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Mukesh Kumar Upadhyay
Assistant Professor, Post
Graduate Teaching Department
of Physical Education V.S.S.D
College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Dr. Neeru Nathani
Associate Professor & Head
Swasthivritta & Yoga I.M.S
BHU, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Rahul Trivedi
Assistant Professor, Post
Graduate Teaching Department
of Physical Education V.S.S.D
College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Himanshu Kumar Tiwari
Assistant Professor, Post
Graduate Teaching Department
of Physical Education V.S.S.D
College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Correspondence

Mukesh Kumar Upadhyay
Assistant Professor, Post
Graduate Teaching Department
of Physical Education V.S.S.D
College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Pitfalls of the use of information & communication technology in physical education

Mukesh Kumar Upadhyay, Dr. Neeru Nathani, Rahul Trivedi and Himanshu Kumar Tiwari

Abstract

As the use of ICT in all curriculum subjects including physical education becomes even more pervasive, it is important for physical education teachers to be reflective and thinking users of the technology. That is, teachers must be mindful that ICT may simply provide a positive means to a negative end. It is conceivable that with the use of ICT, students may have greater access and control over information and know more about sports, health and exercise. It is, however, equally conceivable that the proliferation of such technology may continue to encourage even -' more pronounced levels of inactivity among young people. This may inadvertently devalue physical activity and the place of physical education in the school. Research data on the impact of ICT use in physical education are warranted to help answer some of the pertinent questions raised by professionals who are interested in the welfare and good health of our young people. The future health of this nation may well depend on it. The question as to whether the ICT-physical education nexus is a marriage of convenience, or partners for life, is a question that remains unanswered.

Keywords: curriculum, information, communication, technology, psychomotor

Introduction

It is important to adopt a balanced view of the use of ICT in physical education. It is appropriate and important to acknowledge that ICT will not be a panacea for physical education. Some of the potential pitfalls in the use of ICT in physical education will now be examined.

Gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'

Like many of the experiences in any society, there will always be a tension between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. In India, some schools are in Phase-I of the IT Master Plan while others are still in Phase-III, with the rest of the schools placed somewhere in-between. Also there is usually a lag in time between the availability of ICT in the schools and the appropriate use and application of the available technology in teaching and learning. If there is a disproportionate distribution of 'knowledge-based' knowhow in schools, where only some students have access to ICT in indoor facilities and classrooms, then the knowledge gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' will remain and will not be ameliorated. As Singapore's educational knowledge-based programmes shift into high gear to mirror the society's inclination towards a knowledge-based economy, policy makers, school administrators, physical education teachers and parents will need to pay special attention to the distribution of technology to all students in school, at community clubs, public libraries, public centers of learning and even at home.

Does The Use of Result In The Aims of Physical Education Being Achieved?

Physical education teachers who are actively engaged in, or are contemplating using ICT in the teaching and learning of physical education, must consider the impact of the technology on the physical activity levels and physical fitness of young people. One must never forget that physical education is in essence education through the physical. It seems likely that some uses of ICT would indeed depress the levels of physical activity of young people and that could have a deleterious effect on their health and physical fitness in the long term, if no intervention

is made. The users of ICT in physical education will need to appraise if the technology enhances or inhibits skilled, healthy, and enjoyable physical activity. ICT probably represents another powerful tool that has the potential to enrich students' learning and improve teaching if it is used appropriately. However, it is but one of many tools and it should be perceived as such. The use of ICT must not take away the core business of physical education which is mainly psychomotor. We must be mindful that it is possible for the ICT to be inventive and interesting but if it does not serve the purpose of physical education, then it is a wasteful use of the technology. A group of researchers from the Physical Education and Sports Science Academic Group of the National Institute Education and the Ministry of Education are currently involved in a three-year pilot study that examines the impact of ICT on the habitual physical activity and physical fitness of primary and secondary pupils country.

Is the use of ICT the best way to teach, learn and practice physical education?

Unfortunately, many of the available physical educational software are still at the drill and practice stage and are not very captivating. There is a real danger that a dynamic and effective physical education teacher may be substituted with a less effective and interesting video or computer application. Consequently, students may not otherwise acquire the enthusiasm for physical, activity that they may get through an effective physical education teacher. When good Sports software are available, there is always the danger that students may derive gratification from playing cyber-games on a computer terminal too easily. Consequently they may forego learning the game on court, or on the field, where with skill mastery of the game, there is the promise of delayed gratification. The health benefits that can accrue from actual physical activity in learning the game or sport, are therefore 'virtually' squandered away. Perhaps the best way forward is to combine traditional approaches to teaching physical education with the appropriate use of ICT. For that to occur, the physical education teacher must be ICT-literate and be able to make an informed decision as to how best to employ ICT in a physical education setting. The use of ICT in physical education in India is still very much in its infancy stage. Consequently, there are no current research data as to the efficacy of the use of ICT in physical education. This area awaits future research attention.

The physical education teacher educator

Perhaps the most challenging hurdle to the use of ICT in physical education is the teacher educator. Very often, young people and physical education trainee teachers have more advanced computer and technological skills than the teachers or professors teaching them. Moreover, many faculty members do not yet model the use of ICT when teaching their classes. For instance in a recent informal poll of faculty members teaching physical education at the university, less than 50% use ICT in the delivery of their lectures. The percentage is even smaller where the lessons are practical in nature. The use of ICT must be integrated into teacher training if future teachers of physical education are going to employ it in their own lessons. In turn, teachers must also be technologically literate and want to use ICT in their teaching of physical education where it is deemed appropriate and useful. As ICT become user-friendlier and even more accessible to all, the problem may resolve itself but both teachers and teacher educators must learn how to use the

technology if it is to be integrated in physical education.

Conclusion

The use of ICT in physical education has not received much academic attention despite the launch of the IT Master Plan for Education in India. As the use of ICT in all curriculum subjects including physical education becomes even more pervasive, it is important for physical education teachers to be reflective and thinking users of the technology. That is, teachers must be mindful that ICT may simply provide a positive means to a negative end. It is conceivable that with the use of ICT, students may have greater access and control over information and know more about sports, health and exercise. It is, however, equally conceivable that the proliferation of such technology may continue to encourage even -' more pronounced levels of inactivity among young people. This may inadvertently devalue physical activity and the place of physical education in the school. Research data on the impact of ICT use in physical education are warranted to help answer some of the pertinent questions raised by professionals who are interested in the welfare and good health of our young people. The future health of this nation may well depend on it. The question as to whether the ICT-physical education nexus is a marriage of convenience, or partners for life, is a question that remains unanswered. Like all marriages of sorts, only time will tell. The epic journey has only just begun.

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