

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT SYLLABUS OF THE CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL IN BENCHMARKING ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR THE SUBJECT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

by

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Introduction

The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) in Physical Education and Sport is one of the more recent subject offerings of the Caribbean Examinations Council. The syllabus was completed in 2003 and circulated to schools for teaching from September 2003 and for first examination in May/June 2005. It is one of the 33 subjects that the Council currently offers at that level. In addition, the Council offers 25 subjects comprising 43 Units at the post-secondary level leading to the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). Both CSEC and CAPE are offered in all 16 member-countries of CXC.

The introduction of the CSEC Physical Education and Sport offering supports the notion that education of Caribbean children at the secondary level should aim to provide not only opportunities for the traditional academic and technical studies

but also for the development of the whole child (Ruskin, 1991). In this regard, Physical Education and Sport is seen “as an integral part of the general education process” (CXC, 2003).

The Impetus for a CSEC Syllabus in Physical Education and Sport

A possible CSEC syllabus in Physical Education and Sport was discussed by the Caribbean Examinations Council as early as 1999 when it was undertaking initial work on a CSEC syllabus in Theatre Arts which became available for teaching from September 2001 for first examination in May/June 2003. As the Theatre Arts Panel deliberated on the Dance Improvisation and Dancemaking components of the syllabus, it was necessary to map, carefully, the boundaries of Movement in both components. It was evident that there was a limit to what one might reasonably teach and examine in Movement and Dance in a Theatre Arts syllabus without encroaching on the domain of Movement and Dance in a possible Physical Education and Sport syllabus which the Panel suggested that the Council should consider as another important offering at the secondary level.

However, the real impetus for the development of a CSEC syllabus in Physical Education and Sport came from CARICOM's Third Special Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), which, in May 2001, endorsed a proposal that CXC should be invited to develop a CSEC syllabus in Physical Education by 2003. Consequently, the Sub-Committee of the School Examinations Committee (SUBSEC), responsible for overseeing syllabus

development and maintenance activities of the Council, at its meeting of November 21, 2001, directed the Registrar to work with the CARICOM Secretariat to determine what progress had been made in developing a regional programme of Physical Education and Sport and to initiate the development of a syllabus in this area in keeping with the request endorsed by COHSOD.

This led to extensive consultations to determine what programmes were already being implemented in the Region and what had been planned. These consultations also sought to obtain information on the nature and scope of a possible CSEC syllabus in Physical Education and Sport. Consultations were held, *inter alia*, with Ministries of Education in a number of countries as well as organizations and institutions in the region that were playing an important role in the development of Physical Education programmes at the secondary level. These organizations and institutions included the CARICOM Secretariat, the OECS Secretariat, the University of the West Indies and the G.C. Foster College of Physical Education and Sports in Jamaica.

Additionally, the Council undertook an assessment of the viability of a Physical Education and Sport syllabus, paying special attention to the population of candidates likely to take the first examination if the syllabus were introduced in 2003 and examined in 2005. Having considered the findings of the consultations and assessment, SUBSEC approved plans to proceed with the development of the syllabus.

The definition of the standard to be accomplished

CXC is an important standards setting body for educational programmes in the Region. Thus, the focus of the work of the Council in developing CSEC syllabuses is on what must be accomplished in the particular subject at the upper secondary level. This, in turn, often requires the development of standards to be accomplished at the lower secondary level of the national curriculum in order to satisfy the pre-requisite for proceeding successfully to the two-year upper secondary course of study defined by a CXC subject syllabus. Indeed, the national curriculum of countries in the Region is generally developed with due consideration to the standard established by CXC for its CSEC programme. This is well illustrated by the statement from one CARICOM country that the curriculum developed by its schools were “predominantly related to the requirements of the CXC examinations.” (International Bureau of Education, 1999).

In developing a CSEC syllabus in Physical Education and Sport, CXC had to take into account the importance of the syllabus for setting the standard to be accomplished in the subject, or benchmarking the expected accomplishment, at the end of secondary education. There are at least two important considerations for CXC in doing so. First, the standard established must be in keeping with the generally accepted international standard required of a student completing secondary education in the subject. Secondly, the standard must reflect the

unique features of the subject for a student being prepared for life as a Caribbean citizen.

In order to satisfy these two considerations in developing a syllabus for Physical Education and Sport, the Council carefully selected, for the purpose, a Panel of specialists from the Region with the appropriate mix of knowledge, skills and experience to do the job.

The Panel of distinguished persons included:

- Mr. Edwin G. Murray, Vice Principal of the G.C. Foster College of Physical Education and Sports, Jamaica;
- Mr. Mark Mungal, Tutor, Corinth Teachers' College and Part-Time Lecturer, School of Continuing Studies, University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago; and now Regional Coordinator with the Australian Caribbean Community Sport Development Program;
- Ms. Auldyth Bravo, Physical Education and Sports Officer, Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago;
- Mr. Michael Gaskin, Physical Education Teacher, Queens College, Barbados;

- Mr. Lynden Dundas, Lecturer II, Cyril Potter College of Education, Guyana;
- Mr. Anthony Lamontagne, Physical Education Teacher, Leon Hess Comprehensive School, St. Lucia.

