



## REVIEWING THE KENYAN PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM THROUGH A DE-COLONIZATION EFFORT

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### ABSTRACT

Physical education is an educational process that uses physical activity as a means to help individuals acquire skills, fitness, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to their optimal development and well-being. The history of PE in Africa dates back to pre-colonial times. In the pre-colonial period, the traditional African physical activities and recreation were characterized by being local and community based. The recreational and physical activities reflected the lifestyle of the said community paying attention to the specific needs of that particular community. People engaged in traditional games and sports activities such as wrestling, racing exercises, stick fights, hunting with use of spears and arrows, board games, bull fights, dances, rustling among others. These activities were mainly driven by the need for survival and prestige. At the advent of colonization the Europeans introduced western and European education systems in Africa and most of their colonies. Western oriented physical education was also introduced and this opened the door to European games and competitive and team sports. This was propagated at the expense of local and traditional African physical activities which were perceived as barbaric. Consequently, physical education as a subject attracted a cold reception right from the onset. However, even though viewed negatively, the same aspects physical education aspects introduced by the colonialists have persisted in post-colonial Africa. Very little has changed in terms of the content as well as the approach to teaching. This has seen the subject relegated to the periphery in favour of what are considered academic subjects. In addition to its being viewed as being too much western oriented, physical education has also been criticized of having been introduced to achieve other non-educational objectives such as military training, training of lower-rank civil servants, transmission of middle-class values of conformity and also for deferred gratification and social control. Consequently, to date despite numerous studies linking physical education participation and cognitive development, it has been difficult to show that link in Africa. The emphasis on competitive team sports that were introduced by the colonialists has also seen the subject being viewed as of no value beyond the school especially for those with no interest in sports. This paper argues that for physical education to play its rightful role within the education sector, there is need to decolonize the teaching of the same. Teachers need to contextualize the games and sports so as to make them more relevant to the participants. They also need to emphasize on the how the skills learnt and knowledge gained can be useful beyond school life and this will make the subject more meaningful for the participants.

**Key word:** Physical Education, Curriculum, Colonization , African, Activities

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Wuest and Bucher (1999), physical education is an educational process that uses physical activity as a means to help individuals acquire skills, fitness, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to their optimal development and well-being. Conversely Kirk (1999) views physical education as one of the components that make a physical culture, which in total includes sport and health or physical activity. As a physical culture, physical education involves the use of the body and physical activities or exercises to keep fit for leisure and sport. He argues that physical education is the systematic teaching of school children to acquire knowledge and skills for long-lasting and enjoyable participation in safe physical activities to be able to lead active lives. Further, Kirk (2010) adds that, what teachers and pupils mainly do in the name of physical education is teaching and repetitious practicing of the techniques of a wide range of individual and team games, aquatic activities such as swimming, gymnastics, athletics exercise for fitness and various forms of dance. However, Torres (2014), is of the opinion that physical education is different from games, which are goal oriented and have rules and also differs from sports which possess all the characteristics of games and in addition require physical skill or prowess. Thus, it is important to understand at what point physical education started being viewed as synonymous with games and sports.

The current trends in physical education teaching and learning in Africa can be traced back to the advent of colonialism in the continent. Prior to the coming of the colonialists, most indigenous African communities had their own forms of physical activities. Most of these physical activities did not only keep them fit but were also goal and purpose oriented. For instance, they would throw spears during hunting and fishing, they would engage in dance to commemorate specific occasions, they would run after small game during hunting, they would walk in search of food for themselves and pasture and water for their animals among other physical activities. Sometimes they would even engage in wrestling for entertainment. In pre-colonial Africa, physical activities were indispensable.

Over the years, physical education has been referred to as comprehensive education content covered using physically active approach that involves teaching social, cognitive, and physical skills and achieving other goals through movement (National Academy of Sciences, 2013). However, it has faced numerous challenges in its endeavor to achieve its lifelong benefits of health-enhancing physically active lifestyles. These include limited budgetary allocations, low priority when compared to other disciplines covered in schools, negative attitudes from policy makers and implementers, its colonial legacy, pedagogical challenges, among others. The implication of these is that only a small number of people are physically active to the recommended level, and a much smaller minority continues to play the games, sports or activities that they experienced at school (Jeffrey et al., 2016). This paper attempts to trace the history of physical education in Africa and analyses how its colonial legacy has affected its implementation in schools in post-colonial Africa.

