benefits besides just being equipped with techniques.
2. **Confidence**: Martial arts inspires confidence because you can handle yourself physically, you begin to develop confidence in yourself and your capabilities. You walk taller with your head up; you're prepared, calm, and self-assured. You would be surprised at the change in your mental attitude after a decent sparring session at the dojo. You learn that you can endure, that you can apply real self-defense techniques, and that you are capable and strong.
3. **Focus and Awareness**: In training, you must be very aware of your actions and the people around you. You become more aware of your environment, which helps to keep you safe out in the world. This broadening of awareness is important in life. It can help in school, work, and in your relationships. It can generally help you navigate your way through life.
4. **Martial artists form solid relationships**. It's an understatement to say that you make friends in martial arts. My experience is that your teacher and fellow students are family. Your instructor is more than just a teacher; he becomes a confidant, a father, and a counselor. Your friends at the dojo are part of your social circle, helping you through thick and thin. They become good people to have in your corner.
5. **Reduces Stress**: There are plenty of bad ways to reduce stress, and many of us have

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tried all of them. Martial arts offer a positive way to reduce stress. You direct your energy in a physical way that is beneficial, and there is no doubt that hitting a punching bag is a great way to release pent up energy and stress.

6. **Health**: Martial art is a complete workout. You build stamina, strength, and flexibility. You also develop coordination and balance. You feel better physically as your body becomes stronger and more capable. You breathe better, and blood flows to all the necessary parts of the body more freely. Martial art is a fun way to stay in shape.

7. **Improves Character**: At the dojo, you learn respect, discipline, how to cooperate, and how to be humble. This is all part of perfecting your art. You work with your partners and learn from your instructor in a setting where bowing and handshakes are commonplace and helping each other is the norm. You must focus and be open to being corrected. You use criticism to improve yourself. The martial arts school is a great environment for learning the importance of perseverance and excellence.



8. Handle bullying situations

Schools are supposed to be a safe place for child to learn and grow, but unfortunately, it's not always like this. Kids can be mean to each other, so it's important to ensure that your child knows how to handle bullying situations. Fortunately, martial arts will teach your kids with the necessary skills to react and defend themselves in such situations. The more they train, the more they'll learn to keep calm when confronted by bullies and learn to avoid getting into such situations as much as they can. Martial arts have always been about peace, so your kids will stick to non-violent

conflict resolution skills in their training, and stay out of trouble.

9. **Work under pressure:** With diverse exams, projects and other deadlines, school can be very stressful time for your children. According to the way your kids handle stress, it can either make them crack or help them get stronger. If you want your children to perform great, even under pressure, martial arts help your child to get there. In our programs, the kids learn to handle various situations that require thinking rationally and staying calm before acting. Furthermore, martial arts help your children to de-stress after a long day at school thanks to the endorphins their brains release after a good training!

10. **Discipline:** Discipline is essential for success in martial arts and in school as well. By attending our programs on a regular basis, children learn good work ethic. They'll see that regular training pays off and learn to appreciate the progress achieved through their discipline. Proving that the skills learned in martial art classes are adopted into everyday life, your child will also benefit in school thanks to the learned discipline. They'll learn to be consistent with their homework and respect their teachers and classmates.

Approaches toward mainstreaming Martial Arts in school curriculum

The approaches should be considered to build martial arts in school curriculum thus:

1. **Provision of Basic Facilities and Equipment for Martial arts training**: The Federal should provide the basic quality martial arts facilities and equipment for the schools since these equipments are relatively costly. They include; free standing weight bags for learning how to put power behind the speed of your punches and kicks, training mitts and targets for learning how to accurately hit your target and body shields which is generally held by instructors, who have been trained in how to properly handle them. Think of body shield as a way to become a human free-standing bag.
2. **Training of Quality Personnel:** Some instructors have completed martial arts teacher-training certification **but** surprisingly small percentage of professional instructors has gone through a teacher-training program. These instructors tend to run very impressive schools, with top gear students, and have a long career (just an observation, not an absolute). Teacher-training programs help instructors master the art of teaching, which is a completely different art than that of self defense or fighting. This training enables instructors to better connect with their students, teach in a positive way, organise an effective curriculum, handle issues within their academies, and grow their schools for the benefit of their staff members and communities.
3. **Legislation by Government:** Educational administrators and curriculum developers require a set of rules and regulations needed to guide both actions and inactions of educational actors for effective implementation of life wire of the schools called ''Curriculum''.

