

**REFINING THE STANDARD OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION  
AND SPORTS IN FIJI HIGH SCHOOLS: A CRITICAL  
EVALUATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND  
SPORTS CURRICULUM IN FIJI HIGH SCHOOLS**

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**Abstract**

Physical Education(PE) is one of the core requirement for qualification used in the approval of high schools to be allowed for external examinations. Fiji Secondary schools need to meet a set of criteria determined by the Ministry of Education to qualify for external examinations. This is the only known purpose of PE in secondary schools and the only formal role it played in Fiji's secondary education. This role has marginalized the development of PE thus relegating its standard just to be a qualifying criterion for external examination, stripping its status and value as an independent lesson of its own. Sports within the high school curriculum are often a centre of controversy, in particular the argument between the parameters of PE and Sports, and the overemphasis of competitive sports in the school program. Raising the standard of PE and sports require a concerted effort from all the education stakeholders, with the PE Teacher Education (PETE) institutions leading this development.

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## Introduction

The government through the Ministry of Health has been working hard on creating a healthy lifestyle for the people of Fiji. The advocating of the importance of Physical Activity (PA) and its benefit to health has been the corner stone of major public health campaigns for the achievement of a healthy population. PE comprises of syllabus on Human Biology, PA and Sports that emphasis the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Taking PA and the encouragement of active participation in sports would bring great benefit to our students. The aim of this study is to bring together a number of well-established literatures on the broader basis of PE that concerns with healthy lifestyle, personal development, lifelong skills, positive relationship between physical activity and academic performance and general sports skills. The benefits of physical activity have been one of the most popular subjects in today's Health Journals and articles. No doubt the World Health Organization has always been in the forefront supporting worldwide programs to improve the standard of health.

A study highlighted in the June, 2005 Journal of Paediatrics collected and reviews approximately 850 articles on physical activity benefits. A systematic literature review was carried out on these 850 articles; additional papers were identified by expert panellists; outcome areas were reviewed, evaluated and summarized (Strong,B. Malina, R. Blinkie, C. Daniels, R. Dishman,R. Gutin,B. Hergenroeder,A. Must,A. Nixon,P. Pivarnik,J. Rowland, T. Trost, S. Tredeu, F ,2005). The strength of the evidence, conclusions, key issues, and gaps in the evidence were abstracted in a standardized format, presented and discussed by panellists and organizational representatives. The study concluded that increasing the level of habitual moderate- to vigorous intensity physical activity in youth is a health promotion and a disease-prevention strategy. The designing of PE and Sports education in the curriculum of many developed countries were derived from the findings of these well-established literatures. (Strong, et. al, 2005) If PE supports healthy lifestyle then education stakeholders in Fiji should see that such lesson is developed and encourage.

The intensity on the debate about the status of PE and the place of sports within the high school curriculum has been a constant center of discussion among education stakeholders. This study has identified that the debate exist at local level as well as national level with a number of frequent issues including the *relationship between sports and PE; between health and fitness and sport; and between curricular and extra-curricular sport*. In addition, issues regarding the

examination status of PE and the appropriate allocation of time for sports and sports preparation as opposed to academic time were also argued. The recent argument that had sufficed exists only at national level, is the argument on the type of sports that should be taught or played at school. This particular argument was founded on the discourse of nationalism and the push for Fiji's representation in international sports tournaments. Findings from a research on the status of PE in Fiji schools have supported the existence of these issues which is consistent globally. (Dorovolomo, 2004) The existence of these issues in Fiji was seen to have happened in a 'chain reaction' process where a new issue seems to arise after the addressing of an existing issue. Consequently, it can be deduced that the debate will continue to exist which should be seen as a positive development for PE and sports.

The CDU which the governing body of curriculum in Fiji has drawn up an effective program of PE in the form of Prescription for all the school levels. The Prescription contains all the topics/subtopics and practical assessments that teachers can use for their classes. In most cases this prescription is not properly followed and the teachers use PE classes for play and other activities. Bacchus (cited in Dorovolomo, 2004) stated that a logical step for Fiji is to improve the quality of education offered in educational institutions throughout the country. The quest for increasing quality and relevance of PE and school sport must be part of this strive. Bacchus, importantly, also stressed how paramount it is for teachers to include often marginalized subjects such as PE in their teaching, for holistic student experiences. It is often the practice in Fiji that if exams are near, physical education classes are cancelled for study time; viewed as peripheral; valued little; and often not taught at all (Dorovolomo, 2004). In some cases school limit the number of hours given for PE.