## 2. HISTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The traditional African man was unknowingly involved in physical education. This simply means that physical education was not thought of as an organized activity as we know it today. Traditionally, man did not set aside a fixed time for particular physical activities (Zimbabwe Open University 2000). Much of what he did was in the form of physical activities such as walking long distances in search of food, erecting shelters, protecting himself against fierce wild animals, foes, and the adverse environment and climbing trees or mountains to view faraway places or even swimming across rivers and streams (Wuest & Bucher 1999). The physical

activities were mainly performed for the purpose of survival and transmitting cultural knowledge. In essence these activities were indispensable since they fulfilled very vital functions in society.

During the pre-colonial period, the traditional African physical activities and recreation were characterized by being local and community based. The recreational and physical activities reflected the lifestyle of the said community paying attention to the specific needs of that particular community. For instance, people around lakes, rivers and oceans had activities that differed from highland communities. In Kenya, physical activities for recreational and health pursuits have been part of communities traditional lifestyle dating back to the period before the country of Kenya came into being as it is known today. According to Wanderi (2006), various indigenous traditional sports have prevailed in Kenya as part of the communities' culture since the history of mankind. In the traditional era (pre-colonial era), people engaged in traditional games and sports activities such as wrestling, racing exercises, stick fights, hunting with use of spears and arrows, board games, bull fights, dances, rustling among others. Survival and prestige were the main drivers of the activities, and the same evolved with the changes of the dynamic culture.

According to Shehu (2001), recreational and physical activities were part and parcel of the religious and secular life of the people and served to fulfill social functions for centuries. This implies that, even before the coming of the colonizers, African societies had their way of involving the young people in physical activities and recreation. Activities such as archery, wrestling, canoeing, tugs of war, javelin and stone throwing or bao<sup>1</sup> (a board game) were tied to the historical needs of the community and thus came to characterize traditional physical activities and recreation. Ndee (2010a) adds that, prior to colonization, many tribes in Africa played some form of team or group games, both as recreation and as training for hunting and war. Nevertheless, activities performed during this period were gender and age-discriminatory and also varied according to the values of ethnic groups. Boys engaged in games such as plays of attack, spear-throwing, hoop-and hope, hunting, chase and escape, and games for defense, while girls were more occupied with domestic activities such as fetching water, firewood and home caring, which in one way or another helped them to be active (Shehu, 2001; Ndee,2010a; Chepyator-Thomson, 2014).

Physical education and physical activities were also used to mark specific stages in a person's life. For instance the youth would be engaged in specific physical activities to prepare and initiate them into adulthood. In their study of the history of physical education in Africa, Bressan and Van Der Merwe (1992), found that games were used as opportunities for young people to practice the skills and attitudes needed for successful participation in society. These activities in the forms of games were conducted during initiation ceremonies commonly known in Kiswahili as Jando (for boys) and Unyago (for girls) with the aim of promoting general fitness and developing specific skills necessary for specific tasks in the future lives of the youth. Boys were trained on aspects that would help them protect the community in times of adversity and attacks while girls were equipped with home caring and management skills that would enable them effectively manage their households once married. Further, Mligo (2013) argues that a young person did not become a full member of the community unless he or she had undergone ritual training, called Jando and Unyago<sup>2</sup>, which prepared him or her for guardianship of the

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<sup>1</sup>Bao is a game played with pebbles, beads or large seeds on a regularly patterned playing wooden board consisting of a number of pits arranged in two or four rows.

<sup>2</sup> Jando and Unyago are rituals or initiation schools, which involve teaching young people the cultural norms of

society, parenthood and leadership. Therefore, rituals were taken as seminars that prepared young people for maturation and transition from childhood to adulthood.

