

A comparative study of a proposed physical fitness programme as depicted in the fitness levels of fifteen and sixteen year olds in a Kenyan secondary school

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Abstract:

The Kenyan secondary schools' physical education syllabus shows an omission of physical fitness programmes. The contents are skill activities namely gymnastics, games, athletics, swimming and dance. This was a comparative study of fitness levels between secondary school students of Ruiru High school, Kiambu District who took part in the regular physical education lessons and students who took part in a proposed physical fitness programme. The research design involved pretest, treatment, and post-tests on eighty (80) students, forty (40) boys and forty (40) girls randomly selected and assigned to a study group and the normal group. Each group consisted of twenty (20) girls and twenty (20) boys. A test battery was constructed consisting of 1.5 mile run, sum of skinfold, 60 seconds sit-ups sit and reach test and pull-ups (boys) and flexed arm hang (girls). The selected fitness components, the dependent variables evaluated were cardio respiratory endurance, skinfold fat, abdominal muscle endurance, lower back and hamstring flexion, and arm and shoulder girdle strength. Fitness levels before and after treatment was measured. The results of the study indicated that there was no significant difference between the study group and normal pre-tests on all the dependent variables tested. There was no significant difference between the study group's pre-tests and post-tests results in cardio respiratory endurance, skinfold fat and in boys, lower back and hamstring flexion. However, the 't'-test results indicated a significance of difference at the .05 level results in abdominal muscular endurance, arm and shoulder girdle strength though girls were better in lower back and hamstring flexion. In terms of percentage, there was approximately the same amount of change in boys and girls in all the dependent variables except strength. The results of this study indicate that a physical fitness programme enhances physical fitness levels of students. Children will fail to realize their physical potential in case of lack of physical fitness. A programme that improves physical fitness levels should be encouraged and incorporated in the physical education curriculum. These findings indicate that more studies on fitness levels in Kenya to establish standards and norms for Kenyan population need to be undertaken.