

## Physical Education in Tanzanian Secondary Schools: Perceptions towards Physical Education as an Academic Discipline

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**Abstract :** *Programmed physical activities with a particular goal are as educative as any other non-physical program. As academic discipline, Physical Education (PE) in Tanzania was introduced in secondary schools during colonial period. However, the subject has suffered serious neglect to the extent that, the society takes as an unimportant, extra-curricular program that students are to participate just for recreation. Favourable conditions to enable government policy on PE get implemented had not been adequately created in the schools because, there were no teachers, facilities and almost no form four-PE examination at national level. This lack of teachers, facilities and examinations could be significant signs that show governmental preferences, that PE was not preferentially set to be implemented as an academic discipline. The government, PE professionals and policy makers need to work together if PE is to stand and grow in the Tanzania society.*

### BACKGROUND

Physical Education (PE) as *a science of human movement* dates far back to the origin of mankind. Such physical activities from time immemorial, and until today, form an element of life (McHenry, 1993). Movement of part, or a whole body, is apparently part and parcel of a living being, it is a characteristic of living things (Chan, 1998). In Tanzania, PE included activities such as hunting, gathering food, and dancing (Ndee, 2001).

During the colonial period, Physical Education was introduced in schools as one of academic disciplines taught from primary, through middle to secondary

education (Nkongo, 1993). In this era, various physical activities were employed to train African soldiers and lower rank civil servants, particularly at Mpwapwa military school (Ndee, 1997). Physical education was used as a means by which other skills and values would be enforced and as an education package by itself (Nkongo, 1993).

Later after independence, with the colonial mentality, most of the western sports and games were taken to form a part of Physical Education curriculum for Tanzania secondary schools. The curriculum had the following aims (MoEC, 1969, 1987, 1996, 2005):

- To foster students' physical fitness;
- Build and promote the attitude of self-reliance

- both, mentally and physically;
- To build and promote socialism;
- To develop character among students; and
- To build as well as promote cultural well being among the society.

Therefore, the history of Physical Education curriculum in Tanzania shows that PE was not a new subject; rather, it was one of the oldest disciplines of study in Tanzania settings.

Physical Education like other disciplines of study (Siedentop, 1991) is planned for the achievement of a wide variety of goals in *ideal circumstances*. In any educational settings, achievement is the ultimate goal, once a program is achieving important results it can be expanded and become more daring, more ambitious (Penney, 1999). Achievement serves as a feedback mechanism to the development of educational program (ibid.) However, for a program to achieve; it needs assessment, evaluation and interventions (Siedentop, 1991). In realizing the significance of PE in the school curriculum for the total development (mental and physical development) of children, a study was set to appraise the status of Physical Education in secondary schools in Tanzania.

#### Conception of Physical Education versus Curriculum implementation

The literature shows that, despite the cultural and educational significance of Physical Education and Sports as a field of inquiry in Tanzania, it is characterized more by neglect than by attention (Kilimbi, 1991). Physical Education has so long been perceived by many societies as restricted in sports, and that its importance is to satisfy the play and recreational drives of man (Shehu, 2001). It appears that the popular opinion about PE in Tanzania evolved from this context and it is regularly referred to as '*michezo*' which means '*sports*', and often reduced to '*mchaka-mchaka*' meaning '*jogging*' (Ogundare, 2002).

There is a complex relationship between policy and practice in education. Also the influence of political agendas and interests in determining what is defined as worthwhile knowledge in physical education and how it is to be evaluated as well as taught (Penney and Evans, 1999). Implementation of PE in schools has gone into political chorus, a sound without words (Connell,

1985). Although the Physical Education curriculum in Tanzania is as old as any other subject's curriculum with specifically stated aims, it was not fully implemented up to year 2000 (Mfulu, 2004). Acute shortage of PE facilities and equipment, PE textbooks as well as reference books, and lack of a new PE syllabus stood as limiting factors (Nkuwi 1998). Also, there was shortage of teachers, and a good plan for implementation of Physical Education up to 1996 (Mziray and Kitta, 1996).