According to Fafunwa (1974), even before the coming of the British, Nigeria had a traditional educational system that recognized the elements of physical activities. He further observes that, though Nigeria consisted of many ethnic groups, each with its own culture and tradition, these groups had common educational aims and objectives. However, the teaching methods differed from place to place largely due to social, economic, and geographical imperatives. He further opines that, traditional Nigerian education emphasized training the child in toileting, eating, socialization, and general behavior. Physical training was also a significant aspect of this traditional education. The African child, like his European or Asiatic counterpart, enjoyed exploring his environment and observing adults and imitating them. Physical activities, such as running, jumping, wrestling, tree climbing, and swimming provided a ready opportunity for all-round development. Omolewa (1996) concurs and acknowledges that jumping, wrestling, climbing, dancing, and swimming were all forms of traditional sports in colonial Nigeria, and were part of the inhabitants' lifestyles.

In pre-colonial Zambia, education remained mainly unguided with young boys and girls learning from their fathers and mothers respectively. This was mainly accomplished through observation, imitation, and repetition. Sometimes, they also learnt through direct instruction. Physical education was mainly in the form of the physical activity of daily life. It was essential and utilitarian in the indigenous period because it was simply part of the lives of the people at that time. People lived in clans and moved from one place to another. They were involved in activities such as swimming, hunting, fishing, gathering, walking, running dancing, climbing trees, erecting shelters and many other forms of informal physical activities (Snelson 1974). Physical education was indispensable. The children engaged in physical activities as part of play. They wrestled, raced, or chased each other and played hide-and-seek and tag (Zimbabwe Open University 2000). The traditional African man also engaged in recreational activities like dances on occasions that marked important events such as successful hunting expeditions, post-war victories, religious rites and initiations (Kakuwa 1999). Mufalali (1974) has attested to the fact that long before the Europeans set foot in Northern Rhodesia the natives were involved in activities such as swimming, wrestling, climbing, ox-racing, and traditional games.

Eventually, the demand for education grew and many subjects were added including physical education. With this addition, other forms of physical education activities were also introduced that took the form of games. Traditional games came into being, such as nsolo<sup>3</sup>, tindi<sup>4</sup> and many others still known today (Mufalali 1974; Kakuwa 2005). However, while many subjects have enjoyed immense popularity in the country's curriculum, physical education has suffered marginalization. Although the subject was taught in schools supported by the mining companies and in private schools with facilities and infrastructure as well as teacher training institutions, it was not examined. The history of physical education in Zambia shows to a large extent that physical education has barely survived the times. In the indigenous period it thrived because it was utilitarian in nature. It was essential to man; therefore man could not do without it. The indispensable character of physical education at this time was what kept it alive. The introduction of formal education killed the utilitarian aspect of physical education. It came to be

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gender roles, family life and sexuality.

<sup>3</sup> A kind of checkers common in most parts of the country.

<sup>4</sup> A spear-throwing game popular in the western part of Zambia.

seen as leisure, recreation, diversion, and fun. In essence, physical education ceased and was merely sports at this point.

### **3. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN COLONIAL AFRICA**

Over the years the coming of the colonialists has been attributed to many of the challenges and problems that Africans continue to suffer to date. For instance, the colonialists have been blamed for introducing western culture on African societies at the expense of African cultures and led to underdevelopment of the African continent. Ndee (2010b), argues that, the coming of colonialists (Germans and British) in Tanzania is linked to the distortion of the usual routines of indigenous life. The colonialists paid little or no attention to what existed before their coming. Their arrival affected the nature and kind of physical activities that people engaged in. According to Shehu (2001), the colonialists labelled the existing local games and sports as crude, wild and primitive. They further claimed that the games and sports were callous, monstrous and unpleasant to watch. African dances in particular were described as satanic and sinful to even watch. Shehu (2001) further argues that these labels and claims were intended to discourage African indigenous games and recreation activities. Additionally, the negative perceptions worked as road blocks to the transmission of the activities to future generations. This degradation and falsification slowly but surely smoothed the way for the introduction of western sports.