It was not until 1999, that the MOE established a specialist programme to train PE teachers at the *Fiji College of Advanced Education (FCAE)* high school teacher training institution that saw the introduction of special PE teachers trained to lead the *Physical Education, Music and Art & Craft (PEMAC)* departments in the high schools. This establishment also boost the agenda of confirming the place of PE in the high school curriculum particularly about the capacity to compete with claims of other subjects for space and status within the school timetable. The course content of Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programme at FCAE though far removed from the practical demand of the high school PE curriculum and sports provided some

scope on which PE and sports can develop. The introduction of the first lot PE specialist teachers in 2000 into the high schools also cause the shift of argument from the critics of PE within the curriculum to the place of sports within PE and the recent argument on the overemphasis of sports and sports for competition in schools.

A common situation that PE teachers experience in high schools is when they are asked to teach other subjects neglecting what they were trained to do. These teachers often lose interest in PE and sacrifice their PE practical classes for their new subject. Secondary schools are allocated 80 minutes per week for PE but it is not formally assessed. All the secondary schools have PEMAC teachers, specifically trained and equipped with relevant skills to teach PEMAC subjects. These teachers were not fully utilized because the system in the schools do not allow them to practice like the other academic subjects teachers, where lessons are taught, assessed and results used to measure students' performance. The government spends a lot of resources on the training of these teachers only to leave them idle in the system.

### **Sports in Fiji High Schools**

Sport is part of PE incorporating the ideas of physical exercise and games to be a syllabus taught in schools from primary to secondary level. However, the degree of coverage or the rate of sports participation in the curriculum is something that is yet to be established. Sports in Fiji schools have reached a stage that competition and championship portrays the reputation and prestige of schools. Fiji schools sports competition is always the most popular competition when it comes to sports in Fiji. It is an event that the whole nation converge to a sporting venue to witness the promising talents of Fiji's future athletes. The government of Fiji has always been supportive to the development of sports at all school levels this has seen the development of many sporting facilities and programs around the country. The interest towards school sports now days have swayed from its more traditional purpose of enjoyment and participation to a highly competitive one where winning at all cost thrives. The "win at all cost" philosophy as mentioned by Sports Sociologist Delaney and Madigan (2006) often leads to elitism, sexism, nationalism, extreme competitiveness, abuse of drugs, gambling and a number of other deviant behaviours.

Sports and academic studies seem to be going their separate ways, questioning the very purpose on the existence of sports in the education system. A good number of students go to school to play and to represent their school in sporting competitions. Students have been exploited by teachers to bring fame to the school; this is often the case when students use precious school time for training and sacrificing their studies. School heads are the ones taking the leading pursuit by devoting a lot of time and resources preparing their teams often without much concern to the students' academic performance. High schools that regularly featured in school sports competition always have low academic performance in terms of External examination results. (Examination Office, Suva, 2009). Students who regularly featured for their school team often have high absenteeism and low academic marks. (T. Cuva – Education Officer, personal communication, March, 2013)

Companies have gained great mileage by sponsoring school competitions with little to nothing given to the students. The *Coke Cola Games* is the biggest sporting event in Fiji where all the high schools around the country take part in a two days athletic event. Schools and students put in a lot of sacrifice preparing for the competition with lots of fundraising to cater for the teams travelling expenses and accommodation. Coke Cola should take a holistic approach in the development of students and also give something worthwhile to the students to help in both their education and sporting career. Schools must work together with members of local organisations and business institutions through the development of networks that can have a multi dimension benefit to all parties, in particular education development that can directly improve students learning (Goodfellow & Walton, 2008, pp.13-15)

Elitism has given rise to the establishment of some prominent schools reputation solely based on sports performance. Students rush to these schools so that they can be part of school teams without any interest to their academic studies. Some of these schools went to the extent of recruiting students to join their school teams with the promise of providing incentives for their fees and stationary. On one hand this recruitment may turn to favour the students but in most cases the student were only used for the competition and later cast-off. Another worst case scenario is when these recruited students do not perform up to the expectations of the school; they would be forgotten and later fall out of the education system.

The over emphasis of major sports such as Rugby, Soccer and Netball have caused a neglect in the teaching of minor sports. The minor sports are also prescribed to be part of the secondary sports but they were hardly taught. This neglect can be reflected in the limited number of sports represented at national level, Fiji only concentrate on these three major sports and has marginalised the minor ones. This has somehow developed a problem of racism, Dorovolomo (2004) in his finding stated that if the PE teacher is Indo-Fijian or female their confidence rating for teaching rugby is low. On the other hand, if the PE teacher is Fijian or female their confidence rating in teaching soccer is low. These reflect the country's racial following of the two sports. The students were also drawn along this line where the Fijian ethnic students will only attend Fijian dominated schools to play rugby while the Indo Fijian students will attend Indian dominated schools to play soccer. Furthermore, Netball has a gendered low male confidence rating. (Dorovolomo, 2004)

Students who cannot play the major sports are the ones that are left out during PE and school sports programs. These groups of students often lose interest in sports and physical activity which later develop to be part of their life. Teachers should shoulder the blame because they were the ones who encourage this to happen. Part of this problem was due to the teachers' lack of knowledge on PE and Sports. The teachers are only confident to teach the major sports because this is what they know. This is usually the norm among PE teachers if they do not know the sports they would not teach it. Teachers' limited knowledge in the sports should not hinder them because they can always arrange for someone from their community to help in the teaching.

