



## **SPORT EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR A PRODUCTIVE NIGERIAN SOCIETY IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Ochor Daniel Chinonso**

**Ochor Daniel Chinonso**

Department of Sport and Exercise Science, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt  
Choba, Port Harcourt Rivers State.

Email: [daniel\\_ochor@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:daniel_ochor@uniport.edu.ng)

### **Abstract**

Sport education offers a powerful solution to many of the challenges facing Nigeria in the 21st century, particularly in the realms of economic development, social cohesion, and individual well-being. This paper explores how integrating sports into the educational system can contribute to a more productive and unified society. The economic benefits of sport education are significant, including job creation in the sports industry and the economic impact of successful athletes who bring international recognition and investment to the country. Furthermore, sport education promotes physical and mental health, helping to combat non-communicable diseases and reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. It also fosters lifelong physical activity, which is crucial for maintaining a healthy population. In addition to health benefits, sport education plays a critical role in social cohesion by bridging ethnic, religious, and cultural divides. It promotes national unity through shared experiences in sports, while also developing essential social skills such as teamwork, communication, and leadership. For youth, sports provide a constructive outlet, steering them away from crime and drug abuse, and instilling values of discipline, perseverance, and purpose. Finally, sport education enhances cognitive function, memory, and concentration, leading to improved academic performance. It also teaches valuable life skills like goal-setting, time management, and resilience, which are crucial for success in both academic and professional settings. Through these multifaceted contributions, sport education is positioned as a critical tool for building a healthier, more united, and economically vibrant Nigeria in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Research, Development, Sun bears, Neophobia

### **Introduction**

Nigeria has been the most populous country in Africa for two decades now and during that period, it has had many challenges which hinders development as well as leaves everything redundant. The nation is grappling with a struggling economy, characterized by high levels of unemployment and inflation along with heavy reliance on oil export revenues. According to Garcia, Kohl, Ruengsorn and Zislin (2006), Nigeria's main challenges include, reducing poverty, diversifying its economy from the oil and gas sector towards more labor intensive sectors, and improving health and education.

Even as the economy grew, poverty and income inequality plagued Nigeria. The national poverty eradication and un sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDPF) statistics in 2022 shows that in Nigeria,

40.1% of the population live below the poverty line (376 Naira – less than 1 dollar a day) with significant geographic disparities. Around 86.9 million Nigerians are now living in extreme poverty. The particularly vulnerable include around 54 per cent of Nigerian children who live in multidimensional poverty. The study also reported that over 70% of women and girls in Northern parts of Nigeria do not know how to read and write. This is accentuated by the high dropout rates due to early marriages. For instance, 78% of girls in Northern Nigeria marry before the age of 18.

Understanding the importance of sports in making a good society has become more pronounced in recent times, particularly during this 21st century. Studies have shown the positive effects of participating in sports and recreational activities on mental, physical and social well-being. In return, it leads to the general improvement and development of both the individual they are helping as well as our community (Afshi et al., 2020). Moreover, a study has also showed that sport can play the role to combat multiple societal challenges such as, reducing social isolation of the elderly people violence among youth fragmentation and health problems. It has, therefore, gained the formidable ground of resolving the Nigerian society as is a function with respect to sustained opportunity in all facet of social life (Afshi et al., 2020).

One of those conduits is the educational system, which has long been a primary vessel to realizing the deep power of sports. The Nigerian education system should recognize the important role of sports in the curriculum and ensure it is formulated, implemented to maximize human wellbeing with respect to everyday life of an average member of a Nigerian society (Onyekwena, 2013). Principals and Professors, wearing the heads of academic institutions have a significant part in nurturing sports and representing school into other aspects. (Afshi et al., 2020). Etymology of the term "education" The word "education" originated from two Latin words: educere (to lead out) and educare (to teach, or to instruct). These root words signify the two-fold purpose of education both to bring out natural abilities and further develop them. This etymology, when applied to the concept of sport education underlines a strong meaning in its role as a tool for individual and societal development.

