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Does Health and Physical Education Fail in Sri Lanka? A Recent Perspective



Dr. Walter Senevirathne,
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Education,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Peradeniya,
Sri Lanka.
walters@pdn.ac.lk,senevirathnewalter@gmail.com

Abstract. In recent years, the increase in the prevalence of obesity has led this condition to the forefront of the public health in Sri Lanka, especially among children. The overweight and obesity prevalence among children in Sri Lanka shows different ranges with provincial and gender variations; among boys and girls between 8 and 10 years this was 4.3% and 3.1% respectively and obesity prevalence among primary schoolchildren in Colombo district is 5.1% in 2008. Furthermore, the prevalence of overweight, obesity and central obesity among Sri Lankan adults were 25.2%, 9.2% and 26.2%, respectively in 2005–2006, as defined by Asian Body Mass Index (BMI) cutoffs and there is a clear upward trend. The age-adjusted prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome among Sri Lankan adults was 24.3% (95% CI: 23.0–25.60). The prevalence of obesity related metabolic problems such as diabetes and hypertension among Sri Lankan adults were 13–14% and 18–19% respectively. Many of these young people would prefer to be sitting passively in front of the television rather than to do something physically active. Most Sri Lankan school students believe they do not have sufficient time, opportunity or guidance to participate in physical activities. The ideal place in which students would be able to find adequate time, opportunity and guidance are in the schools themselves. Inactivity of people badly affects national and international level sports performance too. Meanwhile, Health and Physical Education has been implemented in the school curriculum from grade 6 up to 11 in Sri Lanka, as one of the “Media of Education”. Meanwhile sports activities carried out in schools vary, depending on the social, cultural and economical context of the particular schools. Awareness made on the aims and objectives of sports and Physical Education by the Ministry of Education is not sufficient. The main problems occurred when explaining Health and Physical education that are unique to each school such as: student participating in sports, allocated time for sports and Physical Education, problems in coaching and teaching Physical Education, lack of materials, Financial and Human resources, Recognition given to sports and physical Education in the school curriculum is not adequate, poverty and malnutrition, ethnic conflict and displacement, deficiencies of the professionalism of Physical Education teachers.

Biography. Dr. Walter Senevirathne is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education, University of Peradeniya –Sri Lanka and he also worked as a Course coordinator of Postgraduate Diploma in Physical Education programme. He completed his graduation in Bio Science in 1990 and then did his postgraduate diploma in Education with distinction pass in 1995 from the Oldest and Largest University in Sri Lanka (University of Peradeniya) and then he did his master of philosophy degree in physical education from Peradeniya University, Kandy, in 2004. He joined as a lecturer in Department of Education, Faculty of Arts in Peradeniya University, in 2006. He completed his Doctor of philosophy degree in 2016. He has

published 3 papers appear in professional journals .Also, Dr. Senevirathne has offered over 15 invited presentations at National and international conferences. Currently, Dr. Senevirathne is the Sports advisory committee member of the University of Peradeniya. , serving as one of Executive Board members of Asian Council of Exercise and Sport Science since 2012. Before he joined as an university academic he worked as secondary school teacher in Physical Education and Chemistry more than 15 years. He has rendered his service as Rugby Football coach and produced more than 20 National and International players who represented Sri Lanka.