

Exploring Life Orientation Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Teaching of Recreation and Physical Well-being

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KEYWORDS Recreation. Physical Well-being. Life Orientation. Schools and Resources

ABSTRACT Since 1994, there have been many new policy formulation in Education such as National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (2002), White Paper Six (2001) and the Constitution of South Africa (1996). All these above policies are important in the teaching of recreation and physical well-being because they focus on addressing the imbalances of the past. The introduction of Life Orientation (LO) in schools is guided by Learning Outcomes which focus on personal, social, career and recreation and physical well-being. LO also focuses on the learners in their totality and the self in relation to society. Based on the preceding discussion, the research therefore focuses on the Life Orientation teachers' perceptions regarding teaching of recreation and physical well-being in South African disadvantaged high schools. The aim of this study is therefore to explore Life Orientation teachers' perceptions regarding teaching of recreation and physical well-being in South African disadvantaged high schools. The research adopted a qualitative design and data was collected through focus group interviews. All LO teachers at that particular disadvantaged high school were used as participants. The findings revealed that recreation and physical well-being as a Learning Outcome of LO was not seriously taught.

INTRODUCTION

Studies conducted by Rooth (2005) and Prinsloo (2007) focused on the investigation and implementation of LO in South African schools. Little has been written about Life Orientation teachers' perceptions regarding teaching of recreation and physical well-being in South African disadvantaged high schools, yet it is a problem because there are insufficient Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSMs) and sports equipment in the teaching of recreation and physical well-being. Recreation and physical well-being from South African context in this study refers to Physical Education where some form of exercises such as running and playing games are done in order to keep learners fit and healthy for everyday life. These exercises are important because they contribute to the improvement of muscular strength, health and physical fitness. Disadvantaged schools on the other hand in this study refer to poor under-resourced schools.

The other problem is that some schools focus more on the teaching of old Physical Educa-

tion at the expense of recreation and physical well-being as a learning outcome of LO. This poses a problem to some of the LO teachers, that is the reason why as a researcher has opted to explore Life Orientation teachers' perceptions on teaching recreation and physical well-being.

The Context of the Inquiry

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the principal and School Management Teams (SMTs) of the school. Focus group interviews were conducted, consisting of one group of ten LO teachers. The teachers were diverse because they came from different provinces such as Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and North-West. One teacher was a newly appointee coming from overseas.

Research Question

Based on the preceding discussion, the research question can thus be formulated as:

What are Life Orientation teachers' perceptions regarding teaching of recreation and physical well-being?

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is therefore to:

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Explore Life Orientation teachers' perceptions regarding teaching of recreation and physical well-being.

Theoretical Framework

The framework within which this research is based on is Bandura's, which is the social learning (social interaction) theory. Social learning theory according to Bandura (1977) posits that people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling. This theory is thus relevant and it links to this study as it focuses on the interaction between individuals (between learners and teachers). During this interaction the learners learn through imitating and modelling the teacher as he/she demonstrates and teaches them activities during physical and recreation lessons in order to enhance their well-being. This means that through interaction, LO learners and teachers will be able to learn, share knowledge, cultural activities and ideas and respect for other people's indigenous /cultural game activities. It can therefore once more be stated that the relevance of this theory is seen when teachers are expected to teach, mediate and interact with the learners during school sporting activities in LO lessons on recreation and physical well-being.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this study the researcher used a qualitative interpretive research design. Henning et al. (2004) add by describing qualitative studies as those which aim at obtaining depth rather than quantity of understanding phenomena. This is supported by Ezzy (2002) when stating that qualitative methods are those which identify a person's understanding of the situation as something to be discovered rather than assumed. In this study the researcher will thus explore LO teachers' perceptions regarding teaching of recreation and physical well-being.

Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through semi-structured focus group interviews. This method was chosen with an aim of encouraging discussion and the development of ideas from LO teachers as participants, on their perceptions regarding

teaching of recreation and physical well-being in schools. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), in focus group interviews, a purposefully sampled group of people are interviewed, rather than each person individually. Focus group interviews in this study thus consisted of one group of ten LO teachers (6 male and 4 female teachers). LO teachers were asked questions based on their perceptions of teaching recreation and physical well-being. For example, How many LO learners do you have in your classroom? Does your school have Learner Teacher Support Materials (LTSMs) for recreation and physical well-being and also sporting equipment such as hockey fields, netball ground, tennis court, football ground etc.? How often do you engage LO learners with varieties of game activities such as swimming, cycling, cricket and mountain climbing? All the responses from the participants were written by the researcher in a journal (with the participants' permission) and were transcribed verbatim.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The following ethical measures were adhered to in this study:

- ♦ The research proposal was submitted to the relevant committees at school, that is, the Principal and School Management Teams (SMTs).
- ♦ Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Principal and SMTs of the school.
- ♦ Consent forms, together with an information letter, were given to the LO teachers.
- ♦ Information letters included detailed information on the purpose of the research and how data will be gathered.
- ♦ All reasonable efforts were applied in the research process to ensure confidentiality.
- ♦ The anonymity of the school and all participants were protected. Participants' details were not made known. Participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the research study at any time without any penalty.
- ♦ Participants were told that they will receive feedback on research results upon the completion of the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from this study indicated that teaching recreation and physical well-being in schools was a problem as mentioned earlier in the previous sections. This is evidenced by the emergence of the following main themes from the semi-structured focus group interviews: overcrowded classrooms, inadequate Learner Teacher Support Materials and sports equipment. Evidence was derived from participants' responses when they mentioned the following under each theme below:

Overcrowded Classrooms

Life Orientation teachers responded by saying that Life Orientation classrooms were overcrowded with a teacher/pupil ratio of over 1:55. They further mentioned that overcrowded classrooms made it difficult for them to attend to learners' individual needs such as different learning problems. This idea is supported by Willows (2011) when mentioning that there are usually too many learners for the teacher to cater to directly and many do not receive the education they deserve because of this. This implies that it becomes difficult for many learners to easily bond with the teacher and for the teacher to bond with them if the classroom is overcrowded.

LTSMs

It was stated by the LO teachers that there were also insufficient LTSMs for LO. This is a general outcry to most of schools as this similar problem was recently mentioned on SABC 2 news (15 May 2012) that most schools in Mpumalanga have not yet received for example textbooks for subjects to be taught.

Sports Equipment

The participants also responded by mentioning that when LO teachers attempt to teach by following what is written in the Government's policy documents such as NCS (2002), as their guiding document they still face frustrations because their school does not have relevant sporting equipment such as playing grounds, rugby fields, hockey fields, tennis court, netball ground etc. This is supported by Mwamwenda (1995) in his research when stating that pupils in

developing countries perform below those in developed countries because of inadequate and poor facilities. Czerniewics et al. (2000) add that the average former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools are under-resourced. The availability of this equipment is thus important for the enhancement and success of teaching recreation and physical well-being in schools.

The above points according to LO teachers' responses; hamper the successful teaching of recreation and physical well-being. This means that teachers are still struggling to teach recreation and physical well-being.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding discussion, it is found that LO teachers still face problems in the teaching of recreation and physical well-being. This is evidenced by overcrowded classrooms, inadequate LTSM and sports equipment as emerged from the research findings in this study. This therefore hinders the teaching of recreation and physical well-being in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The National and Provincial Department of Education should pay more attention to overcrowded classrooms, LTSM and sports equipment, with an aim of improving teaching of recreation and physical well-being in schools.

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