### **The Teacher Training Institutions**

Dorovolomo (2004) on his study on the status of PE in Fiji schools mentioned about the establishment of tertiary schools teaching PE and Sports. The establishment of these institution would allow for the PE diploma and degree curriculum, such institution include the FIT department of Sports Science Physical Education and Recreation; Fiji College of Advanced Education PEMAC Specialist Diploma in Education and the Bachelor of Sports Science at the University of the South Pacific. The establishment of these institutions is a great achievement for PE and Sports in Fiji but there is no link between the tertiary institutions and the high schools. The programs offered in tertiary institutions should be linked to the programs offered in the

schools so that there is continuity. Intake for these tertiary institutions were drawn from a wide cross sections of students and subjects, there is no specific subject criteria used take students in.

“Researchers have found that many primary education pre-service teachers have negative feelings about their physical education experiences and many are not interested in repeating bad experiences and embarrassing situations they remembered (Carney &Chedzoy, 1998, Howarth, 1987; Portman, 1996). Kagan (1992) reported that primary student teachers with negative prior experiences held such strong beliefs about their abilities that it affected their learning at university. As Morgan et al., (2001) highlight, inadequate teacher education programmes in Australia have resulted in many generalist teachers being forced to rely on their own physical education and sporting experiences, some of which are negative, to guide their teaching and decision making in physical education. The consequences are such that as teachers these individuals then may replicate their own experiences, even when their desire is to achieve the complete opposite and create an alternative physical education. Prior experiences provide generalist teachers with many personal beliefs and stored ideas about PE, which are foundational in the development of generalist teachers’ understanding of PE.”  
(cited in Petrie, 2007)

### **Curriculum Development Unit.**

The primary aims of PE set by the MOE are entrenched in the Prescription for a very long time and have undergone limited changes. The international view of Physical Education Bodies and Organization of modern schools' goal is to provide students with knowledge, and the enthusiasm to maintain a healthy lifestyle into adulthood. Activities included in the program are designed to promote physical fitness, to instill knowledge and understanding of rules, concepts, and strategies. According to the CDU (T. Cuva – Education Officer, personal communication, March, 2013) the teaching of PE and Sports education in Fiji does not meet the expected standard. When it comes to reporting and assessment for External Examination (EE) approval the teachers have a usual practice of compiling all the necessary documents and students books in a very short time just to please the visiting CDU officers. There is no system in place to measure the reality of what is happening in the day to day teaching. The CDU has been working on a Fiji PE curriculum that can incorporate more activities. Introducing students to lifetime activities like

bowling, walking/hiking, or swimming at an early age can help students develop good PA habits that will carry over into adulthood. The incorporation of sports in the curriculum complements the idea of PA, the teachers are given the freedom to teach the sports according to their knowledge and the availability of resources but it was rather unfortunate that this was partially or not done at all.

PE should teach the students to work as an individual or as part of a team. The definition of physical education is the same in different countries in terms of its goals in promoting discipline and wellness. The involvement of students in exercise activities and sports helps introduce children into fitness, teamwork and sports, which are necessary for their adulthood.

Understanding the definition of physical education is important so that students will be able to be more interested with the program and its benefits. In addition, the definition of PE plays a significant function in enlightening the students and providing the understanding of its importance. The PE program must provide the students with instructions that are individualized and challenging, which can advance the confidence, skills, motivation and knowledge necessary in life.

### **What is Sports?**

The existence of Sports in the curriculum is rooted in the society and cultures of the world. As described by Delany and Madigan (2006) Sport is as much a part of American society and culture as are social institutions such as family, religion, politics, and education. The word sport has its origin rooted in the idea that it is an activity designed to divert people from the routines of everyday life (Delany & Madigan, 2006). Sport derives its root from “disport” meaning to divert one’s self. People diverting their attention from the rigors and pressures of daily life by participating in the mirth (fun) and whimsy (desire) of frolic (play) - some physical activity (Edwards cited in Delany & Madigan, 2006, p. 11).

The aspects of sports as a social institution reveal the role it plays in our community. The Sociology of Sports (SS) is a sub- discipline of Sociology that focuses on the relationship between sports and society. SS is concerned with the behavior of individuals and groups within sports and rules and processes that exist within the formal and informal designs and make up of sports. The discipline of SS has been in existence for the last four decade. Kenyon and Loy (cited in Delany & Madigan, 2006, p.11) declared sport had become a cultural phenomenon of great



magnitude and complexity and was fast becoming a social institution. They also noted that despite this the public's commitment to sports, as social phenomenon it has received little serious study. This pattern still holds true today as sports play an even bigger role in society than in 1965 and yet still ignored or considered somewhat vain by some in academia.

