

Facilitating Communication through Physical Education

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The components of total child development(holistic education) are generally accepted as being the three domain behaviors: Psychomotor, cognitive, and affective. It is through the development and stimulation of these behaviors that the values and purposes of physical activity programs are given credence.

(Diagram to be scanned and sent in floppy)

The diagram above illustrates some of the contributions of physical activity to child development as represented by the three inter related circles (behavioral domains) (Gabbard, LeBlanc, Lowy, Pg.5, 1994).

Affective Development

Physical activity contributes to a child's social growth, attitudes, and self concepts, for most of the young child's social contacts are in a play setting. Physical education classes are often referred to as laboratories in which children experience a multitude of social and psychological encounters. Three major aspects of affective development that are particularly relevant to the physical education setting are: socialization, self concept and the development of attitudes. (Gabbard, LeBlanc, Lowy, 1994)

The above research supports the notion of holistic education being the key to the educational development of individuals in Muslim schools. At IQA we have been able to develop a program of activities which help the individual to develop skills which inturn enable students to interact effectively with others as well as have greater self worth and self awareness. P.E can help develop the social and emotional behaviors of children this is somehow been undermined in physical education programs of Muslim schools. Social and emotional behaviors of children underpin an individual's personal success within society.

In a society where Islamic morals and values are eroding it is even more important to instill these within our educational program. Physical education can use individual and team work activities to promote self awareness which can then have a knock on effect on being able to understand the feelings of others. P.E can be used as a learning environment in which children interact with individuals, other children, groups and teachers.

Cognitive Development

Gabbard, LeBlanc and Lowy point out some of the possible reasons for the success of cognitive development and academic achievement, these are:

- a) Motivation-very simply children are interested in movement, they become attentive and eager to participate; therefore the learning process is enjoyable.
- b) Fun- not to be overlooked when combined with motivation, together they are prime factors of learning and retention of information. Children possess a high regard for movement experiences that are fun therefore any negative thoughts concerning “academics” may be diminished.
- c) Active participation- active games and other movement experiences motivate children who have typically short attention spans and get them involved in discovery-learning process.
- d) Multisensory approach- This approach refers to the concept that during movement activities the child will utilize more modes of sensory input, namely, kinesthetic, and tactile awareness, than the child may experience sitting in the classroom.
- e) Reinforcement- Academic reinforcement focuses attention to the learning tasks thus keeping the child involved in the activities.
- f) Retention- This is perhaps the product of all the factors mentioned; motor learning specialists have claimed for years that retention of motor skill learning is higher than “academic” verbal based learning.

Child development research provides us with academic reasoning from which we can obtain good practice. Children grow develop and learn through physical activity. Movement plays a very important role in the holistic developmental process. Movement serves as a springboard by which children are stimulated and they explore and challenge the environment to their fullest potential. It is very important to link Islamic values within this holistic process, as it provides a complete delivery of good practice.

IQA physical education sessions create an opportunity for me as a P.E teacher, through structured play and team game activities, allow students to experience different movements’ children are faced with and develop positive traits such as honesty, cooperation, fair play, courtesy, and respect for others respect for authority and rules as well as to developing self confidence. It creates an opportunity to explore issues in islam relevant to team work leadership and good Islamic behaviors. This can also play a key role towards integrated instruction with core subjects such as Islamic studies

It is important to provide a multifaceted curriculum which integrates not only the TEKS objectives but also provides an informal setting for young people to develop key relationships, good teamwork practices, a forum to let it all out, stress relief, promote good health and improve bodily mental and physical strength.

Physical Education vs Recess

Youth receiving additional physical activity tend to show improved attributes such as increased brain function and nourishment, higher energy/concentration levels, changes in body build affecting self esteem, increased self-esteem and better behavior which may all support cognitive learning (Cocke, 2002) (Tremblay, Inman, & Willms, 2000) (Dwyer, Coonan, Leitch, Hetzel, & Baghurst, 1983) (Shephard, 1997, et al Mitchell, Scheuer

2003)

For this reason physical education in Muslim schools should not be looked upon as simply recess or free time for students to have recreation. This is specially the case since physical education is often times the part of school day that students look forward to with the most enthusiasm. Rather physical education requires the implementation of a real curriculum and the development of physical coordination and skill. This is more as important because research suggests that physical education contributes to confidence building, better behavior, and their academic achievement in other classes.

P.E should be creative and fun. IQA students are going to be leaders of our community in the form of Hufaz and Alim's and Alima's of the future. To achieve this level of knowledge requires a huge amount of mental focus and dedication in studying and memorizing the holy quran. As seen from many research facts above. It can be seen that physical and mental well being of our children promotes better learning skills in students which in turn enhances their ability to succeed in all their subjects. This holistic approach to physical education whereby not only do we play organized games but also use the P.E forum as a forum to promote the following:

Enhance Good Leadership

Effective leadership can be achieved by teaching instruction which educates students that being a good leader is about adopting encouragement and motivational strategies as opposed to always applying a hierarchical approach to leadership where only what we say counts. This should also be related to pointing out the characteristics of the leaderships of our prophet Muhammed (SAAW). Who's leadership qualities consisted of fairness as opposed to unfairness, humility as opposed to arrogance, working with and utilizing strengths within this team(umah) rather than pointing out weaknesses etc. There are many opportunities in P.E to provide integrated instruction to compliment other subjects, especially Islamic studies.

Every Child a Winner

Sportsmanship is an essential attribute to a young athlete. And the responsibility lies in the coach and the parents to teach sportsmanship. Sometimes parental desire and coach desire to win overcome them. And when this desire takes over, they seem to do anything to win. They forget about teaching and focus on other matters, winning. (Murphy, Pg.172, 1999).

