ROLE OF THE CLASSROOM TEACHER IN
ELEMENTARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The physical growth and development of a child is basic to his whole life. A well-rounded physical education program is that part of the formal education which contributes to this growth. The body and the mind can and should be developed and trained simultaneously.

The writer has held the belief that the teaching of a subject or skill in the elementary school is not an end in itself, but that it is the means of helping the child develop mentally, emotionally, physically, and socially, so that he may learn to think, to express himself, and to obtain his greatest potential in a healthy mental and physical climate.

The belief was held that the school program must be organized to provide for the needs of the child and that it is very essential for the classroom teacher to be trained in philosophy, techniques and skills of physical education, just as she is trained in the basic subjects of reading, spelling, and arithmetic. The elementary classroom teacher in her close association with the child is in the best position to understand his needs.

The trend has seemed to be toward more teaching being done by specialists in the fields of music, art, and physical education. This trend has been partially created by the inadequacy of the training in physical education of the classroom teachers. The writer has believed that the needs of the child in these early years can best be met in the self-contained classroom with a properly trained teacher.
The organization of the school day is a contributing factor in the child's learning process, as has been indicated by Walters in her statement:

The effective teacher realizes that the routine of the day is the framework within which the teacher and the children operate; various subject areas are media for the development of personality; and personal relationships establish the emotional climate in which learning does or does not take place. ¹

This study has been concerned with that part of the elementary child's program designated physical education which Vannier and Foster have defined as "... directed, purposeful activity centered around the total body, its movement, care, and use. As such it stresses the development of skills—physical, social, and mental." ²

Halsey and Porter believe that physical education properly taught has a tremendous effect on the child, as shown by their statement:

If physical education is understood, appreciated and well taught, it will be a rich and full experience favorable to the child's integrated development in physical growth, motor skill, emotional maturity, and social adjustment. ³

It was the feeling of the importance of physical education in the life of the elementary school child and the need of a better under-


²Vannier, Maryhelen, and Foster, Mildred, Teaching Physical Education In Elementary Schools, p. 5.

standing of classroom presentation that led to this investigation.

The Problem

There are many administrative plans for teaching physical education on the elementary level. The problem in this study was to ascertain the needs of the child and then examine three of the plans most commonly used to determine which was best for the child. The three types of plans selected were:

1. A plan in which the teacher is responsible for all the actual teaching within her classroom. Usually in this plan there is supervisor or specialist who consults and coordinates the total program. As used in this study it is called a self-contained classroom type.

2. A program in which the presentation to the children is shared by the teacher and the supervisor or specialist. They work together, each making a contribution. The teacher shares her knowledge of the total personality and ability of the child. The supervisor or specialist gives to the program the benefits of progressional training and experience. This plan is designated the cooperative teacher-supervisor type.

3. A program in which a qualified expert visits each classroom at a given period and does all of the teaching. In this plan the teacher is relieved of all teaching and responsibility in the physical education activities. This has been termed the specialist type of program.
Procedures Used

Two procedures were used in the study. Interviews were held with people in the field of physical education to determine needs of the child and attitudes toward the most desirable plan. Literature was reviewed for the purpose of comparing the three types of classroom programs to identify the type of presentation which best satisfi ed the needs of the child.

Limitations of Study

There were two limitations in the study. The review of literature was limited to reference material available in the Montana State College Library and published in the last ten years. The plans for teaching physical education were limited to the three considered to be most commonly practiced.

The first step was to determine the needs of the child. The findings on this phase of the investigation are presented in Chapter II.
CHAPTER II
THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION NEEDS OF
THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILD

During most of history men have regarded the mind and the body as separate entities. This idea has influenced the education of children. The Puritans regarded as a sin the child's urge to run and shout and to play. More recently the natural life of the child has been accepted, and the teacher of the elementary level has aimed at understanding the different aspects of the child's development, knowing that the child is a unified organism with varying rate of developing physical growth and motor skills, emotional maturity, and social adjustment. Thus the changing attitudes have pointed to the physical education needs of the elementary school child as important in his general development.