There is lack of consensus among sport sociologists on how to define sports. Sports as we unconsciously know which activities our culture defines as a sport and we therefore take for granted what is and is not sports. Snyder Spreitzer (cited in Delany & Madigan, 2006, p.11) state that it is important for social scientists to have a workable analytical handle on the meaning of sports.

- Gunther Luschen (1967, 1970) defines sport as an institutionalized type of competitive physical activity located on a continuum between play and world. He emphasized on the fact that sport is a physical activity which would therefore automatically eliminate such activities as playing cards as sports.
- Edward (1973, p.55) defines sports as the involvement physical exertion. Without it there is simply no sport activity. Edward emphasizes the physical aspect as well as the organizational rule making and goal directedness of sport. Edward goes on to define sports as involving activities having formally recorded histories and traditions, stressing physical activity through competition within the limits set in explicit and formal rules governing role and position relationships, and carried out by actors who represent or who are part of formally organized association having the goal of achieving valued tangible or intangible through defeating opposing groups.
- Nixon and Frey (1996, p.3) adapted Edwards and Luschen definition and define sport as institutionalized physical competition occurring in a formally organized or corporate structure. Institutions possessing such key elements as norms, status, roles and social relationships. Physical competition mandates that physical activity and skills are involved in order to determine a winner or loser.

- Jay Coakley (2006) defines sport as institutionased competitive activities that involve rigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by participants motivated by internal and external rewards. Notice once again the idea of physical activity (in this case rigorous) is included in this definition or the use of relatively complex physical skills.
- Delany and Madigan (2006, p13.) put together Coakley, Nixon and Frey, Edward, and Luschen definition to define sport as an institutionalized, structured, and sanctioned competitive activity beyond the realm of play that involves physical exertion and the use of relatively complex athletic skills. Sport must imply physical activity and the ability to gain an advantage over an opponent and they want to make it clear that there is a distinction between play and sports.

Individuals take part in sports for different reasons; some do it for leisure, some as a profession and others for health benefits. The term athlete is commonly used to label individual taking part in any sports activity. Nixon and Frey (as cited in Delany and Madigan, 2006, p.15) pointed out that athletics is a synonym for sports played in school or college settings. They further argue if an individual who is in his or her 40s, works out for 75 minutes a day including a three mile run- is he or she an athlete? Or do they have to play an organized sport in order to be considered an athlete? This question would be best answered by finding out the reasons why different people take part in sports.

A physical active person would be seen as someone who puts forth physical energy while engaged in some sort of activity that involves exertion. This may include walking, gardening, hiking, sightseeing and so on. A physical active person engages in such activity simply for the enjoyment or benefit it provides and athlete on the other hand, is in training for some specific event or participates in sports. (Delany and Madigan, 2006) According to the Webster Dictionary an athlete is someone who trains to compete in athletics. Athletics is defined as exercises and games that require physical fitness, skill, strength and endurance. The idea of competition is part and parcel of sports where one competes against other athletes, against records, or time, or

against one's own previous best. It will be prudent to know and define the purpose of having sports in the high school system and the reasons why students should take part in it.

### **The PE Class**

Physical education can play a role in promoting the physically active person. Dorovolomo (2004) mentioned that in Fiji regular physical activity should be high on the health promotions list. Some of the statistics in Fiji and the Pacific Islands on lifestyle diseases are quite staggering. In Fiji, 80% of deaths are attributable to lifestyle diseases, 70% of which are due to heart disease, the number one killer (Dorovolomo, 2004). Physical inactivity is one of the risk factors besides poor diet, tobacco use and obesity.

Dorovolomo (2004) mentioned that Fiji secondary schools positively implemented programs and good practices in physical education and sport. Some diligently take physical education, supervise recess physical activity, organise intramural and inter-schools sport. These schools take pride in their programs and publicly displayed trophies, awards, and photos, visible as soon as you enter the school reception area. On the other hand, there is cause for disquiet about the status of physical education in various Fiji secondary schools. The teachers often tucked the students into classrooms, indoors without physical education (Dorovolomo, 2004). Both the teachers and the students have become sedentary and often dislike going out to the ground or staying out in the sun.

The government or the policy makers should take a positive stance in discouraging this sedentary behavior. This can be established if the government formally accords PE formal assessment in high school and integrated more fully into school policies and evaluations (Bradshaw, cited in Dorovolomo 2004). The State of California and national legislation has made childhood obesity prevention and reduction a priority by creating new nutrition guidelines and requiring that districts adopt a local school wellness policy. The California national policy was designed to supports the benefits of physical activity for student learning, explains the state requirements and standards of Physical Education (California Department of Education, 2006).

### The Education Context of Sports

Studies have proven that sports have a positive effect on students' life and encourage the involvement of students. The existence of sports in the Fiji Curriculum is in line with some of these studies but it seems to be diverting towards a disorganized non educational program which is widely affecting the high schools. Schools sport program should be planned and organized so that it complements academic performance.

