



DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES TO VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and coaching visually impaired individuals in track athletics requires specialized approaches and considerations to ensure their full participation and development. This abstract highlight key guidelines for effectively instructing and coaching visually impaired athletes in track events. These guidelines emphasize the importance of guide runners, starting techniques, orientation and mobility training, event-specific guidance, communication and feedback, adapted equipment, safety precautions, relay exchanges, competition adaptations, and fostering empowerment and inclusion. By implementing these guidelines, coaches and instructors can create an inclusive and supportive environment that enables visually impaired athletes to thrive in track athletics. Collaboration with professionals and continuous adaptation to individual needs are crucial for optimizing the coaching experience and ensuring the athletes' success.

Keywords: Guidelines, physical education, activities, visually impaired, children

Introduction

Physical education plays a crucial role in the holistic development of children, promoting their physical fitness, social skills, and overall well-being. However, ensuring inclusive physical education for children with visual impairments presents unique challenges that require specialized guidelines and strategies. In Kogi State, Nigeria, recognizing the importance of providing equal opportunities for visually impaired children, specific guidelines have been developed to enhance their participation in physical education activities.

The visually impaired are persons who are visually handicapped as a result of short sightedness, long sightedness, astigmatism, and other similar eye diseases, which impair normal vision (Osinuga, 2018 and Mba, 2022). People in this group deviate markedly from the normal developmental trend as compared with their peers and as such, they require the service of professionally trained persons to cope with the demands of life despite their unique nature. Whereas, there is need for young children to receive appropriate exercise on daily basis to ensure that their bodies grow and develop in a normal, functional manner, blind persons usually have problems with physical fitness hence risk heart disease and stress arising from restriction in mobility.

Ozogi (2022) and Osinuga (2017) asserted that lack of opportunity to engage in physical activities places the visually impaired at serious risks. The researchers observed that as the visually impaired children's lack of movement skill could be observed in performance inadequacies when tackling physical tasks and fundamental skills either at home, in school or on field of play, such inadequacies are also found in their dressing, throwing, catching and other physical activities. It remains, therefore, that lack of physical skills can affect pupil's self-concept and can result in behavioral problems.

The purpose of guidelines is to offer educators, physical education instructors, and other stakeholders a framework for designing and implementing effective physical education programs tailored to meet the needs of visually impaired children in Kogi State (Edwards, 2020). By addressing the specific challenges associated with visual impairments, the guidelines aim to create an inclusive and empowering environment that allows visually impaired children to actively engage in physical activities, enhance their motor skills, build confidence, and foster social integration (Ozoji, 2022). The guidelines emphasize a student-centered approach, focusing on the individual abilities and needs of each visually impaired child. They recognize the diverse range of visual impairments and the varying levels of functional vision among the students. The guidelines also acknowledge the importance of collaboration between educators, physical education instructors, parents/guardians, and relevant professionals to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive physical education programs (Napier, 2022).

Objectives of Physical Education

The National Policy on Education (NPE) revised in 2021 has stated the rights of exceptional individuals, and their potential contributions to the development of the society. In fact, the policy statement has created a new dimension in the educational provisions for the handicapped. The upper most challenge is the mainstreaming or integrating system of their education. Some of the main objectives/roles of physical education are itemized below:

- Adequate locomotion of which the body is an integral aspect in the development of the mind.
- Motor coordination efficiency and motor capacity improvement.
- Moral training, power of decision and will, endurance and the desire to communicate with others for the needed social interpersonal human relationship.
- Self-confidence and self-esteem of the blind are improved and such vocational basic skills of handwork/craft, drawing and painting, writing are assisted by sport activities.

Besides, sport activities help to develop kinesthetic qualities of good posture, graceful body appearance and movement, good walking and sitting positions (Osinuga, 2017).

Again, there is no gain saying the fact that youth sports are seen as an avenue for promoting attitudes and values about the nature and purpose of composition such as sportsmanship, discipline, authority and socialization. Edwards (2020) stressed some of the assumed benefits of physical sport activities, which include character development, competitiveness, physical and mental fitness and nationalism. Thus, the exclusion of exceptional people such as the visually impaired will automatically destroy all the above-mentioned virtues in the individual. It will further create a wide gap among the youth who are the bed-rock of any nation building.

General Teaching and Coaching Guidelines for the Visually Impaired

Teaching and coaching visually impaired individuals require specialized approaches and considerations to ensure their full participation and development (Mba, 2022). Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind when teaching and coaching individuals with visual impairments:

Individualized Approach: Recognize that visual impairments can vary significantly in terms of severity and functional vision. Adopt an individualized approach that takes into account the specific needs, abilities, and limitations of each visually impaired individual (Ladani, 2020). Conduct assessments to understand their visual capabilities and adjust teaching strategies accordingly.