To further stamp their authority, the colonizers ensured that in all the colonies, western sports were canonized and constructed as obligatory activities that must be unconditionally embraced by the natives (Shehu, 2001). For instance, the Germans introduced western sports in Tanzania and ignored traditional physical and recreational activities. It was during this period that physical education was introduced into the school system. Gymnastics formed the major components of the physical education curriculum in schools. According to Ndee (2010b), the teaching of gymnastics was broadly based on gymnastics movement, order, exercise and the Swedish Ling system of free-standing exercises. Most of these activities had a broader objective in addition to aiding physical fitness of learners. Ndee (2010b) acknowledges that during the German period physical education was indeed used as a means of developing skills and instilling other values as an educational package on its own. He posits that, in Tanzania, these activities were introduced in order to train African soldiers and lower-rank civil servants particularly at the Mpwapwa Military School. He further adds that gymnastics activities played an important part in the training of lower-ranking civil servants for the colonial government and soldiers for the colonial forces, the primary task of the school system. This led to the notion that physical education was of little if any educational value. Consequently, to date physical education in Tanzania is associated with school and the skills learnt and knowledge acquired through the subject is perceived to be of no real value beyond the school setting.

Chepyator-Thomson (2014), reports that, with the departure of the Germans, the British introduced a physical education and sports syllabus with the aim of introducing British sport. They also included competitive sports which could ideally be described as physical training with the aim of making the indigenous people more physically fit for work while at the same time teaching them discipline and obedience to the government (Ndee, 2010b). Ndee (2010a) reports that, the British introduced ball games and athletics in the 1920s and 1930s in addition to the system of gymnastics and drill that had been introduced by the Germans. He concludes that most of the modern sports played in Tanzania today are of western and largely British origin. However, the British were systematic in including indigenous traditional physical activities in the school curriculum alongside the new sports and games.

With the coming of the missionary into Southern Rhodesia, there was the introduction of formal education (Mangan 1987). Schools were built mainly to teach literacy and numeracy skills, which were meant to foster an understanding of the Bible. Snelson (1974) reports that the forms of physical activity in such schools were mainly those done through apprenticeship skills, like crafts and agriculture, or others such as blacksmithing and carpentry. Chipande (2009), notes that the missionaries also introduced organized sport to the natives. However, the education was of low quality because it was poorly funded in most cases (Hinfelaar 2007).

In the spirit of racial segregation, the colonialists had their own form of education for whites only. Whites-only schools included physical education activities that were copied from Europe. At around this time, physical education in Europe consisted of games and sports (Zimbabwe Open University 2000). According to Chipande (2009), Europeans were mainly educated in Southern Rhodesia before 1912, although there were small schools for them in Lusaka and Livingstone. From 1914, several schools were opened that offered subjects like arithmetic, science, geography and English. As part of the curriculum, physical and moral welfare was offered and included medical and dental inspections, hygiene and games. The games included football, netball, cricket, hockey, and tennis.

In mission schools and teacher training colleges, physical education was timetabled but there were no specific teachers for the subject, especially in primary schools. The subject suffered little or lack of emphasis on its teaching. The concentration was mainly on competitive sport training, which was mainly for fitness, fun and a diversion from vices.

***Northern Rhodesia's Annual Report of 1948 states: "Football and athletics are becoming increasingly popular amongst Africans, who at some centres have also taken up boxing, golf and tennis. European-type indoor games spread rapidly at these centres" (Northern Rhodesia's Annual Report of 1948, p. 28).***

However, as much as the Africans were involved in "European-type" sport, they did not play together or compete with the Europeans until later, as they were not permitted by legislation. In athletics, multi-racial competitions were only permitted from 1959. In football, the Africans were only allowed to compete with Europeans in 1962. Northern Rhodesia's

***Annual Report of 1962 explains this dramatic turn of events: "On the home front tremendous strides were made in the soccer sphere. A multi-racial, semiprofessional National League was formed bringing together the best players of both races. The league experienced acute teething troubles of racial, administrative and political natures but came through the season none the worse and probably much better equipped to face the future" (Northern Rhodesia's Annual Report of 1962, p. 90).***

During the colonial period, sport was also used to inculcate western culture. Many Africans in Northern Rhodesia mistakenly thought that taking part in sport was a way to assert their position in the newly created society. However, they just ended up losing their identity and uniqueness. On the other hand, some resisted, but were met with brutal force that they could not contend with. This led to a subservience that would last for almost a century.