The idea of 'sport education is novel where the word "educere" calls individuals to be led out from within his or her potential physical, mental and social skills. It is to help individuals explore and develop their inherent athletic ability, team work skills, leadership qualities and strategic thinking using organized physical activities and sports programs. This part of sport education focuses on the process to manifest and cultivate natural ability that individuals possess which will enable them bring out their highest capacity both in sports as well as life. In sport education, "educare" does not mean teaching (athleticism), rather it represents the act of "rearing" or nurturing these talents within a caring and well-planned environment. This includes not only a physical training plan needed to compete in sports, but also the development of character and mind that can be inspired by participation. The sport education that develops discipline, tenacity and resilience—three virtues of human nature which are fundamental for the development of individuals within society. It is a means of molding the individual for creating an ideal character and ethics, which further makes them solid social citizens making contributions to society at large.

So, sport education is not only for training of the body but it can also be taken as an entire playing which helps in nourishing you from every point. It is the "fleshing out" of innate behavior and its "raised in dependence development," facilitating balanced expansion. Conceptualizing sport from its etymological roots allows us to understand the tremendous power it has in bringing forth, and nurturing qualities that also leads towards personal success as well helping build a successful society. This will work as a way of rectifying the various social concerns that face Nigeria, around which sports education can function an answer to creating proper Nigerians in the Twenty-first century society. The sport gives the feeling of belonging, young people communicate with their own schoolchildren and familiarize themselves with new friends as well as join in solidarity. (Mauritti & Mauritti, 2022).

Through non-formal education in sports initiatives, young people can also emotionally mature as sport is a chance for youths to build themselves up with working and growing together. (Mauritti & Mauritti, 2022). Throughout the evolving times of a 21st world, it has been dawning upon people more evidently just how much

sport can help knit society together and equip them to live better lives. Sport is so powerful that it can tackle major societal challenges like social exclusion, juvenile delinquency or community collapse and (Siedentop et al., 2004) stimulates human values such as endeavour, respect solidarity trust tolerance etc.

At a time when political unrest and social cannibalism have become the order of many moments, it has never been more necessary for we as humans to start laying solid layers upon which our communities can remain (Radojević et al., 2019). In this struggle, amidst the challenges of everyday life which are numerous and formidable in character meanwhile a complex sport education system has come to be an unsparing ray on our aid for logistical comfort. First, sport education can alleviate issues of social isolation by providing a place for different people to come together and interact so the feeling of exclusion is minimized. (Mauritti & Mauritti, 2022). by sharing in a common sporting activity, individuals from various ethnic subgroups as well as men and women of diverse background can co-exist appreciate the differences between us to build bonds that bind them together for unity develop social cohesion. Meanwhile, athletic education functions as an actual antidote for youth delinquency. Through participation in structured physical activities, and by developing essential character traits such as teaching discipline, teamwork and perseverance amongst others sport education can turn youth from negative to positive habits. (Mauritti & Mauritti, 2022). These are just some of the important talents that these individuals will gain thanks to their involvement, not only benefitting them but also adding towards a healthier community as they turn into responsible and contributing citizens.

In addition, the place of sport education in promoting physical and mental health is quite necessary for a productive society. Exercise is associated with many health benefits including improved cardiovascular function and reduced stress & overall well-being. Reference(Afshi et al., 2020; Deng & Yu, 2020) Sport education can help prolong and maintain the productivity of workers through a culture of active living, which in turn stimulates national economic growth. Aside from the health benefits for physical and mental well-being, sport education has the potential to enhance academic performance and educational outcomes. Several studies have suggested that participation in sports can benefit children academically, teaching them focus, discipline, time management. (Javed, 2020).

In a world that is constantly changing, it would be hard to overrate the importance of an athletic education in preparing 21st century man for optimum productivity. Sport Education works towards a resilient, peaceful and cohering community addressing immediate social issues, betters the physical well-being thereof with arresting mental health condition thereby invigorating educational outcome. Sport education could, as we head into the challenges ahead be what unlocks our true potential and ultimately secures a more successful and sustainable future.

Nigeria has its own set of issues with social unrest and security difficulties also plaguing the country. The nation is plagued by violent conflicts — ranging from Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, herder-farmer violence across regions of North and Middle Belt to pockets separatist movements such as that seen within Souteast. Resulting in catastrophic human loss of life, mass population displacement and the total destruction of economic activity. There are also significant issues of dysfunction, corruption and violence within public institutions (Amnesty International 2023).