#### METHODOLOGY

The study was based on an assessment model, which suggests that there are four assessment categories, namely, teacher process variables, student process variables, student outcome variables and socio-political variables that interact to facilitate implementation of any educational discipline, in this case, Physical education (Patton, 1987; Siedentop, 1991). The study adopted a qualitative approach where data was collected by questionnaire, observation and interview. After subjecting data into content analysis, enumerative information was summarized in tables into frequencies and percentages for easy treatment

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the next sections the results of the study are presented and discussed in relation to how physical education is perceived as an academic discipline by various education stakeholders, its position in Tanzanian society; students, teachers and parents, and their opinions about PE, as well as time set for PE in the implemented school curriculum.

#### Students' Opinions about the Importance of PE as an Academic Discipline

To examine the position physical education in the society, sixteen subjects were listed from which students and teachers were asked to put their preferences that were done by ranking the subjects in order of importance among sixteen subjects. Then, the first four columns (that represented 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) and last four columns (showing the 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> rank) were summed to get scores of importance of the various subjects. Results on the position of PE as per student's perception are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Score of subjects' importance based on students' opinions (N=168)

	Total of the first four ranks of importance		Total of the last four ranks of importance	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1 Biology	73	43	38	23
2 Chemistry	78	46	34	20
3 Physics	67	40	23	14
4 History	65	39	28	17
5 Geography	73	43	22	13
6 Kiswahili	86	51	23	14
7 Physical Education	13	8	90	54
8 English	64	38	23	14
9 Mathematics	54	32	52	31
10 B/Keeping	40	24	42	25
11 Commerce	34	20	43	26
12 Civics	13	8	38	23
13 Home Eco.	15	9	54	32
14 *Agriculture	0	0	48	29
15 *French	0	0	74	44
16 Fine Art and Music	11	7	88	52

Source : Field data (2006). \*Subjects that due to school biases, non-of the surveyed schools taught it.

Result in Table 1, reveals that 8% of the students ranked physical education as one of the important subjects in the first four columns, while 54% of the sampled students showed that PE was not an important subject. They ranked it in the last four columns of importance (Table 1). Physical Education had highest score in the column of the least important subjects as is shown in Table 1 below.

On the other hand, the subjects that were ranked to be more important with high scores in the first four columns included Kiswahili-51%; Chemistry-46%; Biology and Geography-43% and Physics-39% (Table 1). Other subjects mentioned as of less importance with their scores in the first four columns of importance were Civics-8%, Fine Art and Music-7% and Home Economics-9% (Table 1).

Results showed that students perceived physical education as one of the least three subjects in importance in society out of sixteen subjects. While such subjects as chemistry, biology, physics, Kiswahili, and history were mentioned as the most important subjects to society, physical education, civics and fine art and music were mentioned the least important. As found by Penney (1999) who maintained that in Britain and Wales, Mathematics, English, Electronics, and natural sciences were to be classified number one.

The results delineate that physical education has not secured a strategic position in society. Therefore, PE education professionals still have a way to go to make the subject and the profession selling. The value of the subjects to Tanzanian setting is determined by the possibility of the subject to result into scholars' further education, and employment. Physical education that has few careers in society suffers the cultural stand.

#### Position of PE in society as per teachers' perception

Responses from teachers' questionnaires on the position of PE in society are summarized in Table 2. About 33% of the teachers ranked physical education in the first four columns, and 11% teachers ranked it last (Table 2).

Based on teachers' opinions the most important subjects in the society with their scores include History 47%, Kiswahili 47%, Geography 44%, Physics 42% and Chemistry 39% (Table 2). On the other hand, English 5%, Home Economics 11% and Civics 14% were mentioned the least important subjects among non-PE teachers (Table 2).