In Nigeria, schools were previously run by missionaries, primarily to train their adherents and prepare clergy members for the study of sacred writings and the performance of religious duties (William Boyd in Fafunwa 1974). It was not until 1918 that physical training was included in the syllabus in Nigerian schools. This was brought about by the harmonization of educational activities of the missionaries into a single entity which brought about the adoption of a common syllabus for all schools in Nigeria (Akioye, 1978). In these schools, physical training, as it was known at the time, was primarily used to maintain discipline among the children (Fafunwa,

1974). At the advent of colonialism, school programs did not differentiate between the components of physical education, health education, and recreation (Omoruan1996). The programs were also beset by problems, such as lack of qualified staff and inadequate teaching facilities and equipment, as well as the misinterpretation of the values inherent in physical education. Physical education was regarded as a nonacademic and extracurricular activity that should take place after the normal academic work of the day.

The main method of instruction in colonial Nigeria was the command style, in which the learners listened to specific instructions from the teacher and then complied rigidly. Unfortunately, this approach in teaching physical education has persisted over the years. This has made the teaching of the subject more of rote and the learners are rarely informed of the intrinsic value of participating in the same. To bridge the gap of lacking qualified personnel, schools used retired physical training instructors from the colonial Army to teach children (Laoye and Ackland 1981). The activities in this syllabus were very rigid, military in nature and devoid of enjoyment. The rigidity of this syllabus was due to the fact that it was prepared by the British soldiers who were discharged from the army after the First World War. The syllabus was composed of activities in which the soldiers were engaged during break in the war-front. The activities in the syllabus included running on the spot, running for direction, jumping, hopping, simple stunts, gymnastics, tumbling and calisthenics. The syllabus approach was quite formal and did not stress enjoyment. To make matters worse, teachers who taught children lacked the needed experience and methodology in presenting this subject effectively. The syllabus got a negative reception and its short comings easily accounted for the negative attitude of school children towards physical training even into the late fifties (Akioye, 1978).

However, the emphasis on military drills was discontinued and significant changes were made in the physical education programs in Nigerian schools when curriculum changes occurred in Britain and the colonies. The 1918 physical training syllabus was revised in 1927. The syllabus was sent to all schools in Britain and her colonies. However, few significant changes were made. The syllabus was still military and rigid in nature and did not give room for initiative or flexibility. Both parents and children still maintained their negative position against the syllabus. Ladani (1994) contends that, due to the rigidity of the syllabus, children saw physical training generally as a weapon of punishment. Therefore, physical training was not seen or accepted as a discipline designed for optimum development of the body. Children preferred cutting grass than taking part in physical training. Interestingly, the militaristic nature of the syllabus can be traced to the schools in Britain which McIntosh (1972) described thus:

***“There were two distinct traditions in Physical Education. Outside the public schools a different type of Physical Education grew up springing from several roots - military drill, calisthenics and gymnastics. From them grew the system of physical training which at the end of the century was being adopted in public elementary schools.”***

The last physical training syllabus of British origin was introduced in 1933, and remained in use in some regions in Nigeria until the late fifties. In the new syllabus, the activities in the 1918 and 1927 syllabi were overhauled, fresh activities were included and revised teaching methods were introduced, stressing encouragement. The 1933 physical training syllabus was compiled by the Board of Education of Britain and it was a total departure from the two earlier syllabi which were military in nature. The new edition of the syllabus showed a notable improvement because its primary objective was to help in the production and maintenance of a healthy body and mind.

The syllabus incorporated games and exercises that stimulated the children to perform better skills. It emphasized on physical training as a vehicle for the development of a healthy physique, qualities of alertness and sound character. Unlike the previous syllabi, it stressed on physical training as a way of providing opportunity for children to enjoy and then form habits of recreation as a carryover value. The 1933 syllabus provided general guidance on methodology of teaching with specific emphasis on teacher's voice, teaching progression, class organization in groups and teams and class supervision. The syllabus also gave lesson notes on the type of games and exercises to be taught during the lessons. However, each school was given freehand to select the type of games and exercises depending on the availability of facilities and equipment. The syllabus also provided lesson plans for the teaching of each of the content areas. The lesson plans comprised of four major components- introductory activities, class activities, group activities and games. The 1933 syllabus contained several other detailed components that characterized the physical education syllabi in the post-colonial period. The second component of the 1933 syllabus had compensatory activities and final activities. Based on these additional activities, it is safe to say that the 1933 physical training syllabus laid the foundation for modern physical education in Nigeria.

