

Status of Physical Education and Sports in Lesotho

Situación de la Educación Física y el Deporte en Lesoto

Situação da Educação Física e Desporto no Lesoto



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ABSTRACT: Due to the lack of information on the necessary sources to develop the Bachelor of Science of Physical Education and Sports program at the National University of Lesotho, it was necessary to carry out a diagnosis, based on the review of documents and the application of questionnaires to specialists, with the objective of characterizing the situation of physical education and sports. The results of the research made it possible to identify the main problems faced by the specialty and contributed to the design of the program. It was concluded that it is necessary to establish physical education as a compulsory subject in school curricula, achieve the training of quality professionals and draw strategies to optimize the organization and sports infrastructure.

Keywords: Physical Education, Sports, diagnosis, study program.

RESUMEN: Debido a la falta de información sobre las fuentes necesarias para elaborar el programa de Bachiller en Ciencias de la Educación Física y Deporte en la Universidad Nacional de Lesotho, fue necesario realizar un diagnóstico, basado en la revisión de documentos y la aplicación de cuestionarios a especialistas, con el objetivo de caracterizar la situación de la educación física y el deporte. Los resultados de la investigación permitieron identificar las principales problemáticas que enfrenta la especialidad y contribuyeron al diseño del programa. Se concluyó que es necesario instaurar la educación física como asignatura obligatoria en los currículos de las escuelas, lograr la formación de profesionales con calidad y trazar estrategias para optimizar la organización y la infraestructura deportiva.

Palabras clave: Educación Física, Deporte, diagnóstico, programa de estudio.

RESUMO: Devido à falta de informação sobre as fontes necessárias para desenvolver o programa de Licenciatura em Educação Física e Desporto na Universidade Nacional do Lesoto, foi necessário realizar um diagnóstico, com base na revisão de documentos e aplicação de questionários a especialistas, com o objetivo de caracterizar a situação da educação física e do esporte. Os resultados da pesquisa permitiram identificar os principais problemas enfrentados pela especialidade e contribuíram para a concepção do programa. Concluiu-se que é necessário estabelecer a educação física como disciplina obrigatória nos currículos escolares, alcançar a formação de profissionais de qualidade e traçar estratégias para otimizar a organização e infraestrutura esportiva.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física, Esporte, diagnóstico, programa de estudos.

INTRODUCTION

Physical education and sports are of great importance for the population, especially for children and young people; its development constitutes a sample of the quality of life of any nation. Public investment in these spheres is outweighed by the savings it provides in health and education. Participation in quality physical education has been shown to be able to instill a positive attitude towards physical activity, to reduce the chances of youth engaging in risky behaviour and it has a positive impact on academic performance (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 4). UNESCO (2015b) states that the international cooperation is a prerequisite to increase the scope and effects of physical education, physical activity and sport (p. 6).

Based on these principles, at the initiative of the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation in Lesotho (MGYSR) and, in the absence of programs for that train professionals in this field, a process was started to design a program of Bachelor of Sciences in Physical Education and Sports.

In preparation for development of the program, the following issues were considered: the competencies of the physical education and sports professional, the socioeconomic conditions and the views of the profession in the country. (Addine, 2000, pp. 29-30).

Due to the scarcity of current information on these issues, a diagnostic study was carried out, with an objective characterizing the situation of physical education and sports in Lesotho.

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DEVELOPMENT

A descriptive study was carried out from May to December 2019, based on the review of reports and databases from national and international institutions about the profession in the country. Specialists in the field of physical education and sports in Lesotho were given questionnaires to respond to.

Organizational factors that characterize physical education and sports

The organizational structure of the sports system is made up of the following instances:

- Subsystem of the representative and legislative power, constituted by the Government of Lesotho.
- First level subsystem: Local Governments, MGYSR, Lesotho Olympic Committee and Lesotho Sport and Recreation Commission (LSRC).
- Executive branch subsystem: made up of the National Federations, the MGYSR representatives in the districts, the Lesotho Primary School Sports Association, the Lesotho Secondary Institutions Sports Association and the Lesotho University and College Sports Association.
- Subsystem of performers: sports clubs, educational and military institutions.
- Subsystem of competitions: where the competitive activities in different sports and categories are contemplated.

Situation of physical education and sports

The situation of Physical Education and Sports is characterized by the absence of programs for the training of professionals and lack of sports facilities (Lesotho Times, 2009). Deficiencies that were corroborated through the review of documents and the criteria of the specialists.

Regarding Physical Education, although it is a subject in the primary and secondary education curriculum, it is not compulsory (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). According to specialists, it is practically not taught at the primary level, with an exception of few private schools, and not offered in the rest of the levels.

Regarding the training of professionals, the Lesotho College of Education, whose main responsibility is the training of intermediate level generalist teachers, is the only institution offering Physical Education and Health course. The course provides elementary preparation to the teaching the subject. However, to the course hardly meets the needs of the country.

A large part of the professionals trained outside the country work in administrative roles, nineteen of them graduated from the International School of Physical Education and Sports in Cuba.

Regarding Sports, the country has sports clubs in different codes. However, according to the specialists, the professional level of many coaches is insufficient. In many cases they do not have university qualifications, and in some cases they are trained in other spheres, without any preparation in planning and directing sports training.

The country does not have sports academies for the training and development of professional sports men and women. For instance, the specialists felt that the athletics national teams are normally made up of athletes that come from clubs with lack of professional preparations, and in some cases, they are picked from clubs closer to the capital, which makes impossible to have quality athletes from the remote districts.

For these and other reasons, according to data from the Olympic Committee, the country's participation in the international sphere is scarce. To date only five medals from the Commonwealth Games and one in the Pan-African Games have been recorded. The country still does not have an Olympic medal, although few athletes have participated, mainly in Boxing, and participation in World Championships has been very limited.

To understand this characterization further, the authors did surveys to students, physical education teachers, sports coaches, school and sports club's directors. They proposed to visit schools and sports clubs, an activity that was not fully carried out due to the closure of the institutions, due to the COVID19 pandemic lockdowns during the investigation period.

CONCLUSIONS

The lack of information on the status of physical education and sport in Lesotho made it necessary to carry out a diagnosis based on the review of reports and databases of national and international institutions and a questionnaire seeking opinion of sports specialists.

This situation requires urgent decision aimed at establishing physical education as a compulsory subject in the school curricula, developing and beginning the training of professionals with quality in the country and devising strategies to optimize the organizational structure and sports infrastructure.

The results obtained allowed decisions to be made in the preparation of the program, the profile of the graduate, the professional competences, the occupational fields and the contents of the courses, among other important aspects of the curricular design.

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