From this study, it was revealed that teachers saw the importance that students participate in physical education for their mental and physical health. But as

Table 2: Score of subjects' importance based on non-PE-teachers opinions

Subject	Total; First four Column Score (N = 36)		Total; Last Four Column Score (N = 36)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1 Biology	9	25	8	22
2 History	17	47	4	11
3 Physics	15	42	5	14
4 Chemistry	14	39	5	14
5 Kiswahili	17	47	3	8
6 English	2	5	19	52
7 Geography	16	44	4	11
8 Mathematics	13	36	6	17
9 Civics	5	14	8	22
10 Agriculture	*0	0	17	47
11 Physical Education	12	33	4	11
12 Commerce	9	25	8	22
13 H/Economics	4	11	8	22
14 Book keeping	10	28	7	19
15 French	*0	0	15	42
16 Fine Art &music	0	0	18	50

Source : Field data (2006); \*None of the sampled schools teach the subjects. FA- Fine Art. PE- Physical Education

discussed before, physical education to them meant sport, which they took as a mere recreation program for leisure. This perception of PE as a recreational program for leisure clearly reveals a significant gap between the intended and the implemented curriculum as perceived by its potential users. As a consequence this lead to an ineffective implementation of PE curriculum in Tanzania.

Though most of the teachers had their mind stuck in sports to mean physical education, at least they understood one part of the importance of PE as 'education for the physical', the recreative function of physical education. In line with this, the Department of Education (1995) asserted that physical education helped to prepare a student for classroom instruction. Chan (1998) maintained that physical activities (PA) employed in PE made students healthier mentally and socially. The classification of PE as oriented to the physical well-being has blinded eyes of most educational stakeholders in seeing what exactly was inside PE curriculum, and what was expected to be the outcomes. Such subject classification in society has marginalized some subjects to the extent that there are missing professionals to meet societal needs.

#### Teachers and students' opinions about the position of Physical Education in society

In general, both teachers and students had more negatives than positive perceptions on PE compared to other subjects. A summary of the subject rank of importance based on students and teachers' perception shows that, there were common subjects that were taken as core in society. Table 3, summarizes the first five and last five subjects ranked based on the subjects' importance in society as per students and teachers' opinion.

There were common subjects classified as the most important ones to the society by both, teachers and students. This shows that there was a common understanding between teachers and students in what is worth doing in schooling, and what was not. The position of physical education is, in general, put among least important subjects. The results are similar with Penney and Evans (1999) who contended that Physical Education in Wales was among the last subjects to come online of importance based on society. From this study, the difference in status of various subjects is evident in both, the teachers and students' perceptions.

There were four common subjects ranked as first four important subjects which are History, Kiswahili, Physics and Chemistry. Also three common last subjects

Table 3: Teachers and students' subject opinion on subject rank (%)

Rank held	Teachers' ranking score (N = 36)		Students' ranking score (N = 168)	
	Subject	Frequency	Subject	Frequency
1 <sup>st</sup>	*History	17(47)	Kiswahili	86(51)
2	*Kiswahili	17(47)	Chemistry	78(46)
3	Geography	16(44)	Biology	73(43)
4	*Physics	15(42)	Physics	67(40)
5	*Chemistry	14(39)	History	65(39)
12 <sup>th</sup>	Civics	9(25)	Mathematics	52(31)
13	*French	15(42)	H/economic	54(32)
14	Agriculture	17(47)	French	74(44)
15	*FA & Music	18(50)	FA & Music	88(52)
16	*Physical Education	19(52)	Physical Education.	90(54)

Source : Field data (2006), \*Subject mentioned in a given position by both, teachers and student.

Table 4: Parents' opinions on children's involvement in PE (N = 43)

Type of Involvement of student to the Subject	Yes		No	
	Frequency	percent	frequency	percent
As core subject of combination	0	0	43	100
As a subsidiary subject of combination	23	53.5	20	46.5
Do not involve at all	12	27.9	*8	18.6

Source : Field data (2006); \*They have never heard about PE, thus cannot decide.

were mentioned, namely, Physical Education, Fine Art and Music, and French. French and Fine Art and Music seemed to have suffered the rank because none of the surveyed schools taught the subject. Physical Education, which in the face of sports was a program for all school suffered more because it was simply looked down in its presence.

#### Parents' perception on Physical Education as an academic discipline

To study the parents' perception on physical education as an academic discipline, parents were asked to give their opinion whether their school children should take physical education as a core subject or a subsidiary, or not take it at all. Table 4 summarizes the the parents' opinions as were revealed from this study.

Twelve parents (28%) who did not want children to be involved in physical education and sports stated a number of reasons to defend their opinions. Their reasons were coded as follows:

- It was said to be dangerous for children because it always led to injuries;
- Sport could not be a subject to commit for combinations because it has no future;

- It was time wastage;
- Students involving in sports normally become immoral; and
- Girls and boys together wear shorts, which is a bad manner in Islam.