The Further Education Sports Coordinator (FESCO), 2009 programme report is an excellent paper that emphasizes on the development of an effective sporting program for the children of England (Barrie, Armour, Harvey, Nevill, & Waring, 2009). FESCO programme is an idea mooted by the England government for the development of a *PE and Sport Strategy for Young People* (PESSYP) introduced in 2008 that aims by 2011 to create a world class system for PE and sport for all children and young people, who will stimulate and increase their participation in sport, and sustain it. (Barrie et al., 2009, p.4) The main strategy for the programme is to build on the success of the PESSYP, but also recognising its shortfalls particularly in engaging 16-19 year olds in PE and sport, the emphasis within the new strategy is on ensuring that sport becomes a natural part of every young person's life, not only during their school years, but also into their college and working lives.

The report highlighted two key aims of the strategy to be implemented in the schools. The first is to create a new '5 hour offer' for all 5-16 year olds. (Barrie et al., 2009) To continue to increase the number of 5-16 year olds taking part in at least two hours high quality PE and sport at school each week; and create *new* opportunities for them to participate in a further three hours each week of sporting activity, through school, voluntary and community providers; secondly, to create new opportunities for all 16-19 years old to participate in three hours each week of sporting activities through their colleges or in local clubs. (Barrie et al., 2009)

The overall aim of the FESCO programme is to increase opportunities for young people, aged between 16 and 19 in education, to participate, perform, lead and volunteer in Sport. The program is continuously assessed and supervised and incorporated to the school program. (Barrie et al., 2009) School sports program in Fiji are organised by the teachers. The Fiji sports culture should complement such program where sports can be made to be part of a

child's development where all sporting stakeholders to put in a helping hand. The high schools should extend their role in the students' development outside the boundaries of the school and be part of the students' development in all the areas of their life.

The CDU do not have any report on the current status of Sports Education in schools even though they have designed a curriculum that contains sports. It is the responsibility of the MOE to see that the content of the curriculum are properly implemented to meet the needs of the students and the nation. Policies need to be put in place by the MOE to see that school sports follow a structure that is effective to the children's development.

### **The PE Teachers**

The quality of teachers taking PE plays a very influential role in the effectiveness of the physical education and sports education. Teachers play a pivotal role to ensure that students have positive experiences of PA in school settings. (Bailey, cited in Petrie, Jones &McKim, 2007)Research indicates that teachers who feel good about themselves, and are competent and confident in what they do, are more likely to create similarly supportive and nurturing environments for their students (Marczely; Spiller & Fraser cited in Petrie et al, 2007)The over emphasis placed on the major sports (Rugby, Netball, Volleyball and Soccer) is a reflection on the teachers capabilities. Dorovolomo (2004) pointed out that Fiji PE teachers are most confident to teach volleyball, athletics, body systems, fitness education, sport injuries and drugs in sport; but are least confident to teach cricket, outdoor education, sport sociology, basketball, and hockey.

The FESCO (2009) program stressed the importance of increasing in the range, quality and quantity of sport programmes available to the college students aged 16-19, an increase in the number of coaching hours across a range of sports, an increase in the number of intra and inter college competitions and increase in training, support and deployment of young people asvolunteers in sport (Barrie.et al., 2009, p.4). Limiting the number of sports taught to the students will have drastic effect on the students' choice of their lifetime sports consequently, affecting the countries sports representations at international level. Students have different capabilities and interest, some prefer taking part in team sports while others may like individual

sports. The PE classes should consist of a wide range of sports to cater for the students' preference.

Implementing the PE curriculum relies less on the curriculum document and more on the ability of teachers to clearly know what they are attempting to do and what is realistic in the doing. The experience of many teachers and teacher educators suggests this is frequently the case as many teachers are still largely unclear about what PA means within a curriculum context, and what it can 'look like,' in comparison with a more general understanding of physical activity (Tinning cited in Gatman, 2005). This point was supported by Graber (cited in Petrie, 2007) outlining how teacher characteristics: subjective warrant, teacher beliefs, concerns and experience; teacher competencies: expertise, and knowledge, including general pedagogical, content, pedagogical content and curricular; and pre-impact behaviours: planning, curricular goals and value orientations; have an impact on teaching and learning in PE.

### **The Parents**

Parents play a very important role in the development of their children. They want their children to be healthy and happy. Parents in Fiji are always very supportive during youth sports competition, they will always come in big numbers wearing school sport shirts and waving flags to show support for their children. Nelson and Larsen (2006, p.1281) proved that adolescents with high overall sports and sports participation with parents, using neighbourhood recreation centre, strict parental, and being active in school were less likely to participate in a range of risky behaviours and were less likely to have low self-esteem.