The teacher of physical education has been presented an excellent opportunity of becoming familiar with the needs of the child through observation of him at play as brought out by Halsey and Porter in their statement:

As the child throws himself into play, he moves, thinks, and feels simultaneously, and with all his energy. How he moves (skillfully or clumsily), how he thinks (quickly or slowly, with or without strategy), how he feels (like cheating or playing fair) depends in great part on the teaching he is getting. But whether his learning is good or poor, it "sticks"; it becomes part of him because he has been wholly absorbed in the process; that is, in the game.

1Ellis, George E., The Puritan Age and Rule, p. 35.
3Ibid., pp. 11-12.
The factors in the child's physical development that have been emphasized by the experts and those reporting in literature are physical growth, emotional maturity, and social adjustment. Each of these is an important physical education need of the elementary school child. The three are presented in that order in the following sections.

Physical Growth

Normal physical growth is important to the child and physical needs vary as individuals are born with very different endowments; they develop at very different rates; therefore, the school must provide a differentiated education to meet the variety of capacities and needs. The extent of the problem of differentiating to meet the needs is clearly evident in the great differences in physical development brought out by Halsey and Porter, who compiled the following facts about children's development physically:

1. The average annual increase in weight varied from $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds in a 6-year old to as much as 7 pounds gain for an 11-year old.

2. At the age of eleven the number of permanent teeth varied from ten to twenty-eight.

3. Two inches increase in height was about the average annual growth (gain for size) with the rate of growth gradually falling off during childhood.

4. The child's speed of reaction was about half of an adult.

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5. At the age of six the child could catch medium-sized balls, by the age of nine he could handle small balls well and use a small baseball bat. The 11-year old had increased his skill using bats, rackets, and clubs readily to propel balls.

6. Stunts were enjoyed. The child of six could do a front somersault and was developing more complex climbing and balance skills. By eleven, sex differences were more pronounced. Girls had better form in tumbling, swimming, and dance, boys, in ball control and in all skills involving strength.

7. Younger children ran whenever there was space. Motivation was no problem. Proper guidance for the best developmental experiences to use the urge to kick, throw, jump, swing, climb was needed. The skill and endurance of the older child increased. He needed to play harder for longer periods with some protection against over-fatigue.

8. Since children differed so much in rate of growth, apparatus should be adjustable. Younger children should be relatively free to choose and invent their own way of using the apparatus. Large apparatus was a challenge to the older child for such feats as vaulting, chinning, and handstands.

These facts support the concept that child development

"... is a slow process and the teacher must know about the way a child needs to develop in order to help him to help himself."1

Fischer recognized the classroom teacher's important role in discovering needs and observing continuous growth when he said:

The program for the children of elementary school age must be based on the children's needs, close attention being paid to the continuous process of growth that takes place during this span of years.

Games, stunts, rhythms—these become the serious objectives of the child's periods of activity.

The elementary school day is made up of classroom activities, recess periods, noon-hour activities, and in some schools, after-school play. Since children of elementary school age crave activity but tire easily, the physical education program should be spaced throughout the day, with short periods of supervised play for learning and recreation.\(^1\)

Reports in literature all seemed to indicate the varied physical development and the importance of a program to meet the general needs of physical growth. The importance of the observation factor in differences and growth point to the importance of the classroom teacher in the program.

**Emotional Maturity**

Emotional maturity is another important need of the elementary child and authorities have held that teachers need to be informed of the background of each child and that only then can they understand the behavior of the youngster. Again the role of the classroom teacher is very important because differences in emotional maturity are as great as in physical maturity. The extent of emotional maturity differences has been shown by Schneider and McNeely in their statement:

In any classroom the teacher finds a variety of children—some shy, some aggressive, some from happy homes, some from unhappy ones. Some are generally liked, others are only tolerated, and a few are usually rejected.\(^2\)


There are many points to be considered by the teacher of elementary physical education as she deals with the emotional needs of the children. Those reported by Halsey and Porter have been summarized as follows:

1. The child's normal emotional development continues to depend on security and acceptance. Some children, adept at getting approval of adults, failed at the task of getting approval from their own age group. Gradually dependence on adults decreased, and the child went into a hero-worshipping state. Acceptance in the group was very essential.

