

Beedu

While many people are under the impression that physical education only means an hour or two of exercise, what they tend to forget are the benefits that sports and physical education bring especially to children. The experience of training or learning a new sport stays with them for the rest of their lives and provides opportunities for children and families to get together and have fun apart from helping them keep fit and develop health.

What makes physical education part of any holistic school curriculum is the fact that it trains children about timing, balance, coordination and concentration. It is also very essential for the psychological development of a child because it helps him/her accept rejection better and experience success and achievement almost immediately; apart from teaching children team work, communication, motivation and organisational abilities, leadership and interpersonal skills.

One of the main components of a complete education package is physical education; without it the package is incomplete. Sports is a science and it is necessary for physical educators to be trained and qualified. Ideally speaking a good PE teacher must have a good background of sports, must be interested in coaching students and must have good demonstration abilities besides being a good leader. An unskilled or unqualified PE teacher cannot do justice to the job. There are courses organised by most government or state run universities which train PE teachers, unfortunately the quality and standards are very low. Private colleges select the best PE Teachers and just like any other department they are encouraged to attend seminars; the management also keeps a check on them and they need to show progress. For example Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain College in Bangalore has a very good Physical Education Department, the teachers are well qualified and because of this many students opt for such colleges. In fact, such colleges have been very successful in producing some very good athletes, many who have represented the nation as well.

Back in 1960, when I was trained, the system was very good, because we had highly trained PE teachers. The quality has come down. I still appreciate the government for having taken so many measures to try and improve the present situation by organising refresher courses, orientation courses, and training courses. The UFC (full form ?) pay scales are very good. However, with no particular selection process in institutions, the standards have come down and some schools don't even have an allocated budget for the Physical Education Department. Some PE teachers are treated like attendants and in many schools there aren't any sports facilities. More often than not good athletes, who generally aim for professions related to their fields, are forced to choose other professions either because of the finance or because of the way most schools and colleges treat PE teachers. The vacuum created allows for unskilled, untrained people to take on the position of a PE teacher, and this is how quality deteriorates. The government should step in and try to rectify the situation.

In the west, Physical Education Credits for students are a must thereby assuring holistic development. Children have to learn swimming, basic gymnastics and athletic skills. We must also make it compulsory for children to learn these skills at least by 5th grade. It also helps children build stamina and better immunity. But to learn these skills the right environment is necessary. For which an allocated budget is most important. The government has provided a public stadium but it is up to the schools to make use of them. Facilities can be shared by schools, but they don't.

In India, every field has a very commercial aspect to it. For instance, the media covers more cricket as compared to any other sport. Cricket is much commercialised and at a school level does not provide the necessary fitness for children. I wish the media draws more attention towards the lack of physical education provided in schools. One cannot market or sell a sport but the media can change the way people view gymnastics, sports and athletics.

Also, there is a notion that sports is very expensive and that it is only for the rich, but this is not true. It does need money but it is not much. There are government facilities provided for practice, like the Kan-teerva Stadium, and it is free. The Nike Run Club is a small budget initiative that coaches around 300 people and it is free.



Schools and colleges must ensure proper facilities; a physical education department should be a must, like any other department. Timings must be made convenient for this department because most of the training takes place before or after school or college hours. Students are harassed for attendance even when they are attending a sports meet or practice sessions. Students' performance on the field should also be evaluated and this will hopefully encourage talent. Most schools deny the PE hour for 9th and 10th standard students and this must not be done.

The situation in Government schools is worse; they have nothing more than a ground. Many government schools do not have training facilities nor do they have the budget or the initiative to take the students to government stadiums to use the facilities. Every gov-

ernment school must be ensured of a trained qualified physical education teacher. This is one advantage that elite private schools have over government schools. It is high time the system changed.

I would suggest that the Government provide more funding for government schools and have a body to monitor that and make sure that funds are not misused. More programmes can be organised to recognise the need for quality physical education. The qualification requirement that every physical instructor must be insisted upon in order to maintain good standards.

Some of the Bangalore institutions that have been maintaining a good physical education system are

St. Joseph's Indian Boy's High School, Cluny Convent, Mount Carmel College, and Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain College. These institutions have a separate physical education department which is well funded and run by trained and qualified faculty. They have produced many national level athletes. Some of the students presently studying there who plan to pursue sports are also very comfortable there because the Department makes sure they receive credit for their achievements, talent is recognised and nurtured. The activities conducted by the physical education department helps other students to learn new sports and develop an interest in sports.

Although the government has made it necessary for schools to include one hour of physical education everyday, the quality of the sports department must be up to the mark. Schools must ensure the establishment and management of a proper physical education department.

Beedu trained at YMCA Chennai, National Institute of Sports, Patiala, and studied his M.Sc in Physical Education in Germany. He specialises in training athletes and has coached many state and national level athletes. He is also the chief coach at the Nike Run Club, which trains marathon runners free of cost.