Through teaching instructions, physical education can promote a more qualitative definition of success rather than the quantitative definition of success. For example a student can be taught that a team is not necessarily successful according to the goals that it has scored but more so if they learnt from the experience or had fun working towards their goals as a team; this experience creates more sense of success than actually winning the game itself.

Activities should be used that meet the needs, interests and capabilities of children at various developmental stages. Forcing children to attempt activities that are beyond their perceptual-motor, physical, and emotional capabilities is not conducive to success; rather, in most cases, failure occurs. Developmentally appropriate activities should be used as a means of enhancing a realistic concept of abilities. (Gabbard, LeBlanc, Lowy, 1994)

In light of this it is very important to set clear and small achievable goals, for students, according to the grade level being taught. This is important because every child needs to feel successful in the way that they are accomplishing their learning goals; this can be the rules of a game, learning a specific skill or participation.

Competition vs Teamwork

Competition may also be negative. Some people feel competition is not healthy. It teaches youngsters that in order to survive they must do anything to succeed even if it means hurting another individual. Aggression is another negative aspect. Many sports are violent. Teams may take this into their every day life and become overly aggressive at unnecessary times. (Zwingmann, 1984)

Team sports magnify the existing personality traits of an individual; They also magnify feelings about issues which have occurred at home or in other classes, in their action within team games. As these emotions and traits are magnified they become more apparent in an individual dealing with another team member or opponent. Within this buzzing competitive environment where everyone wants to win, the heat is on. Students are facing the real life pressures of not letting down others; maintaining their social status and winning is the only thing on their minds. Sometimes the feelings of a prior event may materialize into a reaction within the game. Everyone is physically, mentally and emotionally charged and competition can bring out animal characteristic in them.

Here are some ways as teachers we can utilize this situation for building relationships and cultivating meaningful communication with students. The following interventions can help the teacher to draw on this opportunity and help towards fostering this critical link with their students.

Preventative Intervention

Competition within the physical education setting can bring out negative attitudes in students, however I believe that the issues that arise, can be used as a point of learning. The setting can become a perfect forum for exploring attitudes, feelings and behaviors; this can help towards establishing a meaningful relationship with students. Behaviors can be worked on and investigated in relation to where they stem from, and be used as a chance to develop preventative intervention before a problem becomes a crisis, for the individual, family, and school. Preventative intervention can include; counseling, advice, listening to the problem, group work sessions focusing on the Islamic personality, leadership qualities of the prophet (SAAW), good team working etc.

Conflict Resolution

Physical education can also be used as a medium for resolving conflicts within teams as well as any conflict stemming from other lessons during the students day. This can be done by helping children redirect their decision making process.

Tarbiyah for kids lays down a model that can be used for specific conflict resolution this is as follows:

- o Focus on the behavior and decision making process not the “badness or goodness” of the child.
- o We all make mistakes because Allah created us as humans not angels. He also gave us the solutions in the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah, but it is up to us to seek the answers and apply them in our lives.
- o It is an obligation for each staff member to use those “teachable moments” to help our students make connections to Quran and Sunnah. So they themselves will see the “value” of our Islamic principles in their lives.
- o Refer to appropriate Quran and Hadith for staff and student reference. A consistent school-wide approach to conflict resolution will help student make “real-time” connections to Quran and Hadith.
- o See all “misbehavior” as an opportunity as an opportunity to model the thinking process that will eventually be internalized, as the framework for the decision-making process that will compel the individual to out their deen into practice.

Applying the Islamic Personality in Effective Team Working

The ideal Islamic personality, as the saying attributed to the Prophet’s wife, A’isha, makes clear, is the personification of the Qur’an. That which is pleasing to God, should be pleasing to the Muslim and this should be borne out in every thought, word, and action. The Prophet, according to Muslims, reached this stage of human perfection because he was able to personify the Qur’an in this manner. As A’isha said, “He was pleased by what it (the Qur’an) finds pleasing and angry according to what it finds hateful.” Thus, in effect, the Prophet achieved actualization of the Divine Names and the highest and most refined character as a result of it. (Al-Hawfi, A.M. 1996. *Portrait of human perfection*. Dar Al Taqwa: London, p. 33.)

Good team work is about adopting the above Islamic personality. That is when we are working with people we should be humble, respectful, fair, courteous, encouraging motivating etc.

The goal of winning should never out weigh the rights of our team members on us, meaning that we must never loose the sight of our goal to please Allah over winning a mere game of soccer or basketball. Our dealings with our team members should always be noble and honest.

Conclusion

In order to achieve meaningful communications with students it is essential we as teachers do not negate or ignore parts of a child's whole identity. Teachers should develop a holistic curriculum which takes into account the religious, linguistic, cultural and developmental stage of each child. Integrated instruction can be used to compliment the whole curriculum hand in hand, within this the Quran and Hadith should become an integral part of the core curriculum, not just at a theory level but at a practice level. It can be seen from the above that the child development research, curriculum objectives and the Islamic foundation in character building provides a complete framework to deliver physical education. This approach is essential to facilitating genuine communication with students.

There are many health benefits which can be achieved, through sports. In a structured physical education environment, students also have the perfect opportunity to practically apply the Islamic character traits they are taught in Islamic studies. In the secular setting this is called "sportsmanship". PE plays an important role towards putting students under simulated conditions where they face the real-life pressures of working cooperatively with other people and attempting to achieve challenging goals. What setting could be better for testing the Muslim character in action?

Reference

(Murphy, 1999, Pg.172)

(Zwingmann, 1984)

<http://www.darling@bard.edu>

Physical education for children (Gabbard, LeBlanc, Lowy 1994)

Al-Hawfi, A.M. 1996. *Portrait of human perfection*. Dar Al Taqwa: London, p. 33.

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