**ROLE OF ADAPTIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

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**ABSTRACT:** Children with special needs require tailored approaches to their education because of the unique challenges faced by their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. This chapter highlights the role of Adaptive Physical Education (APE) in offering an inclusive approach toward the holistic development of these children through techniques has aim to enhance fitness and social interactions. This study delves into the need for APE and demonstrates the various ways of incorporating APE in children with special needs to improve their physical health, confidence, communication and social skills.

**Keywords**: Children with Special Needs (CWSN), Holistic Development, and Adaptive Physical Education (APE).

1. **INTRODUCTION:**

An individual’s physical and mental well-being is the concern of two similar areas of education: health education and physical education. Both deal with the habit of exercise, sleep, rest, and recreation. Since physical well-being is only one aspect of a person’s overall health, physical education is often thought of as a part of health education. Physical and health education can be defined as the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary to help the development of the body, mind and spirit in order to promote health and wellness.

**1.1 MEANING OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION:**

Physical education is a combination of two separate terms: Physical and Education. The first term physical refers to the physical attribute of an individual regarding physical strength, physical endurance, physical appearance, physical fitness, and physical health. And the second term education refers to a process of training and re-training an individual either formally or informally in order to bring about change in the behaviour of the learner.

Physical Education is an educational process that uses physical activities as a means to help students acquire skills, fitness, attitude and knowledge for their optimal development and well-being.

**1.2 DEFINITION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION:**

“Physical Education is that part of education by which the full development of man along with training through physical activities takes place”. A. R. to WEIMAN

“Physical Education refers to the transmission of the student’s strength and ability, which is capable of keeping his body fit and smooth and giving great strength to his intellectual and emotional life”. EDWARD HITCHCOCK

**1.3 AIMS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION:**

* Physical Development: Physical education aid in developing the muscles of the body through selected well-planned and programmed activities.
* Social Development: Children learn desirable social attitudes during group activities. These attitudes lead to better social adjustment.
* Mental Development: During physical education the mental capacity is further enlarged through the knowledge of the rules of the various games and sports.
* Emotional Development: With the help of physical activities, children learn how to be humble in victory, control their tempers during games and sports and accept defeat gracefully.

**2. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION:**

Physical education aims at the training of the body, mind and conduct of a student. The physical education program is planned and provides instruction that provides participants with many benefits:

* Improved learning aptitude.
* Improved physical fitness.
* Improves cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, mobility, and body composition.
* Improves power, agility, reaction time, balance, speed and coordination.
* Skill Development.

**3. ADAPTIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Adaptive Physical Education usually refers to programs that are school-based, especially for students of the 3-12 years age group.

Adaptive Physical Education is a specialized approach to physical education that tailors activities and exercises to meet the individual needs and abilities of students with disabilities.

Adaptive Physical Education instructors provide planning and assessment, consultation for general physical education teachers, with specially designed instruction, and adapts or modifies the curriculum task, equipment and environment so a student can participate in all aspects of physical education. Adaptive Physical Education and general physical education teachers work together to design meaningful and beneficial instruction for all students.

**4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ADAPTIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

In 1838, physical activity began to receive special attention at the Perkins School for students with visual disabilities in Boston. The students participated in gymnastic exercises and swimming. This was the first physical education program in the country for students who were blind. The purpose was to prevent illness and promote health.

In 1952 the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER) formed a committee to define adapted physical education and give direction to teachers. This committee defined adapted physical education as a “diversified program of developmental activities, games, sports, and rhythms suited to the interests, capacities and limitations of students with disabilities who may not safely or successfully engage in unrestricted participation in the rigorous activities of the regular physical education program.”

Lastly, in 1968, the Kennedy Foundation established the Special Olympics. This program has grown rapidly and holds competitions at local, state, national and international levels in an ever-increasing range of sports.