The parents who allowed their children (53%) to participate in physical education and sports but only if taken as a subsidiary subject (not for examination) had reasons to mention, the reasons were summarized hereunder:

- Sport (PE) is for leisure and not for future career;
  - Sport (PE) as a career is poorly developed;
  - It is not examined nationally such that they wonder on the manner the children could be evaluated in his/her final exams;
  - An intelligent child should not opt for such a subject while there are other subjects like Physics, Biology, and Mathematics in A' Level studies;
  - Females are not that muscular to involve much in the subject;
  - It is important that a child involves in sports for his/her health, but not for it as a core subject; and
  - It has not to be taken as a core for what the subject would not lead to a known profession.
- Parents' views on physical education as an

Table 5: Students' understanding on the meaning of Physical Education

Students' School(N=5)	Response on the meaning of physical education (N = 45)			
	Limiting PE to sport		PE as more than sport	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	4	80	1	20
B	3	60	2	40
C	5	100	-	-
D	5	100	-	-
E	3	60	2	40
F	4	80	1	20
G	4	80	1	20
H	5	100	-	-
I	2	40	3	60

Source: Field data (2006).

academic discipline showed negative perception. A good number of them reported their children not to participate in PE. All parents disagreed to let their children to take PE as one of their core subjects of combination in secondary schools. Result revealed reluctance of some parents even to allow their children to be involved in PE as a subsidiary subject. Other parents had no decision on their children with a reason that they did not understand PE, and therefore could not give their opinion. Most parents perceived PE as activities that did not need a class and a teacher because it can take place anywhere, and under their 'self-supervision'.

Parents' interview responses also revealed that to them, PE meant sports, and probably unorganized sports that frequently led to injuries, time wastage, and immoral deeds. These findings are in line with Penney and Evans (1999), who asserted that:

"... discourses in PE and what is ultimately defined as worthwhile knowledge in the subject not only reflect historical practices and individual preferences, but also trends in physical cultures beyond schools..."

Parents have a lot of influence in what is going on in school curriculum. These parents want their children to sport and recreate, but they do not consider any possibility of their children to become PE professionals.

There were some parents who allowed their children to participate in PE with the same basis, for recreation purpose. They said their children needed leisure, recreation after studies, and to maintain good health. Yet, they did not allow them to take it as one of

core subjects with a common reason that PE was not examined at national level. There are no A-Level schools with PE-combination. Therefore, it was impractical taking it as a core subject. Other studies contend that for many school children as well as parents, their reason for involving in PE may be to do with fun, fitness, therapy, friendship, sociability, or the pursuit of excellence in sport and not developing intellect academically (see for example, McHenry, 1993; Talbot 1997).

One of the parents reported that his child was just too intelligent to take PE as one of his core subjects. He suggested to the child to take mathematics, chemistry and physics among other science subjects. To the parents, physical education was 'of more activities' than studies that involve the physical body and not the brain. This corroborates with Clay (1997) who noted that,

"... the parent sells the sense of sports being a right of all children therefore it is insignificant capitalizing to PE as another academic discipline. It is perceived a program for less academic students..."

This shows that, the classification of subjects, the subject status and priorities greatly influences what goes on not only in school curricular processes, but also outside school.

#### The perceived meaning of Physical Education to teachers and students

The study also examined how far students and PE-teachers, academic masters and school heads could make a difference between PE and Sports. In general,



the majority of the respondents showed inability to differentiate between physical education and sports. This corroborate with Talbot (1997) who maintained that PE was inevitably a struggle, a contest of and for competing definitions about what was to count as worthwhile knowledge, what the body, the individual, school and society are and ought to be. The students' understanding of PE as were found from this study are presented in Table 5.

Most students had no understanding about physical education. To them, the importance of physical education was realized in sports. Although sports are important physical activities (PA) employed by physical educators in physical education, it is not all about PE. Clay (1997) stated that sport can be regarded as an important aspect and vehicle for PE, but PE is, and is about 'more than sports'. There is a need for PE advocacy in schools, and other educational institutions to translate the *PE-language* for common understanding. Students need to understand such future career attached to PE as physiotherapeutic professions, exercise physiologists, and sports medicine.