2. The small child had a range of emotional experiences. Crying was repressed. The 6-year-old might be brave about physical injuries, but hurt feelings, fatigue, or unjust punishment might produce tears not only at six, but also at seven or eight. The older child in spite of his independence still wanted love and affection from parents and teachers. When the ten-year-old scraped his knee on the playground, he did not come running to the teacher as he did when he was six. He did appreciate concern along with first-aid treatment, provided it was offered on a man-to-man basis.

3. At six or seven anger was expressed by fighting. Later, "big talk", gruffness, boasting, and "acting tough" took its place. Cowboy and gangster games took its place. Cowboy and gangster games gave him a sense of power and competence in difficult situations. Expressive movement was an excellent way of giving vent to aggressive and hostile feeling without fighting. "Walk like a giant" might lead to heavy, angry stamping, but the child emerged more relaxed and cheerful. Anger in the older child was more often provoked by adults than by peers and took the form of rebellion.

4. Fear of physical danger was somewhat dispelled by improved skills, but the child became susceptible to fears of the supernatural, of school failures, and of loss of popularity. Later these fears were replaced by worry.

1Halsey and Porter, op. cit., pp. 25-26 and 33-36.
5. Through the sixth grade, most physical education classes should be mixed. In the fifth and sixth grades, some provision should be made for the boys to play the more rugged games with teams of their own sex.

6. The child was an idealist. He learned to compensate for his frustrations. Emotional control went along with sportsmanship.

All of these emotional characteristics and differences point to the need of an understanding teacher. Heffernan emphasized the importance of an understanding teacher when she wrote, "Only as the teacher understands each child as a person can she guide him to the fullest development of his unique potentialities."1

These studies clearly reveal emotional maturity as a real need of the child and the important role of the classroom teacher in physical education.

Social Adjustment

A third major need of the elementary child is social adjustment and the school in any society is created "for the sole purpose of helping children grow up properly," according to Havighurst.2 The importance of early training in fixing behavior patterns for adjustment has been shown by Vannier and Foster who said:


Behavior patterns are laid down early in life. We all need to belong, feel secure, gain recognition, and be loved. These inner pressures are often intensified among children.¹

Just as in the needs for physical and emotional adjustment, the characteristics and differences in social adjustment among elementary children are many and great. The extent of the challenge to the teacher is given in the following summary points on characteristics of social adjustment. The study made by Halsey and Porter² presented these facts as important in a child's social adjustment:

1. By the age of six the child should be able to learn that there are simple, impersonal rules that apply to everyone in his group. These groups often dissolve in quarrels, with one or more, or even all quitting the game. By the age of eight, children have learned to muddle through disputes and maintain their groups for longer periods of play. Circle games might be first used; then small self-directed play groups. The groups should be kept flexible and allowed to shift after a quarrel. By the age of eight, team feelings have begun.

2. As social skills developed, play groups became more closely knit and took on "gang" characteristics. It is important for the child to be part of a "good" gang. Some children are so successful in gang life that they never mature beyond it.

3. The child learned to adjust to competitive situations if the situations were not so intense as to upset his emotional balance. Nine and ten-year-olds are capable of electing leaders. It was best to choose teams when the group was not present to avoid the inferior status of being chosen last. It was the belonging that counted. The group might often develop the less obvious talents of its members and help the obscure child.

¹Vannier and Foster, op. cit., p. 37.
4. Recently there has been a tendency for adults to force youngsters into the "varsity" pattern. Eight-year-olds were dressed up in uniforms, played their games before a crowd. Parents and teachers who understand competition and children should avoid this.