**5. ORGANISATION AND CERTIFICATES**

* **Special Olympic Bharat**:

Special Olympic Bharat was established in 2001. This organization uses sports as a catalyst to change the lives of children and adults with intellectual disabilities. This organization organizes sports competitions at the state and national levels. At a national level, they are trained to participate in 24 single and team games by the sports authority of India.

* **Paralympic Games:**

Paralympic games are major international multi-sports events for athletes with various disabilities such as athletes with mobility disability, amputation, blindness, and cerebral palsy. The headquarter is situated in Bonn, Germany. At present it comprises 176 National Paralympic Committees.

* **Deaflympics:**

Deaflympics is also known as the world games for the Deaf and the international games for the Deaf. This multi-sports event is held once in 4 years. It was first held in Paris in 1924 which was the first-ever International sporting event for athletes with disabilities.

**6. AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

* To let the child regularly in movements that are age-appropriate to help develop motor skills.
* To develop a healthy level of balance, flexibility, muscular strength, body composition, and cardio-respiratory endurance.
* To learn new games and their rules and to demonstrate them correctly in the same settings.
* To learn and demonstrate appropriate social skills during physical activities.
* To develop motor skills and to learn the benefits of regular physical activity.

**7. SUPPORT FOR CWSN**

If a child has a suspected developmental delay diagnosis, early intervention can make a difference. Early intervention includes therapies, support education, and so on to help children develop the skills they need to take part in everyday activities. Sometimes children who get early intervention need less or no support as they get older. If a child has a developmental delay, then the child along with their parents/guardians might work with some or all of the following professionals depending on the child’s needs:

* Physiotherapist
* Speech therapist
* Occupational therapist
* Psychologist
* Social worker
* Special Education Teacher

**8. BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CWSN**

Physical education programs can do a great deal to improve the lifestyle of children with special needs, they can increase competency in gross motor skills, help to control obesity, improve self-esteem and social skills, encourage an active lifestyle, and maintain motivation in various areas of life.

* **Physical Improvement**:

Intellectually disabled children may have various physical disabilities which can result in below-age-level performance in motor skills. When encourage to participate in frequent fitness programs, many special needs students see improvement in their hand-eye coordination, muscle strength, endurance, and even cardiovascular efficiency. It also helps individuals to fight against problems such as obesity, and other health complications.

* **Mental Improvement:**

Physical activities improve general mood and wellness in psychiatric patients suffering from anxiety and depressive disorders. Providing a physical outlet may help students to cope with anxiety, and depression while interaction with other students will give help to children a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

* **Behavioral Improvements:**

Physical activity also leads to cognitive improvements in children with special needs allowing them to practice self-regulation, increase their attention span, and enhance their decision-making skills.

**9. WAYS TO INCLUDE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Special needs students often have delays in gross motor skills due to conditions such as hypotonia or dyspraxia. But physical therapy is usually only 1 or 2 hours per week will aid in improving various fine and gross motor skills.

* Reduce the duration and speed of activities for students with lower levels of fitness.
* Slow down the activity to accommodate students with restricted mobility or poor mobility fitness.
* Repetitions can be beneficial for higher levels of mobile students.
* To facilitate less mobile students, utilize a smaller playing area for physical activities
* Use different kinds of balls and rackets that are easier to hold, throw or see easily. For visually impaired students, goal balls with bells inside are used. Whiffle and Nerf balls fly more slowly than solid balls and reduce the fear of being hit. Rackets with short handles are easier to strike with than those with longer hands.
* Playing non-competitive games provides action and skill practices and involvement of everyone.
* Providing a peer helper can often engage the student more fully and directly.
* Ask students to create activities that are inclusive of the limitations of peers.

1. **CONCLUSION:** To conclude, an adapted physical activity program plays a vital role in promoting physical activity and overall well-being for individuals with special needs. Well-planned physical activities with modified activities, equipment, environment, rules and the curriculum of general physical education will maximize a person’s abilities and minimize any special challenges they face. Adapted physical education provides opportunities for individuals with special needs to participate in physical activity, to promote socialization, self-esteem, and improved health outcomes.

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