The right complement of knowledge, skills and experience had to be found with a satisfactory territorial representation. The territorial representation is important in assuring that the peculiarities of the countries served by the Council are taken into account in developing the syllabus.

It is important to note the inclusion of persons teaching the subject at the secondary level among the specialists in the Panel. These teachers are important in ensuring that the programme defined is appropriate for the secondary school system.

The Panel appointed by the Council worked hard and worked well. In seeking to benchmark what is to be accomplished in a programme at the upper secondary level, the Panel reviewed the reports on the consultations that led to the decision to proceed with the development of the syllabus for teaching from September 2003. In particular, it took note of the suggestion of SUBSEC (the Council's Sub-Committee responsible for overseeing syllabus

development), that the proposed CSEC syllabus should include requirements that would promote physical fitness for all students and options that involve students in particular sports.

In the course of seeking to benchmark accomplishment at the upper secondary level to reflect the internationally accepted standard for that level, the Panel considered syllabuses of a number of Examining Boards and countries from several parts of the world. In seeking to benchmark accomplishments that responded to a Caribbean orientation, the Panel benefited from Physical Education and Sport programmes of a number of secondary and post-secondary institutions in the Region.

To assist, further, in its effort to establish appropriate benchmarks for the Physical Education programme, the Panel submitted the first draft of the syllabus for review by teachers and other specialists in the Region. These included a specialist from a Community College, a Chief Education Officer, a Lecturer in Physical Education from the University of the West Indies, the Principal of a College of Physical Education and Sports, the Director of the Office of Sport and Physical Education of the University of the West Indies and a Deputy Programme Manager at the CARICOM Secretariat whose portfolio included responsibility for Physical Education and Sport programmes.

The responses of the teachers and specialists formed an important input for the refinement of the draft syllabus. The entire syllabus development process was illustrative of the consultative and iterative process to syllabus development used by CXC and fully discussed by Stephens (2004) in her recently published article on formative approaches to constructing syllabuses. The schedule for completing the development of the syllabus was very tight but with the commitment of the Panel, the Council, the CARICOM Secretariat and the countries of the Region, the target of having a syllabus available for teaching from September 2003 was realised.

Overview of the CSEC Physical Education and Sport Syllabus

The CSEC Physical Education and Sport Syllabus (CXC, 2003) aims to:

- develop the knowledge, skills and values for the enhancement of performance in a wide range of movement and sport experiences;
- promote optimal health through an understanding of healthy lifestyle practices and regular participation in physical activities; and
- develop the capacity for critical and creative thinking, technological competence, problem solving, leadership and cooperative behaviours through authentic learning experiences.

Worthy of note is the subtle but special encouragement to schools, contained in the syllabus, to develop appropriate programmes in Physical Education and Sport at the lower secondary level by the inclusion of a statement in the syllabus that “Students who have benefited from a Physical Education programme equivalent to that undertaken in the first three years of secondary school will be better prepared to undertake this syllabus.”

This encouragement is in keeping with the understanding that the CXC subject syllabus establishes the benchmarks for accomplishment at the upper secondary level and that, in order to reach these benchmarks, it is necessary to provide the appropriate foundation at the lower secondary level. Thus, the important pre-requisite knowledge, skills and experiences for the proper pursuit of the programme at the upper secondary level must be integrated into the programme at the lower secondary level.

The Physical Education and Sport syllabus comprises a Compulsory Core and three Options to be completed during the two-year course of study. Each candidate must do the Compulsory Core and three Sports from at least two of the three clusters of Sports Options. The Compulsory Core and Options are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Composition of the CSEC Physical Education and Sport Syllabus

COMPULSORY CORE	OPTIONS	
1. History and Development of Physical Education and Sport 2. Anatomy and Physiology 3. Fitness and Performance 4. Health and Nutrition 5. Social Issues	A	(i) Dance (ii) Gymnastics (iii) Martial Arts (iv) Swimming (v) Track and Field
	B	(i) Badminton (ii) Golf (iii) Squash (iv) Table Tennis (v) Tennis
	C	(i) Basketball (ii) Cricket (iii) Football (iv) Hockey (v) Netball (vi) Rugby (vii) Volleyball

The subject is examined at the General Proficiency only. As with other CSEC examinations, candidates are awarded an overall grade, reported on a six-point scale. Also, in keeping with CXC's way of reporting performance in an examination, the performance of candidates in Physical Education and Sport is reported as a lettered grade on the two dimensions of achievement measured by the examination, that is, Theory and Practical. The examination itself has three components.

The first is a Paper 01 that is based on the Compulsory Core. It measures Theory only and is worth 30 percent of the overall marks. This paper is made up of 12 short-answer and five structured questions, all of which are compulsory.

The second component is a Paper 02 that measures Practical only, and is worth 20 percent of the overall marks. It is based on the performance of basic and advanced skills on one of the Sports selected from Option A, B or C and is jointly assessed by the teacher and an external assessor.