Clear Communication: Use clear and concise verbal instructions to guide visually impaired individuals through activities. Provide detailed explanations and use descriptive language to convey information about their surroundings, movement cues, and activity requirements (Okunrotifa, 2021). Use consistent terminology to help establish a common understanding.

Tactile and Kinesthetic Cues: Utilize tactile and kinesthetic cues to supplement verbal instructions. This can include using touch and physical guidance to help individuals understand movement patterns, body positioning, and spatial awareness. Provide tactile references or markers to indicate boundaries or targets.

Environmental Adaptations: Modify the environment to enhance accessibility and safety. Clear any potential obstacles or hazards that may impede movement. Ensure proper lighting and contrast to maximize visibility (Ozaji, 2022). Consider auditory cues, such as beeping or verbal cues, to assist with orientation and navigation.

Use of Assistive Technology: Explore and utilize available assistive technologies that can enhance learning and participation (Ladani, 2020). This may include screen readers, magnifiers, text-to-speech software, or apps specifically designed for individuals with visual impairments. Familiarize yourself with these technologies to provide guidance and support.

Inclusive Team Activities: Encourage participation in team sports and activities that promote social integration and cooperation. Adapt the rules or equipment if necessary to ensure equal opportunities for visually impaired individuals (Napier, 2022). Foster a supportive and inclusive environment that values teamwork, empathy, and mutual respect among all participants.

Sensory Awareness: Promote the development and utilization of non-visual senses. Encourage individuals to rely on their auditory, tactile, and proprioceptive senses to enhance spatial awareness, movement coordination, and skill development (Osinuga, 2018).

Collaboration with Professionals: Collaborate with professionals who specialize in visual impairments, such as orientation and mobility specialists, low-vision therapists, or adaptive physical education specialists. Seek their expertise and guidance to ensure the most effective teaching strategies and adaptations are implemented.

Regular Feedback and Evaluation: Provide regular feedback to visually impaired individuals on their progress, technique, and performance. Use constructive feedback to help them improve and set realistic goals. Assess their development periodically and adjust teaching strategies accordingly (Napier, 2022).

Inclusion and Advocacy: Advocate for the inclusion of visually impaired individuals in physical education and sports programs. Educate others about the capabilities and potential of visually impaired individuals to challenge misconceptions and promote a more inclusive and accepting environment.



Remember, these guidelines are general in nature, and it's essential to adapt them to the specific needs and abilities of each visually impaired individual. Working closely with the individual, their support network, and relevant professionals will ensure a more effective and inclusive teaching and coaching experience (FRN, 2021).

Track Athletics

When teaching and coaching visually impaired individuals in track athletics, there are additional considerations and guidelines to keep in mind. Here are some specific guidelines for teaching and coaching visually impaired individuals in track athletics:

Guide Runners: Utilize guide runners to assist visually impaired athletes during training and competition. Guide runners should have clear communication and synchronization with the athlete. They can provide verbal cues, physical guidance through tethers or elbow connections, and help with navigation on the track (Napier, 2022).

Starting Techniques: Adapt starting techniques to accommodate visually impaired athletes. Provide clear instructions on starting positions, alignment with starting blocks (if used), and starting commands. Use audible cues or tactile signals, such as a starter pistol or vibrating starting blocks, to indicate the start of a race.

Orientation and Mobility: Incorporate orientation and mobility training into the coaching process. Help visually impaired athletes become familiar with the track layout, including straightaways, curves, and exchange zones (in relay races). Teach them techniques to maintain proper lane positioning and negotiate turns effectively (Mba, 2022).

Event-Specific Guidance: Provide detailed instructions on technique and form for specific track events. Break down each event into smaller components and demonstrate proper execution. Emphasize the use of auditory cues, tactile feedback, and kinesthetic awareness to help visually impaired athletes perform at their best.

Communication and Feedback: Maintain constant and clear communication with visually impaired athletes during training sessions and competitions. Use verbal feedback to provide instructions, corrections, and encouragement. Encourage athletes to ask questions and provide input on their experiences (Ozaji, 2022).

Equipment and Markers: Ensure the use of appropriate and adapted equipment. Implement auditory cues, such as beeping or ringing devices, to help visually impaired athletes locate and identify field event areas (e.g., long jump pit, high jump bar). Use tactile markers or tape to indicate the approach path or take-off points.

Safety Precautions: Prioritize athlete safety by ensuring the track is free from obstacles, debris, or hazards. Maintain proper lighting and visibility during training sessions. Modify training methods, such as incorporating lower impact exercises or modified drills, to reduce the risk of injury while maintaining skill development (Osinuga, 2018).

Relay Exchanges: For relay races, establish clear communication and exchange techniques between visually impaired athletes and their guide runners or teammates. Practice and refine relay handoffs to

ensure smooth transitions. Use verbal cues or tactile signals to indicate the precise moment for the exchange.