5. Movement and dance called for qualities of expressiveness and imagination, which were sometimes overshadowed in games by strength and skill.

The importance of game and play situations as a laboratory for social adjustment was clearly brought out in the preceding summary.

Breckenridge and Vincent have further recognized the impact of the group in liberating the personality in their statement:

Groups can liberate what is socially meaningful in the person and give it direction and a chance for self-development much better than any individual can. . . . Not only momentary behaviors, but many deep springs of child personality are liberated in group situations. The child finds himself because others find him. ¹

Children are not miniature adults. ² Authorities have compared growth to a ladder, each rung representing a developmental stage. ³ They have maintained that each child must progress up three such ladders marked "physical growth", "emotional growth", and "social growth". The best adjusted youngsters had progressed up all three growth ladders in a relatively even way.

In education there were those who believed that the classroom
teacher was the one to direct the physical education program of the children. Others believed that only qualified experts in the field should present the program. The findings relative to the presentation of a physical education program are discussed in Chapter III.
CHAPTER III
PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAM
IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The ideal toward which every elementary school strives is to provide the physical and social environment which will lead to maximum growth for every boy and girl, and teachers, supervisors, and administrators should aim toward this end. Picariello supported this ideal when he stated:

The primary purpose of any physical education program is to develop a high level of physical fitness of all the participating students. Its goal of sound mind in a sound body, mens sana in corpore sano, can only be reached through leadership of selling, motivation, desire and pride of knowledge of skills of the instructor directing the program.

Physical education has been an integral part of the curriculum in good elementary schools. Recently the Elementary School Section of the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare made the first comprehensive study of its status on a national level. This study had limitations but it gave a picture of who was teaching physical education in elementary schools.

Schneider reported on a questionnaire which was sent to 619 schools in cities with a population over 10,000. Replies were received

1 Heffeman, op. cit., page 37.


3 Schneider, Elsa, Physical Education in Urban Elementary Schools, Bulletin 1959, No. 15.
from 86 percent. The data was then compiled from 523 systems representing more than six and one-half million children enrolled in grades one through six in urban public elementary schools during the 1955-56 school year. These children attended school in 12,217 buildings located in forty-seven states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii.

The survey proved that the cooperative teacher-supervisor type of presentation to be used in about half of the schools. The self-contained classroom type is more frequently used in grades one through three. The bulletin summarized the pattern of presentation of the physical education program as follows:

Twenty-six percent of the classroom teachers of grades 1-3 and 16 percent of grades 4-6 do not have the help of specialized personnel in physical education in carrying out their responsibilities for teaching physical education.

Sixty percent of the classroom teachers of grades 1-3 and 48 percent of grades 4-6 teach physical education with the help of specialists or consultants in physical education attached to the school staff or to the central office staff.

Special teachers are directly responsible for providing the day-by-day instruction in physical education in 12 percent of grades 1-3 and 29 percent of grades 4-6.1

Of the 523 systems reporting, six systems stated there was no program of physical education provided for children. Some reports did not supply sufficient data for tabulation.2

The Schneider report indicated who was teaching the physical education program to children. The question then is the cooperative

1 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
2 Ibid., p. ix.
teacher-supervisor type of presentation, which most of the children are getting, meeting the needs of the boys and girls?

Who Should Teach Physical Education

In 1955 a study was begun by five staff members in the Elementary Schools Section, U. S. Office of Education, to determine how the needs of children were being met in the schools.\(^1\) Forty small conferences were held and the discussions were recorded. Included were 1,300 persons from 415 school systems in 68 communities of 35 states and the District of Columbia. Large and small urban schools, consolidated and rural schools, and schools made up of different racial and socio-economic groups were represented. The conferees did not agree on any one plan as best because school situations differ. They did agree that in-service education was important.

The summary results of the conferences were:

"Physical education is just as much a part of the school day as is reading, so we should do the teaching, but, of course, we need the help of specialists." This comment made by a classroom teacher reflects the point of view of many of the men and women who took part in the conferences. Other felt that physical education specialists should do all the teaching in that area in grades 4, 5, and 6. Some among this group felt that the plan offers a way of giving the classroom teachers a "free" period. Another group believed that classroom teachers should participate with the children and the specialist.