Another important issue is public health. This is a double burden in the context of Nigeria because it has to look after communicable and non-communicable diseases. The healthcare system is poor; the resources are often lacking and health personnel over-stretched dealing with epidemics of diseases such as malaria, TB care, and more recently COVID-19. The burden of sub-clinical and chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension prompted by poor lifestyle changes coupled with a milky patient referral system put additional load on the city. This pair of health challenges together with the lack of infrastructure and difficulty in accessing good education, weave a complex set to issues that need varied solutions (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013).

## **Sport Education as a Solution**

Sport education serves a holistic solution to the myriads of challenges facing Nigeria and its benefits transcends aggrandizement. Including sports training in national curriculum can make Nigeria raise a fitter, well disciplined

and better team working generation. Sport education is important in making sure students remain physically fit to prevent an increase in the number of people getting non-communicable diseases. Regular physical activity prevents the occurrence of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases burdening health allowance (Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee 2023).

Sport in education as well not only provides its physical benefits but also contributes to social development. Provides a platform for young people to gain important life skills like leadership, acting collectively and resilience. In a diverse society, sports unite across ethnic and religious boundaries which bridges the gap both culturally as well. A case in point is that team sports can promote collaboration and raise a sense of responsibility among members which could further benefit the social bonding. Furthermore, Youth Participation in Sports brings their attention away from crime and drug abuse, thus creates a more stable nonviolent society (United Nations 2023).

Athletic education can also create jobs and grow the economy, economically. In the sports industry, you will find a plethora of vocations from athletes and coaches to sports marketers and even event managers. Building a sports industry that is in high demand creates a new source of employment and revenue. It would bring the world media and big international money surely, making some athletes dreams come true of professional living trainers on latin buffet table. Such success in international sports for instance can enhance the country's global image and offer opportunities whether in commerce or be it tourism (International Labour Organization, 2023).

## **Integrating Sport Education Can Enhance Economic Growth, Social Cohesion, and Individual Well-being in Nigeria**

Embedding sport education into the educational and social dimensions of Nigeria is a strategic move that has enormous implications for improving conditions across multiple sectors. On an economic foot, a well established sports industry may provide much more employment and will be able to generate considerable earnings. Sports have many spill-over advantages including in tourism, international trade and national imagery as is apparent from sports scepters of the world. Immense potential economic benefits for Nigeria: Success by Nigerian athletes on the world stages can trigger investment and attention that give rise to significant advantages ranging from decade or other improvements in their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) among others according International Monetary Fund, 2023).

Altogether, physically sport safety and due diligence unites the nation in a way that is faster than sports league standings or educational achievements. And sports can bring the society together and cultivate better national sentiment, if they encourage virtues like team work, discipline & mutual respect. 7 Organised team sports offer children a safe space to participate, act in the realm of prosocial and anti-social environments. It will end the tensions of society and make it easy to operate, in this regard UNESCO (2023).

On an individual level, sport we know it enhances physical and mental well-being. Playing sports regularly helps to maintain physical well-being which dampens the pressure of lifestyle disorders. Furthermore, physical exercise can benefit mental health enormously by reducing stress and anxiety levels as well as the reward system which creates a sense of achievement and self-worth. Sport education represents a form of holistic development that prepares people to be productive participants in society and, hence advancing the progress of mankind (Journal of Sports Sciences 2023).

But they are not the only board games that contribute brain nutrients to school going children in Nigeria, as you shall get from this post on Monopoly, Ludo and Checkers. In fact, a study has suggested that playing Monopoly might enhance mathematical skills (especially in arithmetic and probability) among others (Ramani & Siegler, 2008). This brainy strategy game helps to teach valuable skills like critical thinking, decision-making and risk management—all while players have a blast. In addition, the sport nurtures fundamental interpersonal abilities—such as negotiating and problem-solving—that are very important to personal growth.

And Ludo, new studies suggest, is now also good for teaching kids about probability and risk management (because they get to think about the odds of certain things happening if a number comes up on the dice). Research has shown (Jones and Tanner, 2002 ) that dice along-board games such as Ludo can improve childrens ability to

grasping probabilistic thinking. Moreover, playing Ludo encourages social interaction which can be instrumental in improvising communication and collaboration among children for the reason that kids generally play it with a group.