The third component is a Paper 03 or School Based Assessment. This component is worth 50 percent of the overall marks. It has two parts, one is a Class Project and the other is Practical Skills. The Practical Skills aspect of the School Based Assessment requires performance of practical skills related to three sports from at least two different Options and is assessed by the class teacher. It is worth 40 percent of the overall marks, that is, 40 of the 50 percent awarded for School Based Assessment.

The syllabus provides extensive guidance for conducting the Class Project. This Project takes the form of an intramural event planned and conducted by the students themselves under the guidance of the teacher. Each student is required to take on the role of an official. The role may be that of Competition Director, Competition Manager, Competition Secretary, Technical Manager, Event Official, Coach, Team Manager, Sports Journalist or First Aid Officer. The syllabus describes the responsibilities associated with each role. The description of the roles of Competition Secretary and Sports Journalist below should illustrate the guidance given in the syllabus.

Competition Secretary

- Deals with all correspondence related to planning, organisation and execution of the game/event.
- Must be present at all meetings and prepare the minutes for those meetings.
- Collects the scores from all games and writes up results to be given to the press official.
- Coordinates the provision of awards and recognition of achievement.
- Prepares press release for all events.

Sports Journalist

- Designs promotional and information material.
- Features sports personalities in newsletters and magazines.
- Highlights and reviews interesting, funny or informative news from each week's fixtures and training sessions.
- Interviews players or coaches at the end of the training session or game/event.
- Highlights the upcoming week's game/event and reports on its execution and the status of the competition.

Based on his or her participation in the event and the role played, the candidate is required to develop a portfolio with relevant information. This part of the

School Based Assessment is worth 10 percent of the overall marks, that is, 10 of the 50 percent awarded for School Based Assessment.

Formative assessment is an essential aspect of the School Based Assessment for CSEC Physical Education and Sport. It requires that teachers guide students in the tasks they are required to complete, undertake ongoing assessment of their progress and provide them with feedback that will help their own self-assessment. More importantly, perhaps, it requires teachers to use the feedback obtained from the ongoing assessment to determine the effectiveness of their own guidance and to determine what additional interventions may be needed to get students to improve in areas where they are weak. (Airasian, 1997; Nitko, 1994).

The syllabus places a heavy weighting on practical work and authentic experiences. The Practical in Paper 2 and the School Based Assessment comprised of Practical Skills and authentic experiences in Paper 3 account for 70 percent of the overall marks. It is this weighting of practical and authentic experience that CXC would like to benchmark for Physical Education and Sports programmes in secondary schools. While theory is vitally important and all students should know, understand and use information that is critical to accomplish the goal of developing physical fitness and participation in sports through a programme of Physical Education and Sport, it should be recognized that the requirements of such a syllabus transcends a mere classroom

experience. A strong emphasis on physical activities and authentic experience is essential.

Conclusion

The effective implementation of the CSEC Physical Education and Sport programme at the upper secondary level must respond to a number of challenges. This is true, as well, for programmes at the lower secondary level which must establish benchmarks that will provide the prerequisite for easy transition to the two year CSEC Physical Education and Sport programme.

A survey undertaken by CXC in 2002 (CXC, 2002) to obtain information on the readiness of schools to implement a programme at the CSEC level found that most territories had teachers who were adequately trained to deliver a Physical Education programme at the upper secondary level.

However, most territories seemed to require an upgrading of the facilities and equipment in place for an upper secondary Physical Education and Sport programme leading to a CSEC examination. Even now, additional resources may still be required to take advantage of the full range of Options offered in the CSEC Physical Education and Sport syllabus. In the meantime, schools and territories are encouraged to focus on those Options for which they have the necessary facilities and equipment.

The importance of Physical Education and Sport to the rounded development of the Caribbean student and for an improved quality of life is well recognised in the Region. Caribbean countries have been investing in expanding the opportunities for such programmes at the secondary level. Teachers are being trained and equipment and facilities are being added to schools for the purpose, even though much more needs to be done to equip schools to offer a wide range of sports to students.

The programme at the secondary level must be properly designed to achieve the desired outcome. In this regard, the CSEC Physical Education and Sport syllabus is expected to meet the needs of the Region at the upper secondary level. It benchmarks what should be accomplished in a programme at that level. Additionally, the CSEC Physical Education and Sport syllabus will assist schools in establishing benchmarks for programmes at the lower secondary level that will provide the prerequisites for an easy transition to the programme for the subject in the last two years of the secondary education cycle. The fact that the syllabus provides students with the opportunity to pursue a CSEC Physical Education and Sport programme leading to a certification equivalent to that of the academic and technical subjects offered by CXC, should encourage the development and expansion of formal Physical Education and Sport programmes at the lower secondary level.

The Caribbean Examinations Council regards its offer of a CSEC Physical Education and Sport syllabus as a beacon to guide the Region into expanding the offerings of Physical Education and Sport programmes at all levels of the education system. The Council looks forward to large numbers of candidates entering for the examination which will certify candidates in Physical Education and Sport for the first time at the May/June 2005 sitting of its examinations.

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