In some schools parents often take the leading role in fundraising for their children sports tour and other expenses. Old scholars together with the parents sometimes play a very influential part in Fiji secondary school sports competition; they often go back to their school to help in the training of school athletes and in most cases take over some of the teachers' responsibilities. However, the role of parents in the sport experiences of youths is often overlooked (Gano, 2010). The parents need to be guided on the role they play in their children's sports since some parents negatively impact their child's experience by not becoming involved, putting too much pressure

on their child to excel in athletics, becoming over-involved in coaching and planning decisions, or by engaging in deviant behavior. (Gano, 2010)

The over emphasis of competition has somehow affected the parents role towards their children's sports hence taking the fun out of it. Gano (2010) highlighted that research has continually found that the most prevalent reason why youths participate in sport is to have fun. Therefore, it is important to encourage children to have fun and to enjoy. In recent studies, athletes from 8 to 15 years of age identified learning skills and enhancing personal performance, socializing with others, and experiencing optimal challenge as key characteristics of fun in sport (Harris & Ewing; Shi & Ewing cited in Gano, 2010). Most of the famous international sporting idols always say that the reason they take part in sports and have become famous is because of their love and for the fun of it. For this reason, parents should make sure fun is associated with personal improvement and intrinsic joy from the activity, and not just from winning games.

### **Creating the Climate for Your Children**

Sports provide an environment of learning where children can be nurtured to behave and learn values. It is the responsibility of schools and the community to create a climate that emphasizes learning. Creating a climate and mastery of skills has been found to be associated with greater effort, more adaptive practice strategies, and more enjoyment (Roberts cited in Gano, 2010). Parents can do this by evaluating and rewarding their child's effort in games and practices. Following a game, a father could approach his daughter and congratulate her on how hard she hustled during the soccer game that day. Or a mother could tell her son how proud she is that he improved two seconds in the 100 freestyle (Gano, 2010).

The child learns to define success as a result of his/her own effort, an aspect she/he can control. This is a psychological concept of "locus of control" where individual should only focus their attention on things they can control, "*you can only control the controllable*" (G. Osborne, personal communication, 2009). This turns the focus away from an aspect that the child cannot control which is the win/loss record. A child has no control over how the rest of his/her team will perform or the ability level of the opponent. The only aspect of the game which children can control is their own effort and their approach to the sport. Talking to children after games may also help them develop a better sense of how to define their success through effort. Instead of

focusing on the win/loss, children should be encouraged to think about how they performed on the field: What they did well, where they need to improve, what was enjoyable about the game regardless of the outcome. Children also need to be taught that mistakes and failure are opportunities for learning. So rather than dwelling on the mistake, it is important to gather the necessary lesson (hopefully with the help of the coach) that will prevent the mistake from happening again. (Gano, 2010) With this perspective, children will be able to maintain a higher level of motivation and enjoyment while engaging in sport rather than experiencing added stress and fear related to losing and making mistakes.

### **Teachers and Parents Attitude towards School Sports**

The “win at all cost” thrives among school organized sports where teachers and parents are always involved in deviant behaviors with the sole aim of winning. Teachers often go to the extent of forging Birth certificates of students to allow them to play at a lower grade; this practice is common during schools rugby and athletic competitions. Valuable school time is often sacrificed to cater for training of school teams; this is a very common practice in Fijian dominated schools where students may spend valuable class time for training. This training often goes right to the night forcing students to be late home, tired and go straight to bed leaving no time for school work. (E. Serukalou, personal communication, May 18, 2013). The students are used and exploited for the sake of winning and to bring good reputation to the teachers and school. There is no concern at all on the academic work of the students as required by the curriculum. Sports and academic performance must go hand in hand for the sake of creating a holistic child.

Parents and teachers must maintain realistic expectation for the children. All parents and teachers want their children to excel in every activity in which they engage. However, they are not always sure about what to expect, according to Gano (2010) it is always easy to blame the poor coaching or lack of effort on the child's part for the lower level of ability on the contrary it is much harder to be objective about the child's ability. The reverse is true as well, parents who see their children excel begin to develop expectations. Parents may continually push their child to practice more or stay focused and may become easily frustrated at setbacks or blame others when their child does



not excel. Under these circumstances, it is important to have realistic expectations about what the child can truly accomplish. Gano (2010)

According to Researchers who have talked with young elite athletes they have found that parents' negative evaluative and affective reactions to poor performance, exaggerated importance of good performance, or lack of support has been linked to sources of competitive stress for the athletes (Scanlan&Lewthwaite ; Scanlan, Stein, &Ravizza cited in Gano,2010). Additionally, excessive parental pressure has been linked to athlete's perceived negative affect (Hellstedt cited in Gano, 2010). The teacher and parents are there to give the child a balance life with the help of the curriculum to ensure holistic development. Children need a lot of experiences in which to discover who they are and what they want to become, isolating them as an athlete will not be very beneficial.