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The Nigerian education industry is dynamic and laws must continue to reel out backing it, so as to guarantee idealism, synchronism, existentialism, pragmatism and progressivism. According to Adesugba and Temitope (2019), Nigerian curriculum changes from 1999-2016. This period (1999-2016) is another democratic setting in which the country is under presidential Government. Education system has changed from 6-3-3-4 to 9-3-4 in which 9-implies the 9years of Basic Education programme. There are three major curricula designed for this 9-year of Basic Education. These include; (1) Lower Basic Education Curriculum (primaries1-3) (2) Middle Basic Education Curriculum (primaries4-6) and (3) Upper Basic Education Curriculum (JSS1-3). These Curricula involve the following subjects; English Studies, Mathematics, Social Studies, Basic Science, Basic Technology, Physical and Health Education, Cultural and Creative Arts, Home Economics, Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Agricultural Science, Hausa Language, Igbo Language, Arabic, Yoruba Language, French, Civic, Life Skills, Computer Education, and Basic Science Technology (NPE,2004).

4. **Training of Quality Personnel**: Many aspiring martial artists fall in love with their art, and would be honored to spread its life-changing impact to others. Some have a missionary-like drive to teach and make the world a better place through the tenets of Tae Kwon Do or the brotherhood of BJJ, for example. Most of these martial artists have the best of intentions, and some of them open their own school or teach others in some capacity (William, 2021).
5. **Use of Black Belt to teach Martial Arts:** Most martial arts instructors hold at least a black belt in the style they teach. Some schools say that only those who hold black belts are able to teach the style and rank students. This is an old approach, based upon the "pass it on" philosophy of oral traditions. Back in yesteryear, a black belt (i.e., a highly-advanced student, even before belts were used) would help beginners with their training. This did not mean that he or she would necessarily start a training school and teach 80-100 students each night, like what you see in a modern-day school.

3-Step Procedure to Build Martial Arts in the School Curriculum

According to Eran (2021), the three simple ways to build martial arts into the school curriculum thus:

1. **Make list of all the Concepts, Techniques and Routines**: At this stage, it is important you just get everything out Here you don't have to assume or over think it. You have to make a list of all the techniques, concepts and routines you want to know from white belt to black belt
2. **Group all the items into three groups**: In this stage, you have to group all the items listed out into beginner, intermediate and advanced depending on where they fit into. You can always move

material around later. The most important thing is that you get it done so you have something to work with.

3. **Allocation of time to teach it**: Here you have to map out rough estimate of how long it will take to cycle each belt or skill level. This is a roadmap for you, but you'll fine tune it as you implement it. The most important thing here is that you figure out when and for approximately how long you'll spend training on each group of materials.

Conclusion

The truth is that there aren't enough opportunities for children to get exercise in today's society. Schools across the country are experiencing budget cuts — and as a result lots of smaller clubs are getting cut. Students don't have as many options anymore. Martial arts classes don't have to be expensive; they can take the place of any Physical Education class. At the very least, schools should offer martial arts as a form of variety: a middle ground for those students who don't want to fit into gendered high school stereotypes. Martial arts at physical education curriculum will not only be a good physical exercise for students, but it will teach them good self-control.

Recommendations

1. For quality education, governments should place education as a priority in both policy and practice by including martial arts in the school curriculum.
2. Nigerian governments should make firm commitments to provide adaptive and standard sports facilities and equipment from primary school to or all levels so all can access including vulnerable or marginalized.
3. The private sector should be encouraged to invest resources in the development of educational tools such as martial arts facilities and equipment.
4. Parents and Teachers, should encourage the students to participate in martial arts classes just like other educational classes due to the benefits therein
5. NGOs should be urged to partner with youth and other groups to foster the importance of education within local communities for quality education
6. There is a great need for seminars, workshops, conferences on pedagogical approach to martial arts in schools for physical Education teachers. We cannot give what we don't have.
7. Lecturers at National Sport Commission equally need international experience and exposure on methods of teaching martial arts in schools so that they can impart that to the coaches they train.
8. Lecturers from the universities should also include martial arts in the physical education curriculum so that they will train the students who will be teaching at both primary and secondary school levels.
9. Nigerian curriculum research and Development should review, amend, and modify the existing curriculum to

add the one such as martial arts for the quality education.

10. Martial arts such as taekwondo and karate should be one of the competitive sports from primary to secondary schools.

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