Similarly, a recent study shows that playing Checkers may even enhance cognitive abilities such as memory, attention span and spatial skills (McGuinness 2018). It also trains your children to develop the skills they need for planning and doing strategies, which are important not only in studies but everyday life. Also, Checkers is a great game to develop patience and discipline as the player must take time to seriously consider each move they will make.

## Economic Benefits

The upside of the sports business stems from its potential to create jobs. It employs numerous people in different fields such as athletes, coaches, sports marketers and facility managers among others. At the tip of the sports ecosystem iceberg are athletes themselves, accompanied by enormous support systems—coaches, trainers and medical professionals. Educators help foster and channel talent, offering a path of guidance teaching all players from beginners to professional levels. The need for well trained coaches grows as more and more educational institutions start incorporating sports in their curriculum along with numerous Sports Academies (International Labour Organization, 2023).

For sports event management, promotion is very important. Top 5 Greatest marketer in Sports—Those Who Changed the Game. They create marketing campaigns, negotiate sponsorship deals and engage the media and fans in order to build brand visibility. This role is especially important as the sports industry amplifies, working to bring in larger audiences and investments. Facility managers maintain and manage sporting venues, keeping safe operational conditions for both athletes as well as fans in a very organized manner. Together these functions help support a growing sports industry that not only entertains, but also drives economic growth (Sports Management Review 2023).

There are also secondary career options in sports such as event management, Sports journalism & field of medicine. Sporting events vary from local competitions to worldwide championships — and the event organisers of these need to have skills in logistics, organisation and planning. Sports Media: This field has sports journalists covering events and providing analysis—including detailed game recaps, that inform the public. Nutritionists and physiotherapists, along with other professionals in sports medicine involving the health of athletes. He spoke of what a sports ecosystem looks like in an ideal scenario and how well they can give employment opportunities to millions but less discussed payout is the economic impact.

## Economic Impact of Successful Athletes

**National Icons:** Exceptional athletes become national symbols and their success goes beyond just performance to remind citizens that they are members of the same nation. Athletes like footballer Jay-Jay Okocha and sprinter Blessing Okagbare are megastars, striking glimmers of Nigerian brilliance that shine internationally. This not only inspires young athletes, but also tells you about national morale. The athletic accomplishments of these athletes succeed in not only raising awareness to the horizontal job, that is Nigeria but also showcase an eye for what sports can and could do well within other lands {italic} The Guardian 2023).

**International Attention and Investment:** This goes a long way to garnering the attention and investment when Nigerian athletes perform well on international platforms. Athletes who excel on the world stage attract attention from international sponsors, media and sports bodies. More exposure could mean more lucrative sponsorship deals, endorsements and partnerships that not only benefit the athletes but also have a positive impact on the national economy. For instance, Nigerian footballers showcasing their unreal talents, playing in Europe top leagues gained backing from the big gent player brands encouraging global players returning with financial benefits and imbuing automation to make Nigeria a strong destination for sports talent brand (Forbes 2023).

## Examples of Nigerian Athletes on Global Stages



Over the years, a number of Nigerian athletes have etched their names in global footprints as ambassadors for Nigeria's sporting prospects. Kanu Nwankwo and John Obi Mikel, for example have played as successful careers in the top European clubs which shows talent of Nigerians that thrived on highly-competitive leagues across Europe. Nigeria is also not short of global stars in athletics with Tobi Amusan breaking the world record in 100m hurdles at this year's World Championships. Their successes not only raise the nation's hopes but also open up possibilities for foreign money in Nigeria to get involved across the sports infrastructure along with plans for development (BBC Sport, 2023).

## Physical Health Benefits

### Combating Non-Communicable Diseases (Obesity, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Conditions)

The common non-communicable diseases (NCDs) obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular conditions are increasing in Nigeria with the highest number of cases discovered in urban cities. Regular physical activity is crucial to combat NCDs. The physical inactivity and poor dietary habits are main causes of these diseases. Everyday lifestyle and sport education can prevent obesity, stabilize blood sugar levels and help heart health. Studies have found that regular physical activity reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes by up to fifty-eight percent, while also helping prevent heart disease (by improving blood flow and lowering hypertension) (World Health Organization, 2023).