Some of the conferees believed that it is not a clear cut case of specialist or classroom teacher. Rather, children profit most when classroom teachers, specialists, supervisors, and administrators work out plans together which seem best for a particular school or school system.

There was complete agreement that the services of specialists for in-service education of both classroom teachers and specialists was high-lighted in some conferences.¹

Schneider showed that most schools utilize many trained people in the program and many do provide in-service training when she reported:

85 percent employ special teachers, consultants, or specialists in physical education

62 percent provide in-service education in physical education for classroom teachers.²

Koopman believed in a self-contained classroom with teacher assistance when needed. He said:

The self-contained classroom is gradually becoming the unit organization for learning. It is a social organization in of itself. It is a healthful, sane, sanitary, safe child's world—a democracy in action. . . .

The administration also will provide services from expert consultants who can supplement the insights and skills of the teacher as the occasion demands.³

¹Ibid., p. 112.


Baker, Annis, and Bontz made a study in 1951 to determine the nature of in-service practices in elementary schools. They concluded that the classroom teachers must carry the responsibility for teaching physical education at the elementary level and that in-service education is very important. They suggested demonstrations, use of bulletins, group conferences, individual conferences and workshops as methods of in-service education.

Expecting the classroom teacher to assume the responsibility of the development of her pupils is not asking the impossible, according to Yauch. In responding to the question "How good are our schools?" he said:

The main hypothesis on which the assertion of progress is predicted is that, if a body of knowledge about human growth and development and educational psychology exists and is systematically used in guiding the work of the classroom teacher, improvement in learning will be forthcoming. A correlated hypothesis is that if the conditions and environment for learning and the facilities with which teachers have to work are properly provided, learning will be improved. A further hypothesis states that if the preparation and in-service education of teachers are based on all the above, and in addition the teacher is a truly educated person, all the conditions necessary for improvement have been met.


2 Ibid., p. 386.

In answer to the question of who should teach the physical education program on the elementary level, the best method for each was held to be the one that gets the job done, provided it is done in socially approved ways. ¹

¹Vannier and Foster, op. cit., p. 70.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer had believed that the needs of the child in the elementary school could best be met in the self-contained classroom with a properly-trained teacher and then investigated literature to find out if this was upheld by authorities in the field.

Reports seemed to indicate that physical education has been an integral part of the school curriculum. Teachers of the elementary level have aimed to understand the different aspects of child development, knowing the child is a unified organism with varying rate of developing physical growth, motor skills, emotional maturity, and social adjustment.

The classroom teacher has been provided an excellent opportunity to understand the child as he participates in physical education.

Growth was described as a slow process and only as the teacher understood the child's development could she guide him to the fullest attainment of his unique potentialities.

Research reports showed that on the elementary level (1) less than one-fourth of the classroom teachers conduct their own physical education program with no outside help, (2) more than half of the classroom teachers conduct their program with the help of specialists or consultants, and (3) special teachers are responsible for the day-by-day instruction in less than one-fourth of the schools.

It was generally agreed that since physical education was as much a part of the school day as was reading and other basic subjects,
(1) the classroom teacher should do the teaching, (2) that services of the consultants or specialists were very desirable, (3) that in-service education was important, and (4) the purpose of the school was to help children grow.

Conclusion

The type of presentation of the physical education program was best when the child profited most in any school situation. Evidence presented indicated that at present this is the cooperative teacher-supervisor type of program.

Recommendations

The teaching of physical education is such an important part of the child's program that more effort should be directed toward improving the techniques, philosophy, and skills in physical education of the elementary school teacher before she enters the field of teaching.

A study should be made of the present requirements of prospective teachers in the field of elementary education to determine what courses are now required. The content of these required courses should be evaluated. If sufficient background was not required, then recommendations would be in order.
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