The 1933 syllabus was also more elaborate with a better focus and specific objective. It was flexible because it provided more diverse activities and there was room for initiative and enjoyment. Since there were many similarities between the 1933 syllabus and physical education syllabus of modern age, it is clear that the curriculum developers in the post-colonial era borrowed heavily from the contents of this last colonial syllabus in Nigeria. In the syllabus, activities were described along with methodology and even illustrations and pictures also describing the activities. In addition local games were included for children to enjoy and develop skills for good posture and health. The activities emphasized team spirit and development of skills required for performing both individual, dual and team sports.

However, despite the numerous improvements from the previous syllabi, the 1933 physical training syllabus had its shortcomings including: inadequate teaching facilities and apparatus; inadequate number of trained teachers to teach physical training; inadequate personnel to supervise physical training in schools; failure to make room for physically or mentally handicapped children to benefit from the program of activities; emphasis on psychomotor domain while neglecting both the cognitive and affective domains; and lack of guidance on how learners acquired the skills and lack of evaluation to determine the extent of what children had learnt. These challenges have plagued the teaching of physical education not only in Nigeria but in most countries in Africa in general to date.

#### **4. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA**

While physical activities and sports have been traced to pre-historic man, modern physical education is said to have emerged as a profession in the late 1800 (Wamukoya & Hardman, 1992). Several European and American personalities are credited as pioneers, and the ancient Greek traditions informing the development of the same (Tipton, 2014). Development of physical education and sports in Africa in general and in Kenya in particular was heavily influenced by colonization just like many other aspects of life, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Odendaal, 1990). British settlers and Asian contractors established professional teams in form of clubs as early as 1922 before the establishment of formal schools. Later, sports practiced in Britain and physical training using activities with similar biasness were introduced and promoted in schools as part of extracurricular activities. Some activities were continued after colonial era where they were included in the curriculum in form of PE lessons, while a few of the sports such as soccer,



hockey and athletics were professionally organized as early as pre-independent Kenya (Njororai, 2009). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many sports were popular in Kenya, played both professionally and as recreational physical activities, including athletics (track & field and other running events), cricket, motor sports, soccer, rugby, volleyball, basketball, swimming, boxing, handball and netball. Rounders, softball, cycling, some martial arts, tennis, table tennis, squash, badminton, golf, chess, goal ball, roller sports, horse riding, polo, weightlifting, canoeing, wrestling, mountain sports among others sports are also played in Kenya, but they do not enjoy wide participation (Embassy of the Republic of Kenya in Russian Federation, 2013). It is important to note that most of these sports are team sports and some require expensive equipment and facilities to be engaged in successfully. It is difficult to engage in most of them individually and at a local level. Consequently, once students are past school it becomes very difficult to engage in many of these activities unless one joins professional clubs that require membership fees or one takes sports as a career.

In Nigeria, the first indigenous physical training syllabus was authored by the late Harding Ekperigen and Isaac Akioye in the then Western Provinces of Nigeria. This syllabus was published by the Ministry of Education, Western Provinces in 1956. The syllabus content included: specification of frequency and duration of lessons, the outfits for pupils, teaching methodology, content/teacher's notes, equipment / apparatus and lesson plans. The syllabus laid emphasis on the need to teach physical training on daily basis and the standard minimum time was five 20 minutes periods per week, three of which were devoted to formal lessons and others to more specialized activities, such as games and swimming. It was mandatory to conduct all physical training activities outdoors whenever possible, except schools which had none were expected to set aside physical training rooms for lessons during bad weather. The children were permitted to use any type of outfit that did not hamper movement during their lessons.

In Zambia, major developments have taken place in the area of physical education since 2005. President Mwanawasa declared that physical education should be taught in all schools. The subject was introduced to the primary school examination as part of Creative and Technology Studies (CTS) and later as Expressive Arts (EA). It is now also being examined at junior and senior secondary levels. Teacher education institutions have been steadfast in training students in physical education. Despite this, the teaching of the subject still leaves much to be desired. It appears that the past as well as the present are vehemently holding the subject down.