#### School heads' understanding about Physical Education

Results from interviews were subjected into content analysis so as to obtain the general meaning the respondents had in their explanations. Result revealed that 55% of the heads/deputy heads (N=9) had their views on physical education as sports only, while 45% showed that physical education was more than sports. On the other hand, 67% of academic masters/mistresses (N = 9) viewed PE to mean sports only. The rest 33% had an idea that physical education was more than sports.

These findings showed that more than 50% of the school heads lacked understanding about physical education, as they did not differentiate it from sports. Being administrators, heads of PE-departments were reported to have been regularly forced to teach/coach students what the students liked most, and that was competitive sports. In line with this, Keller (1982) argued that one head of physical education faced a situation where he had to sell the subject as sports in order to win more pupil enrollment in school. That was so because sports stood as the selling brand. Result from

this study and literature clearly illustrates that school heads do not understand clearly what PE is. Thus their perception influences the content of PE and in the manner it is delivered to the students. The school heads and managers of privately-owned schools in Tanzania are after selling the school by any means. Therefore, sport has been one of the most efficient bites to hook more students in a highly competitive period where there are mushrooming of secondary schools.

If the school management and statutory orders do not put emphasis on the implementation of PE as an academic discipline, PE teachers alone would be unable to affect the curriculum. Connell (1985) argued that published statutory orders too privilege sports over PE, and other new initiative centered upon school sports. On the other hand, Sexton (1997) contended that there was no doubt that the powerful countering vested interests that were present in sports were barriers to acceptance and increased status of physical education in society. In an environment where even educational inspectors showed less concern, teachers found themselves unable to discern the content they had in their profession.

Some school heads (privately-owned schools) said they taught PE in sports-content because that was what their clients needed (i.e. the students and parents). Therefore, even the school heads who represent educational administrators do not understand the actual meaning of PE. This shows that, PE is neglected not only by the layman in the society, but also by the government. It is not possible to implement a curriculum by just relying on the likes and dislikes of a student. This was also observed by Ball (1993) that resistance of the society to the context of physical education threatened survival of, either the institutions or PE content, and one had to pay for the survival of the other. If school heads who represent educational administrators do not understand the actual meaning of PE, or deliberately diverge the content of subject for whatever reason, one should expect very little change in the improving the status of PE in Tanzania.

#### Time scheduled for Physical Education

The observed timetables showed that was scheduled for PE. Table 6 shows that five schools (55%) had PE in their timetables; four of the schools

Table 6: Duration scheduled for PE per week.

School	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Duration	40	120	60	120	40	80	60	40	40
Time	Sct	after	after	after	Sct	Sct	after	Sct	Sct
Activity	sport	sport	sport	sport	Sport	PE	sport	PE	PE

Source: Field data (2006); Sct = during school timetable. After = after school timetable

had only 40 minutes, while one school had 80 minutes per week per class. However, out of the five schools, only 33% used the scheduled time for PE and sports, while others used it for sports only.

Results showed that out of the surveyed nine schools, only three schools scheduled PE during school hours of which, one-scheduled 80 minutes, while the two other schools scheduled 40 minutes each. The rest of the schools scheduled time for sports either during school time (day schools) or during evening (boarding schools). Time is a scarce resource in many schools, and teachers of different subjects compete for the resource. In such competition, unless statutory prints and orders monitor it, subjects that suffer marginalization like PE will be given the least consideration.

In almost all of the surveyed schools, PE was reduced to sports, and given time on that basis. That was similar to Penney (1999) who stated that time was always scarce in physical education and there were the ongoing concerns for teachers who are anxious to maximize students' learning in PE. Physical education was given those lessons after fulfilling the needs for other subject. Without more time and resources, teachers can achieve little either in relation to securing the position of the subject in society or meeting its standards.

## Conclusions

The society perceives Physical Education as a subsidiary subject or 'just activities' that students need for recreation and not as an academic discipline. It is also obvious that, the government on its part has seem to have not played its role to meet its own intentions, the policy of Physical Education.