Through sport learning, Nigeria can reduce the escalating public health mishap that has been associated with NCDs by promoting an active lifestyle. Playing sports increases metabolism, strengthens Muscles and bones, increasing the immune system of a person which also helps in fighting illness. A simple example is that regular aerobic exercise (believably running or swimming) can make for normal cardiovascular endurance, while true strength training may reduce fatten levels far also. This save money on health care cost and this improve the quality of life for Nigerians (Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2023).

**Promoting Lifelong Physical Activity:** By introducing sports to the educational syllabus, we are following a strategic concept of inculcating physical exercise habits for life. Schools are probably the most important places where children and young people get their taste for different sports, starting an interest in physical activity from a very early age. Frequent participation in sports through childhood and adolescence forecasts more physical activity later in life as an adult. These process is extremely important because it enhances Health continuity promoting all round health, thereby reducing the risk of lifestyle diseases in later life (Journal Of School Health 2023).

Sports as part of the curriculum here include organized physical education (PE) courses, sports clubs and extracurricular programs, in addition to school competitions. The PE classes at the elementary level are responsible for giving students a basic example of what each sport is, why exercise daily and to support continuously ensuring in their life. Extracurricular sports programs offer more opportunities for kids to play team sports, gain specific skills, and experience the social aspects associated with group activities. Participation in interschool competitions, and physical activities held at local school sports events will also additionally motive students to engage more actively into the particular sport/field (UNESCO, 2023).

Physical health is a gift of sports to education. Being involved in school sports teaches discipline, time management and setting goals—all things that transfer well to the academic and career worlds. It also fosters a structured environment to develop confidence, independence and leadership. By addressing these factors, people are more likely to develop the skills they need and so lead healthier lives—attributes designed to contribute toward wellbeing throughout their lifespan (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2023).

## Mental Health Benefits

**Reducing Stress, Anxiety, and Depression:** Taking part in sports and physical activity is of great help to mental health, it moves anxiety or depression far away. Exercise increases endorphins, natural mood lifters and reduces your cortisol levels when you are under stress. Regular exercise may help you get a more restful nights sleep, allowing for higher levels of energy and better moods in general which contributes to overall better mental health

(Mayo Clinic, 2023).

Sports are a great way to let off steam beach bodiestress and anxiety. The concentration needed while performing physical movements can also keep you away from everyday problems and bad ideas — it gives your brain something productive to focus on, helping calm the mind. Since healthy communities are built on relationships between its members, team sports and group activities also provide social support to ease the loneliness that may lead to mental health issues. Camaraderie and teamwork with sports can decrease those feelings of loneliness that in many instances leads to depression (APA, 2023).

Sport participation can also lead to an increased level of self-esteem and confidence. On a personal level, striving to improve and win competitions leads the individual feeling proud of themselves. This is a positive way to see yourself, but this perception can improve the symptoms of anxiety and depression by having a more optimistic vision on life. This, the Journal of Sports Sciences reported in 2023 will help Nigeria deepen positive citizenship, well-being and promote better 'mental health for all' through sport education (Journal of Sports Sciences 2023).

### **Bridging Ethnic, Religious, and Cultural Divides**

With all notion, Sports can be used as an essential tool for uniting the different ethnic and religious group in Nigeria ensuring National sustainability. Nigeria, home to over 250 ethnic groups — as well as the two largest religions in Africa (Christianity and Islam) is a diverse nation which has often strained against its own seams of unity. It is on areas like Sports that people who come from such varied cultures and backgrounds can meet, find a common ground to strive for the same goals together – as equals! Sports teach teamwork and cooperation rather than divisive identities, fueling a national esprit (United Nations 2023).

They bring people of different backgrounds together to participate in national and regional sports. Events like the National Sport festival helps to bring athletes from all parts of this vast region together with each attributing their bit in keeping sports boom, which is why we can exist and live peacefully among warring countries. These interactions contribute towards breaking down stereotypes and preconceptions, thereby creating a more inclusive society. Sports can also be used in peace-building efforts for mediation and trust restoring between clashing communities through the universal language of sports (Peace and Sport, 2023).