## **5. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA AND ITS COLONIAL LEGACY**

For a very long time, physical education has been perceived to have a colonial heritage and legacy and hence its' low status in most of the African countries. For instance in Tanzania, despite the various syllabus versions, the contents of physical education have always been influenced by the colonial powers and by religious and traditional interests. The presence of gymnastics, hockey, cricket and ball games such as soccer and netball point to contents that were introduced into the education system during the colonial period. Ndee (2010a), argues that in the colonial times these ball games and sports were offered to the minority. For instance, hockey and cricket, were played in European and Asian schools during the colonial period. However, now that Tanzania is an independent state, these games are now part of the secondary school physical education syllabus. This has not stopped people from viewing the mass colonial sports. Consequently, many people have continued to have a negative attitude towards physical education as a subject offered in schools.

According to Musangeya et al. (2000), physical education and sport were also heavily characterized by ills of injustice, racial discrimination and prejudice emanating from the colonial

legacy. During the colonial period physical education was not valued by most Africans since it was viewed as play, controlled by whites, elitist and was based on western activities, values and beliefs. Musangeya et al. (2000), note that while it can be observed that Zimbabwean physical education activities have undergone some transformation and metamorphosis towards the better, the discipline is still being haunted by the historical influences. And in an effort to decolonize the African mind, the need to overhaul the education system including physical education contents remains imperative.

#### **6. DEMEANING TRADITIONAL AFRICAN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND CONCENTRATION ON EUROPEAN GAMES AND SPORTS**

Physical education is one of the important aspects of the educational and teaching processes, especially in the current era, in which high values are set for the physical activity, as it has many positive effects on the individual. However, in many countries, teaching the physical education is facing several challenges (Hardman, 2009), such as decreasing in the teaching time, curriculum deficiencies, shortage in equipment, negative view of the teachers as well as students and guardians about physical education (Nyakweba, 2005). The physical education subject content has also been criticized for being too western oriented and therefore a continuation of colonization. Ndee (2010b) and Chepyator-Thomson(2014), contend that the physical education subject content show that there seems to be a lackof local origin. The syllabus chiefly comprises imported sports introduced during the colonial periods. Moreover, most of these are competitive sports, which seem to conflict with physical education as a promotor of health. Consequently, for those who have no interest in competitive sports especially team sports, they perceive it a waste of valuable time participating in the same.

From the foregoing, it has been observed that the Europeans did not take much account of traditional physical activities. In extreme cases, they viewed the traditional African physical activities as barbaric if not demonic. This led the colonizers to introduce western games and sports which they believed to be advanced and sophisticated as compared to the Africans' physical activities. However, this was just to ensure everything worked in their favour when it came to dominating and colonizing the African mind and psyche. Consequently, physical education got a cold reception in most African countries and societies as it was seen as a vehicle to continue the domination of the Africans by the Europeans.

#### **7. TRAINING FOR MILITARY AND OTHER CIVIL SERVICE JOBS AT THE EXPENSE OF PHYSICAL FITNESS**

Physical education as a subject has also been criticized for being non-educational and used over the years to achieve non-educational goals. Its inclusion in educational institutions has also been contested. For instance, Ndee (2010a), argues that in many schools physical education is being used to achieve many non-educational missions such as military training, self-sacrifice, character training, masculinity, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the provision of leisure pursuits. This exposes the subject to strong criticism and attacks for being a non-academic subject. Therefore, it is essential for physical education to have a precise focus and to leave other areas to other subjects. That will give the subject an educationally and academically credible identity, leading to a strong position in school curricula and providing valuable legitimate experience to students. Kirk (2014a), concurs by claiming that physical education has been used frequently in schools for non-educational and sometimes even anti-educational purposes. He concludes that despite physical education maintaining a place in the curricula of most schools throughout history, the reasons why it has been retained have rarely been educational ones. Further, he claims that physical education has been used for military training for warfare, the

transmission of middle-class values of conformity and also for deferred gratification, character, masculinity and social control.