Competition Adaptations: In competitive settings, ensure that visually impaired athletes have access to appropriate classifications and divisions based on their visual impairment category. Coordinate with race officials to ensure fair and inclusive competition.

Empowerment and Inclusion: Foster an inclusive and supportive team environment that values the contributions of visually impaired athletes. Encourage team-building activities, peer support, and opportunities for collaboration with sighted teammates. Recognize and celebrate the achievements of visually impaired athletes to promote their self-confidence and sense of belonging (Okurotifa, 2021).

Remember, these guidelines should be tailored to meet the specific needs and abilities of each visually impaired athlete. Collaboration with relevant professionals, such as adaptive physical education specialists and orientation and mobility experts, can provide valuable insights and guidance to enhance the coaching process.

Key elements highlighted in these guidelines include:

Individualized Assessment: Conducting comprehensive assessments to determine the unique needs, abilities, and limitations of each visually impaired child. This assessment may involve consultation with ophthalmologists, low-vision specialists, and other experts.

Adapted Physical Education: Designing and modifying physical education activities to suit the specific needs and abilities of visually impaired children. This may involve using adapted equipment, implementing appropriate modifications, and providing specialized instruction (Skyes & Ozoji, 2022).

Sensory Considerations: Recognizing the reliance on non-visual cues and enhancing the utilization of auditory, tactile, and proprioceptive senses during physical education activities.

Environmental Modifications: Creating a safe and accessible environment that minimizes barriers, ensures easy navigation, and provides a conducive setting for visually impaired children to participate in physical activities (Ladani, 2020).

Inclusive Instructional Strategies: Incorporating inclusive teaching methods such as verbal cues, tactile guidance, and auditory feedback to facilitate effective communication and understanding.

Collaboration and Support: Encouraging collaboration among teachers, physical education instructors, parents/guardians, and relevant professionals to promote effective inclusion and provide necessary support for visually impaired children.

Professional Development: Recognizing the importance of continuous professional development for educators and physical education instructors to acquire knowledge and skills specific to teaching visually impaired children. Training programs and workshops should be provided to enhance their understanding of visual impairments, adaptive strategies, and inclusive teaching methods (Okunrotifa, 2021).

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs): Collaborating with parents/guardians, educators, and relevant professionals to develop comprehensive IEPs for visually impaired children. These plans should outline specific goals, accommodations, and adaptations required to support their participation in physical education activities.

Peer Inclusion: Promoting peer interaction and fostering an inclusive environment where visually impaired children can engage in physical activities alongside their sighted peers. Encouraging cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect among all students to create an inclusive and supportive atmosphere.

Parent/Guardian Involvement: Recognizing the crucial role of parents/guardians in supporting the physical education of visually impaired children. Providing resources, guidance, and regular communication to ensure parents/guardians are actively involved in their child's physical education journey (Ozoji, 2022).

Assessment and Evaluation: Establishing appropriate assessment tools and methods to evaluate the progress and performance of visually impaired children in physical education activities. These assessments should consider individual abilities, provide constructive feedback, and guide future instruction.

Equipment and Technology: Ensuring the availability and appropriate use of specialized equipment, such as adapted sports equipment and assistive technology, to enhance the participation and learning experience of visually impaired children in physical education (Skyes & Ozoji, 2022).

Advocacy and Awareness: Raising awareness among the broader school community, students, and parents/guardians about the importance of inclusive physical education for visually impaired children. Advocating for equal opportunities, challenging stereotypes, and promoting a culture of inclusion and acceptance.

Conclusion

The guidelines for the teaching of physical education activities to visually impaired children in Kogi State serve as a valuable resource to facilitate inclusive and empowering physical education programs. By addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by visually impaired children, these guidelines promote equal opportunities, enhance motor skills, and foster social integration. Through collaborative efforts and the implementation of these guidelines, Kogi State can ensure that visually impaired children have access to high-quality physical education experiences, enabling them to develop their physical fitness, self-confidence, and overall well-being.

Suggestions

That adapted physical education seems unworkable in the school with its physical education staff is no reason to dismiss the matter altogether and penalize visually impaired students. Efforts should be continued by seeking help from all spheres. Special education teachers have the obligation to demonstrate how community resources can be utilized and how an active, enjoyable life can be led outside the school and outside where children live the greater portions of their time.

It is very essential to facilitate physical sports activities of the exceptional persons side by side other sports and games for the sighted persons in the current trend for them to make relevant contribution in the continental prominence and also global excellence. One of the objectives of special education as stipulated by the National Policy on Education is to give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all handicapped children and adults in order that they may fully play their roles in the development of the nation. It becomes imperative that the entire Nigerian society should strive to implement this objective at all cost sooner than later.

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