### **International Bodies Perception of PE**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2004, the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, formally launched 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. Four major aims were developed: (i) *democratization and strengthening of the practice of physical education and sport for all in all member states and by all sections of the population;* (ii) *promotion of physical education and an integral part of lifelong learning;* (iii) *generalization of physical education and sport as a major tool not only for health and physical development but also for acquiring values necessary for social cohesion and intercultural dialogue;* and (iv) *launching of an awareness-raising and information campaign focused on an issue arousing popular support* (Allman cited in Dorovolomo, 2004).

Two internationally recognised documents provide relevant guidance about PE curricular and co-curricular for New Zealand school settings; the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport(ICPES) (UNESCO, 1978) and World Health Organisations (WHO) guidelines for Promoting Active Living Through and in Schools (2000) (Petrie, Jones &McKim, 2007). Discussion on the ideas of ICPES remind school administrators and teachers on the importance of physical activity, in the forms of PE and sport, and also detail the need for qualified teachers/coaches, access to adequate facilities and equipment, and the need to design programmes that meet student needs, including development of the physical, social, and moral aspects (Petrie et al (2007).

The WHO guidelines focus explicitly on the physical health benefits, as the WHO attempts to encourage countries, both developed and developing countries, to address concern about a decrease in PA and formal PE programmes in schools. The WHO guidelines for “Promoting active living through and in schools” state that schools can and should allow each child and young person to take part in a structured PE curriculum and in PA sessions of moderate to vigorous levels regularly, several times each week; and offer a range of physical activities outside the school system, i.e., in the community with the support of parents, peers, community leaders and local sports and social organizations. (Petrie, Jones &McKim, 2007)The government of Fiji through the MOE and the Ministry of Health have been working according to the guidelines set by the International bodies in order to meet these standards. (MoE, 2013)

### **The Benefits of Physical Activity**

PE classes and school sports represent two areas where adolescents can engage in physical activity of sufficient quantity and quality to promote a spectrum of benefits. Since most youth attend school, the role of PE in the development of PA behavior, and subsequent physical fitness, has become a central belief in improving students’ sedentary behaviour. (Dorovolomo, 2004). Besides, the school PE environment provides a primary source of PA and fitness instruction serves as a change agent in youth health status and plays a prominent role in promoting physical activity in the population. The benefits of engaging in PA affect a lot of areas in the adolescents’ life.

The benefits of PA are discussed under the following sub headings:

- A. Social benefits
- B. Behavioral benefits
- C. Academic benefits

### **Social Benefits**

Engaging in PA and Sports affects our social life, this was confirmed by the work of Sports Sociologist that has label sports as a social institution. Kenyon and Loy (cited in Delany and Madigan, 2006)pointed out that sport had been in existence for the last four decade it has become a cultural phenomenon of great magnitude and complexity and was fast becoming a social institution. Children watching others, family, peers and role models and learning from their

behavior and experiences affects the way they perform and behave on a daily basis. This learning of behaviour's, values, rights and wrongs by the children is a form of socialization. (Delany and Madigan, 2006)

Culpan (cited in Gatman, 2005, p.5) described the *socio-ecological perspective* which promotes a 'way of teaching' that acknowledges the learner operates within a social context and recognizes that students do not come to school encased in a bubble. Through specific pedagogical processes in PE, students are 'able to understand how broader physical, social, political, economic, ethical, and cultural contexts and histories influence the ways in which they (and other people) make meaning out of their PA experiences. (Gatman, 2005, p.5)Gatman (2005) added that students will be encouraged to question their own decisions critically and work towards improving practices relating to PA within the school and wider community.

Albert Bandura (1961) a famous Psychologist pointed out that demonstration and observation of others performing a skill is a vital way of learning. It has been publicized that an individual's performance will improve most when the demonstration is from a skilled superior, such as a teacher or coach. However, demonstrations from unskilled peers also are often effective. Team sports bring out the value and attitude of "team work" where individual players will be working together as a team. *Attitudes and values* contribute to the well-being of individuals and society through learning in PE; students will develop a positive and responsible attitude to their well-being; respect the right of other people; care and concern for other people in the community and for the environment and a sense of social justice (NZ Ministry of Education, cited in Gatman, 2005, p.4). Students who are involved in PA will learn how to participate positively and will be encouraged to meet competition and challenges constructively, and strive for their personal best.

### **Behavioral benefits**

Delany and Madigan (2006,p.7) state that sports often serve as a positive diversion from the negative aspects of life by providing a temporary escape from the routine/dull , sometimes monotonous and painful elements in one's personal or social life. Adolescents who actively participate in sports find a sense of purpose while participating in sports activity. Their time is

often occupied with training and preparation providing them opportunities for intrinsic and extrinsic reward.