In most countries in Africa, the initial objective of the physical education curriculum was military training as well as training civil servants to work in the colonial administration. Consequently, physical education was perceived to be of little or no education value at all to the school going children. In extreme cases like in Nigeria, physical education was actually taught by retired military officers emphasizing the military nature of the subject. This made many of students' view the physical activities included in the subject as a punishment and thus developed a negative attitude towards the subject.

#### **8. EMPHASIS ON TEAM SPORTS AND COMPETITION RATHER THAN COOPERATION AND PHYSICAL FITNESS**

Most of the physical activities in African societies were meant to meet certain functions. People would walk long distances in search for food. People would throw spears when hunting or fishing and they would climb trees to pick fruits or harvest honey. However, most of the European games and sports were meant to ensure a win for the team. For instance, when playing soccer or football, people had to coordinate and work together to ensure their team won. This made physical education in the colonial era lack a local origin. People viewed the subject as not meeting any local function or obligation. Participation in the same also lacked the enjoyment that had hitherto existed and thus the attitude towards the subject became more negative.

Physical education as a subject has also faced the challenge of laying too much emphasis on competitive sports rather than physical fitness and enjoyment. In most African societies physical activities were geared towards enjoyment and achieving specific functions. The emphasis on competitive sports can be traced back to the introduction of the subject by the colonial governments. For instance, in Nigeria, the British government initiated school children to competitive track and field athletics and invited mission schools to take part in the Empire Day Celebration. They believed that this would give the primary school children the opportunity to practice and improve the skills acquired in the Physical Education lessons. When schools were invited to join the celebrations, the foundation of competitive sports was laid in Nigeria.

All schools in the same district met for athletic competition and skills already acquired from the physical education program. The events during the celebrations included: sack race, egg and spoon race, tug of war, threading the needle, catching the train, sprints, middle and long distance races, relays, long jump and pole vault. As these celebrations progressed from year to year, shields and trophies were donated and it became rivalry among mission schools, government schools and even traditional rulers (Enahoro, 1965).

Most of the games and sports introduced as part of the physical education curriculum during the colonial period were competitive in nature. Physical education was actually used to prepare the participants for both local, national and even international sporting activities. All this was at the expense of the enjoyment that was supposed to be derived from participation, the educational value of the subject and the health benefits that have been widely documented in literature. Taking the cue from the colonial governments, most independent African states have also continued on this same trajectory and made subject content and focus of physical education more of competition rather than enjoyment, education and physical fitness. Consequently, majority of the stakeholders including parents, teachers and even the learners' themselves have continued to view physical education as being of little or no educational value at all. Therefore, in most countries where physical education is not examined students rarely participate and where it is examined, participation is normally pegged on getting the minimum score in the subject.

## 9. CONCLUSION

While the colonialists can be credited to the introduction and development of the discipline of physical education today, they also stand accused for the negative reception the subject has been accorded over the years. The introduction of western sports at the expense of local games and sports and the emphasis on competition has worked against the objective of the subject as far as enjoyment and physical fitness is concerned. This has led to the subject being sidelined in many African countries. The sidelining of physical education in the education system is not a phenomenon unique to any one African country. Many researchers have revealed the declining nature of physical education in schools in Africa (Akindutire & Olanipekun 2014; Nhamo & Muswazi 2014; Mulima 2010). The past has taken its toll on the present. However, the present is also to blame for the declining emphasis on physical education. The technological advancements have also made physical activity dispensable in some instances. Labor-saving devices have made man avoid even the most basic of human activity. What is also appalling is that educators have joined the band wagon of those who hardly see the need for physical education. Rather than being seen as a necessity, physical education has been pushed into a defensive position.

Therefore, while the distant past can be responsible for what happened in the recent past, this cannot be the basis for not changing the status quo. The question of what contemporaries have done to improve the situation that has befallen physical education in the education sector must be asked. Perhaps it is time to make physical education different from what it has been. The education sector, with the assistance of researchers, must find ways and means to improve the current status of physical education. The importance of physical education in the health and wellbeing of the people cannot be overemphasized. It is time the educators and the masses at large joined hands to put physical education in its rightful place so as to avert the huge health concerns awaiting us in its absence.

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