Additionally, sport education programs that focus on equity and respect for population diversity will help strengthen this mindset in future generations. Integrated schools and community sports programs get children, tweens and young adults to see differences as something special. Sports is a way Nigeria can connect — early exposure to diversity through sports helps create a peaceful working future for all. UNICEF (2023)

### **Development of Social Skills**

Involvement in sports helps kids to learn key social skills like teamwork, communication or leadership. The third reason — which have gained more popularity in recent years due to growth of team sports — is that playing on one side (except for things like boxing and even there) implies teamwork towards a common goal. These experiences raise awareness on collaboration, and having patience and sharing responsibilities; key skills for personal well as professional life (Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 2023).

This activity also teaches athletes good communication skills. Strategies need to be communicated, feedback needs to flow in real-time and everyone has the power of influence through one another during training or competitions. This constant interaction reinforces both verbal and non-verbal communication skills, thus making them better communicators by enabling them to effectively telecast themselves while still being a good listener. These communication skills are applicable in other contexts like the workplace and community engagements as well (International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 2023).

Participation in sports also help to grow the leadership skills. Athletes are often put in complex situations where they have to make quick decisions, execute on certain strategies and methods that would provoke a sense of inspiration amongst their teammates. It instills courage, confidence, resiliency and most importantly a sense of responsibility. Therefore, youth involved in sports is an unique group of young people who seeks out leadership roles and can be a driving force for positive change within the community (Sport Management Review 2023).

## **Constructive Outlet for Youth**

Taking part gives young people something positive to do, getting them off the streets and away from crime and drugs. In many communities, especially in urban areas young people are at risk of falling into negative habits because they do not have anything to push them and train their ability. It provides a diversion by taking their minds off of themselves and keeps them productive with a positive behavior. Involvement in a sports program provides an outlet for criminal activity and substance abuse by giving the youth purpose, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), (2023).

This is also likely to explain why sports programs have positive effects in terms of behavior, developing traits such as discipline or perseverance and understanding the value system established by the respective set of rules. It teaches them self-control and the value of hard work since sports is structured with training schedules, practices, guidelines to follow. They are very much necessary for the person growth and can be practiced in other arenas of life too like education, employment etc. Take sports for instance; the passion and hard work we put in on fields can lead to better study scores or greater corporate achievement (The Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 2023).

## **Instilling Discipline, Perseverance, and Purpose**

In addition to preventing negative behaviors, sports provide young people with discipline and focus. Training and competing regularly takes dedication and perseverance, this helps to teach young people what it means to have goals that you work at day in day out. Such perseverance is what allows a person to learn from their difficulties and failures; they reinforce the idea of a growth mindset and a good attitude towards life. Similarly, sport also offers a sense of purpose as elite athletes provide their task and success orientation in competition that pushes into other domains (Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 2023).

In a nutshell, sport education is an instrument of social cohesion and youth development in Nigeria. Sports succeeds as a unifying element, supplying the necessary social skill for turning frustration into positive actions that improve civilization. Sports has private benefits it can derive from investment, including furthering individual development into sport culture and occupation which also translates to the general socio-economic advance of the nation.

## **Studies showing the correlation between physical activity and academic performance**

The benefits of exercise on cognitive ability, memory, and focus (key elements to academic success) have been well established. Research has shown that by increasing the flow of blood to your brain (increase in cerebral capillary growth), thus enhances neuronal health and increases neurogenesis, making physical exercise can improve functions within our grey matter. This physiological enhancement is translated into augmented cognitive performance, improved memory retention and even quicker information processing (Hillman et al., 2019).

A study from the Journal of Pediatrics showed that children who participated in daily physical activity performed better on standardized academic tests and received higher grades for core classes, such as reading and math. Not only that, but the research also substantiated that these improvements were not just related with physical health outcomes either; they are linked to direct cognitive benefits gained through being in action (Donnelly et al., 2016). In another research paper that reviewed several studies of physical activity on academic performance found a positive correlation between the two and shows greater results in cognitive tasks including memory (Rasberry et al., 2011). By integrating, this approach we are making sure that students learn what is in the text book but also build their cognitive abilities which are really a wealth for them when they pursue such studies. Increased brain power due to regular physical activity leads students closer towards their academic success i.e. more productive experience of learning altogether (CDC, 2020).

