

PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES
(YWDS) IN MAINSTREAM SECONDARY
SCHOOLS SPORTS ACTIVITIES IN UGANDA

Background and Justification

The constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, guarantees non-discrimination of any persons whether on

grounds of gender, colour, ethnic origin, social economic stands, political opinion or disability. There is a

National Sports Policy in Uganda which caters for both persons with disabilities (PWDs) and those without. This

provides a favorable climate for participation of PWDs in sports activities. However, this study was driven by the

researchers' notion that Youth with Disabilities (YWDs) in the main-stream secondary schools do not actively

participate in sports activities.

Aims and objectives

1. To investigate the current situation concerning sports activities for YWDs in main stream schools.
2. To establish the challenges faced in sports programmes for YWDs in mainstream schools.
3. To make recommendations or propose solutions for the challenges.

Methods

The study was qualitative in nature and conducted in two mainstream secondary schools in Eastern Uganda. 19

in-depth interviews were carried out in Eastern Uganda and Kampala. The participants included: YWDs (N=12)

from two main stream secondary schools (2 with hearing impairments, 2 visual impairments and 2 were physically impaired, from each school). 2 youths without disabilities from each school. (N=2). 2 Sports teachers, one from each school (N=2), an officer from the National Council of Sports (NCS) (N=1) and 2 District

Sports officers (N=2). Document analysis was employed to retrieve some key information in records and archives. The interviews were recorded on cassette tapes and

transcribed. The data collected was analyzed thematically using the study objectives and research questions for guidance.

A workshop was held to validate and disseminate the findings.

Results

The study findings are reported according to the three objectives;

1. Current situation concerning sports activities in schools

Funding

No clear specific plans exist on funding sports activities for YWDs at the secondary school level in particular. At the secondary schools, efforts were being made to start involvement of YWDs in

sports in one of the districts.

Current level of participation of YWD

Findings show that the schools have some sports and games involving YWDs which included athletics, cricket,

goal ball, sit-ball, power lifting and swimming for YWDs especially those with visual impairments and those with

motor-impairments. It was found that there was no appropriate equipment for most of the games in the schools.

“School activity programmes vary from school to school and from one disability to the other....” “The playing

environment is not adequate and fields are not available, and even if they were, they are not adapted..” (NCS

Secretariat Officer)

The attitudes of YWDs towards sports practices

YWDs were enthusiastic to participate in various sports activities, like athletics, cricket, goal-ball, sit-ball, power

lifting, and swimming and in-door games. “Even those students with disabilities have expressed interest in

participating in sports” (Sports Teacher). Some YWDs expressed discomfort in participation. “I feel uncomfortable ...” (A visually impaired student)

The desires and needs of YWDs:

YWDs desired to have trained coaches and guides to assist them participate better in sports activities in schools. "... like in running, when you go far in sports, you can lack guides to guide you". (a YWD). Some of the

YWDs disliked outdoor games and expressed need for a variety of games, including indoor games which made

them feel more equal to their peers and give them more confidence. "... we feel better with things like ludo and

cards where we can compete better". (YWD with motor impairment).

2. Challenges

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Negative attitudes of other youth, jealousy of other youth (e.g. when a disabled youth is better than a non disabled in a given sports activity.). “It’s not that we do not want them to participate. We felt that they’d not be able to compete ...” (Sports Prefect).

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The poor attitudes of some staff towards the participation of YWDs in sports activities within those schools. “... the school does not consider them joining sports activities....” (non-disabled youth).

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Main focus is on academics to see that students pass exams and sports generally is not so much of an issue. “Actually games and sports in this school is not so much of an issue ... this is more of an academic than sporting (institution).” (Sports Teacher)

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Lack of appropriate facilities leads to minimal participation of YWDs for example accessible play ground, equipment. “... bring in more balls, they’d be made to participate actively and directly, in those sports activities if at all the schools consider them.”

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Inadequate training for both staff and YWDs in the use of specialized equipment and games. “We lack trained manpower. Sports for the disabled in some areas require technical expertise by its nature and we do not have many of such trained people. ...” (NCS official)

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Poor or inadequate funding from the government towards sports in schools. “I would say 80% of the funding is through well-wishers and fundraising. Government puts like 40% (20%?) then we have other supporters....” (NCS Official).

3. Recommendations:

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Advocacy and lobbying from various stake holders and pressure groups-(government and disability organizations)

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Tailor made trainings for existing teachers in sports and involving universities and national teachers' colleges

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Mainstream sports events for YWDs in the national sports calendar.

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Sports training curriculum should have provisions for training both teachers and PWDs at all levels

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The Department of Special Education, Guidance and Counseling in the MOES should be part of the National Council of Sports for better representation.

Conclusions:

There are policies and structures in place to promote participation of YWDs in sports. The study however

established that, these need to be strengthened at all levels to ensure enhanced participation of the target

group.

Challenges faced during the study

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Coordinating the different activities in relation to researchers' timetable

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Results reflect the opinions of respondents from one setting, which is 2 secondary schools. This could be limiting in that other YWDs in other community settings might have varying opinions and experiences.

What the study has added

In Uganda YWDs are interested in participating in sports regardless of the various challenges limiting them like lack of adequate sports facilities, trained personnel, inaccessible play grounds, inappropriate equipments

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