Because, no reform in curriculum can be successful without a corresponding change in which that curriculum is assessed and evaluated, the introduction

of Physical Education in the national form four examinations would be one of the bargaining encounter in the complex negotiations over the 'status' and a 'part' of Physical Education not only in schools, but also in the Tanzanian society.

To produce quality teachers in teachers colleges and universities needs candidates with specific pre-requisite qualifications. In this study, some PE-teachers, the assumed PE-advocates, showed inability to define and make differences between PE and Sport. This showed that, the implementation of PE in secondary schools suffers both, lack of teachers and lack of advocacy. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training need to establish A-Level combination with PE that would:

- Stimulate students to study PE at O-level and opt for A-Level;
- Provide adequate supply of PE candidates to the colleges and universities for PE-related professional training, in this case, PE-teachers who have knowledge about PE from secondary level.

The government ought to consider the long-term requirement of PE-curriculum implementation. The lack of PE-professionally trained teachers is *not a constraining factor by itself*; rather it reflects how prioritization in planning and budgeting had put PE pending. Priority needs to be put on the implementation of PE-curriculum by training more teachers and funding of facilities and equipment.

The society (teachers, students and parents) is quite resistant to exigencies of national initiatives especially if the innovation in question is not enforced. This meant that, too little had been done by the government to enforce the implementation of PE in Tanzania. Teachers and students in schools were left in dilemma on what to do, a syllabus on the table without supporting means from the government. The society was to be educated on the necessity of PE in secondary school curriculum.



Policy makers need to re-direct educational officers (curriculum-implementers) on what to be done by delineating step-by-step strategies of implementing and evaluating PE. Teachers acting in consent best achieve any relevant curricular change by resolving dilemmas they face in schools. Physical education teachers need to be involved in translating and solving problems that lowers the status of PE.

Private schools have taken advantage to sell their image by teaching Physical Education (in the face of Sport). The teaching of PE made the schools look 'modern' and 'international'; it increased enrollment with high tuition fee. This shows the potentials PE has to the society. The MoEVT need to review its plans so that, the children in her schools get total development, that is, Physical, Mental and Social development, as it is with those in private schools.

## Recommendations

This perception that physical education is of less value needs to be changed in the Tanzanian society and that the society needs to be educated on its usefulness in education. Some of the strategies that could help to change the negative attitude to the PE subject include:

- The government through Ministry of Education and Vocational Training to:
  - i. Train inspectors for physical education as for other subjects to monitor and control quality;
  - ii. Provide funds for physical education equipment and facilities;
  - iii. Ensure assessment as well as evaluation of the implementation strategies are explicitly put in place;
  - iv. Examine physical education at national level for certification as well as for further studies;
  - v. Establish advanced level secondary education subjects combination for PE that will not only make students take it as core for A-level studies but also serve as a prerequisite qualification for PE-related courses in higher learning institutions. This will ensure production of quality PE-professionals with expertise to serve the community at various levels, and;
  - vi. To educate the society through media, the importance of PE in the present style of living.

- Physical education professionals should stand their advocacy role to educate society on the meaning, objectives and importance of physical education. Also they have to bargain and lobby for its part not only in curriculum, but also in the society for which the curriculum is planned.
- Higher learning institutions create PE-related programs that meet the social market for easy employment of graduates.
- Educate the society on the importance of PE and Sports as a both, a carrier, recreation, educational and a health promoting subject that to persevere through the course needs an intelligent student as in other disciplines
- The current emphasis of the Government on Physical Education in schools and sports in the society at large, should parallel with strategies on handling the perceptual and conceptual gaps between the intended and implemented PE curriculum.

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## 要 約

特定の目標を伴う計画された体育活動は他分野の活動同様に教育的である。体育教育は植民地時代タンザニアの中等教育に教科として導入されたが、生徒が単にリクリエーションに参加するための重要でないカリキュラム外の活動として位置づけられた。体育教育が政策的に導入される条件整備は適切に行われなかった。これは教員、設備そして国レベルの試験の形式が欠落していたためである。これは体育が正規の教科として導入されなくても良いという政府の考えを示すものであった。政府、専門家、そして政策担当者は、タンザニアに体育教育を確立し発展させたいなら、共同して取り組むことが必要である。

(訳：教員教育国際協力センター)