Nelson and Larsen (2006, p.1287) found that physical activities may contribute to reductions in risky behaviours through a variety of mechanisms such as providing role models, peer networks, opportunities for teamwork, social development, problem- solving, and effective outlets for energy. Risk behaviours for adolescents in Fiji include illegal drugs truancy, cigarette smoking, sexual intercourse, delinquency). Nelson and Larsen (2006) pointed out that adolescent who have high overall sports and sports participation with parents, using neighbourhood recreation centre, strict parental control of TV, reporting few activities overall, and being active in school and were less likely to participate in a range of risky behaviours. They further added that active teens were less likely to have low self-esteem (e.g., adolescents engaging in sports with parents) and more likely to have higher grades

### **Academic Benefits**

Researchers have proven that there is a positive relationship between PA and academic performance. Youths receiving additional PA tend to show improved attributes such as increased brain function and nourishment, high energy, high concentration levels which may all support cognitive learning (Leslee and Mitchel, 2003). A number of studies were conducted in USA on the effect of PA and academic performance; these studies support one another in suggesting that when a substantial amount of school time is dedicated to physical activity, academic performance meets and may even exceed that of students not receiving additional physical activity (Shephard cited in Leslee and Mitchel, 2003).

Shephard (1997) pointed out improved brain attributes associated with regular physical activity consist of increased cerebral blood flow, changes in hormone levels, enhanced nutrient intake, and greater arousal. Cocke (cited in Leslee and Mitchel, 2003) states “a trio” of studies presented at the 2001 Society for Neuroscience Conference; suggest that regular exercise can improve cognitive function and increase levels of substances in the brain responsible for maintaining the health of neurons.

A change in the environment is one of the factors that enhance learning. This is often the reason given by teachers when they take their students for field trips or excursions. Brain function may also indirectly benefit from physical activity due to increased energy generation as well as from time spent outside of the classroom or away from studying. The increased energy levels and time outside of the classroom may give relief from boredom resulting in higher attention levels during classroom instruction(Linder cited in Leslee and Mitchel, 2003).

Focusing more on physical fitness and physical education in school would result in healthier, happier and smarter children. Cotrell (2010) put forward that we want our kids to be fit for as long as possible and it will show in their academic performance but if we can intervene on those children who are not necessarily fit and get them to physically fit levels, we may also see their academic performance increase.

### Conclusion

The push to improve and uplift the standard of PE requires a right and effective starting point and there is no other better place than beginning from the Teacher Education Institutions. The teacher training institutions needs to be strengthened and programs offered improved to developed quality teachers that would ensure effective delivery. Establishing a specific set of intake criteria for the tertiary institutions would ensure this transition. This idea was supported by Siedentop and Locke's (cited in Dorovolomo, 2004) notion that the success and quality of PE in K-12 schools depends on Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) and on how each plays a part in the success or failure of the other. Put simply, good PETE must produce good school programs. PETE has failed to exert a positive influence on school programs because there has been little or no real effort to do so. Siedentop and Locke (1997, p. 26) pointed out "*What we have is a systemic failure – one that involves the relationship of physical education programs in public schools with teacher preparation in higher education*". Realizing this systemic failure is imperative because many PETE institutions do not impute the problem as systemic, thus operating programs far removed from the context. This study had identified this failure and recommended corrective measures through the modification and strengthening of PE in the Fiji education system through development at PETE institutions.

PETE curriculum need to be aligned to the current developments and new innovations in the area of sports, fitness and health. This would require a concerted effort and network between the

PETE institutions, MOE, Sports Organisations and the MOH; the creation of new knowledge and awareness on the importance of PA to the lives and development of young people. This approach of curriculum development can be termed as faculty driven, data informed and needs supported. Courses or units offered in PETE need to reflect ideas founded on research and best practices to provide a broad- balanced relevant learning experiences that takes into account the learners needs while having provision for progression and continuity. Furthermore, PE curriculum development should be responsive to the changes in society and the economy that reinforce the idea of lifelong learning and support the initiative of the government in building healthy and fit citizens. Rectifying the place of sports within the school PE curriculum should take a balance perspective providing equal opportunity for both competitive sports and recreational sports.

Parental support for school sports was more eminent among schools that regularly featured in the Fiji school organized competitions, while schools that do not take part have been seen to be the one lacking parental support as well as having a weak PE program. The school, teachers, students and parents should be aware of the place of sports within the school curriculum and the sporting activities of their children. PE teachers should consider that students, parents and school administrators are key people in PE and sports programs (Siedentop, Hastie, & Van Der Mars, 2011, pp.181-183). It is suggested that programs should maintain good data on what the students know and can do as this would ensure a stronger position to promote and advocate its role in the school curriculum. It is always evident that the parents support increases and are more involved when teachers communicate with them on the students' progress and sports involvement. (Siedentop et al. 2011). In summary parental support towards children's PA and sports would enhance the development of physical, social and communicative skills, self-confidence, friendship, fun and enjoyment as well as fitness.

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