## **Teaching Life Skills**



## **Goal-Setting, Time Management, Resilience**

Sport education is important in teaching fundamental life skills that are valuable when developing both academically and professionally. One of the primary skills that sports teach is goal-setting. It is not unusual for athletes to strive toward performance goals such as simply achieving a personal best or winning an event. That goal-setting practice then transitions to the academic realm, where students are taught how to create educational goals and achieve them in a systematic way (Weinberg & Gould, 2019).

In addition, participation in sports helps you develop time management skills. Time management is the key to juggling training, competitions and academic commitments. Through sports, students learn to prioritize and juggle tasks, manage their varying/complex schedules effectively and make the most out of every minute. These skills are incredibly useful as a student, and essential for mastering the academic time-management required to balance coursework with study hours of all kinds together with your passion. Time management is an essential skill in University that leads to better grades and less stress (Conley, 2015)

Sports also build resilience — the capacity to recover after you screw up or get kicked down and survive despite that. It is the athletes who go ahead of themselves to accept defeats or just be injured, and have a tough mind combined with positivity. He uses this resilience and applies it directly to the academic environment, a professional setting where students often meet with failures or setbacks. Resilience forged through sports prepares students to manage the stresses of academic life and recover from inevitable setbacks by gaining insight, direction and clarity at a critical stage of personal development (Galli & Vealey, 2008).

## **Overall impact on academic and professional success**

Sport education, overall has huge impact on academic and professional success. Since sporting activities can boost cognitive functions, improve concentration and enhance memory, it is not surprising to see that student who involve in sports generally perform better academically. Additionally, they are also less likely to learn the fundamental basics of life like goal-setting, time management and resilience — necessary skills for success in both academic (course-work) & professional environment Bailey et al. 2013).

Additionally, the importance of teamwork and discipline that team sport teaches are essential in cultivating a proactive work ethic as well as cooperative abilities — two traits highly sought after by companies. They look for people who can be good team players, handle their time and have resilience in tough situations. Sport teaches key attributes —those which employers find attractive, and those needed to become future leaders within this country (Forbes, 2018).

Moreover, success in sports builds self-confidence that can carry over into a student's academic and professional pursuits. A belief in one ability to perform can lead individuals to be more active facing challenges, will encourage innovation and will benefit overall performance. It also provides schools with the opportunity to assist students in developing a more diverse range of life skills, which can complement their academic pursuits and future career prospects (Eime et al., 2013).

## **Conclusion**

The sport education in the new millennium, is a model of source for necessary ingredients to develop our society (Nigerian) above others. Sports can serve as a vehicle of education and reconciliation for Nigeria among its young citizens by galvanizing the ethnic divide, improving fluid intelligence and promoting health. Such programs not only foster life skills such as teamwork, discipline and resilience but drive economic growth via job creation, international recognition. Sport education can thus serve as a force for unity which is both necessary for the inculcation of national feeling and social cohesion, required to ensure individuals have capacity that allows them contribute positively toward nation building. The 21st century Nigeria can only be built by a people that have finally understood the importance of embracing sport education, health or other to build fitter and more economically independent human resource.

## **Suggestion**

1. The Nigerian education system should formally incorporate sport education at all levels, ensuring that physical activity and sports are prioritized alongside academic subjects. This will help develop well-rounded individuals who excel both mentally and physically.
2. The government and private sector should collaborate to build and maintain sports facilities, especially in schools and communities. Well-equipped facilities and structured sports programs will encourage widespread participation and talent development.
3. Policies should be enacted to ensure that sport education is accessible to all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or physical ability. Inclusive programs will promote social cohesion and ensure that everyone benefits from the advantages of sport education.
4. Collaboration between government, educational institutions, sports organizations, and businesses can drive the development of sport education. These partnerships can fund scholarships, provide resources, and create opportunities for young athletes to pursue sports at higher levels.
5. National and local governments should use sports as a tool to promote unity and peace, particularly in conflict-prone regions. Organizing inter-communal and inter-ethnic sports events can help bridge divides and foster a sense of national identity.

## References

- Afshi, A J., Zia-ul-Islam, S., & Khan, M A. (2020, April 19). Role of Higher Authorities (HED and HOIs) in Uplifting of Female's Sports at College Level. 3(1), 133-138. <https://doi.org/10.36902/sjesr-vol3-iss1-2020> (133-138)
- Akarah, E. (2012, March 19). Conceptual Model for Effective Sports Marketing in Nigeria. *African Journals OnLine*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v6i1.12>
- Bailey, R., Hillman, C., Arent, S., & Petitpas, A. (2013). Physical activity: an underestimated investment in human capital? *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 10(3), 289-308.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). The association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance: A systematic review of the literature.
- Conley, D. T. (2015). A new era for educational assessment. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(8).
- Deng, C., & Yu, Q. (2020, January 1). Value Orientation of School Physical Education Reform From the Perspective of Life Outlook. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200727.029>
- Donnelly, J. E., Hillman, C. H., Castelli, D., Etnier, J. L., Lee, S., Tomporowski, P., Lambourne, K., & Szabo-Reed, A. N. (2016). Physical activity, fitness, cognitive function, and academic achievement in children: a systematic review. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, 48(6), 1197-1222.
- Eime, R. M., Young, J. A., Harvey, J. T., Charity, M. J., & Payne, W. R. (2013). A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sport for adults: informing development of a conceptual model of health through sport. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 10(1), 135.
- Forbes. (2018). The benefits of sports on children's brains.
- Galli, N., & Vealey, R. S. (2008). "Bouncing back" from adversity: athletes' experiences of resilience. *The Sport Psychologist*, 22(3), 316-335.
- Garcia, Rose Mary; Richard Kohl; Ann Ruengsorn; and Julia Zislin (2006) Nigeria: Economic Performance Assessment (Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), February); available at: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADF350.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADF350.pdf).

- Hillman, C. H., Erickson, K. I., & Kramer, A. F. (2019). Be smart, exercise your heart: exercise effects on brain and cognition. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 9(1), 58-65.
- Javed, S. (2020, September 15). Ethical Development of Young University Players through Involvement in Sports. , 4(III), 315-324. [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020\(4-iii\)24](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020(4-iii)24)
- Mauritti, R., & Mauritti, R.. (2022). Socio-sportive experience and informal education of children and young people: contributions to the citizenship of new generations. *International Academy of Technology, Education and Development*. <https://doi.org/10.21125/edulearn.2022.1032>
- Mgbor, M O. (2006, June 30). Issues and Future Direction of Physical Education in Nigeria. Taylor & Francis, 70(2), 134-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720608984884>
- Ojo, T J., Odusanya, I A., & Ojo, S. (2022). Health expenditure, education and economic growth in Nigeria. , 3(1), 01-17. <https://doi.org/10.52417/ojssh.v3i1.308>
- Onyekwena, C N. (2013, August 1). Evaluating Co-Curricular Activities as Integral Component of the Human Life: Curriculum Implications for the Nigerian Context. *Mediterranean Center of Social and Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n7p35>
- Onyekwena, C.N. (2013). Evaluating Co-Curricular Activities as Integral Component of the Human Life: Curriculum Implications for the Nigerian Context. *Mediterranean Center of Social and Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n7p35>
- Radojević, J., Grbović, M., & Jevtić, B. (2019, January 1). Academic study programs and education for the profession of sports, sports coach occupation. *University of Belgrade, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education*, 73(1), 89-105. <https://doi.org/10.5937/fizkul1901089r>
- Radojević, J., Grbović, M., & Jevtić, B. (2019, January 1). Academic study programs and education for the profession of sports, sports coach occupation. *University of Belgrade, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education*, 73(1), 89-105. <https://doi.org/10.5937/fizkul1901089r>
- Rasberry, C. N., Lee, S. M., Robin, L., Laris, B. A., Russell, L. A., Coyle, K. K., & Nihiser, A. J. (2011). The association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance: a systematic review of the literature. *Preventive Medicine*, 52(S1), S10-S20.
- Siedentop, D., Hastie, P A., & Mars, H V D. (2004, July 20). Complete guide to sport education. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB05926160>
- Weinberg, R. S., & Gould, D. (2019). Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology. *Human Kinetics*.