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Sports should be integral to a person’s life. This is due to the benefits in health that can be derived from it and also skills such as strategic thinking and teamwork can be learnt. Most pupils have benefitted from participation in various sports, but most voluntarily participated in the sport activities of their choice. Sports serve as an excellent physical exercise. Those who play sports have a more positive body image than those who do not. Sports often involve physical activities like running, jumping, stretching and moving about which turn out to be a good body workout. Playing sports is energy put to good use. A co-curricular activity is defined as a program or out-of-class activity, supervised and or financed by the school, which provides curriculum-related learning and character building experiences.

There are five major co-curricular activities in every school in Malaysia. Uniform-Groups, Club & Societies and Sports & Games are the major co-curricular activities in Malaysia. The 1M1S policy introduced by the MOE made it compulsory for every student to choose at least one sports to participate in. It underlines the intention of the National Education Philosophy (NEP) to produce balanced individuals in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects. In the long run, this policy aims to develop human capital through extensive participation among students in sporting activities throughout the year as well as fostering sports culture among school children to become productive members of society and to adopt a healthy lifestyle, highly competitive and stay active. As stated in the government’s 1M1S guidebook –

“ Matlamat 1m 1S dalam jangka masa panjang, dasar ini berhasrat membangunkan modal insan melalui penyertaanyang menyeluruh dari kalangan murid dalam kegiatan sukan sepanjang tahun serta memupukbudaya bersukan di kalangan murid sekolah agar menjadi ahli masyarakat yang mengamalkan gaya hidup sihat, cergas dan berdaya saing tinggi. ( Buku Panduan 1M1S, Bahagian Sukan Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia)”

Engaging in sports since an early age strengthens bones and muscles and tones body. It helps to increase stamina and endurance. Sports that involve jumping and stretching help increase height; for example basketball. Games that involve running, kicking or throwing a ball help strengthen the arms and legs; for example soccer and cricket. Swimming provides a full body workout. Thus sports provide the body with complete exercise and engaging in sports directly translates into overall fitness. “ According to the non -profit International Platform on Sport and Development, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence that supports the belief that sport and physical activity play a large role in overall health and well-being. Sports have direct positive benefits on the body including prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis and hypertension. Physical activity obtained through sports has both physical and mental benefits for young and old alike.”( Linda Ray, 2009, 9 20 article from www. livestrong. com)

One of the objectives of this 1M1S policy is to get students involved with a least one sports throughout the year with the hope that all students, including book worms and couch potatoes will get out of their comfort zone to be active physically. In addition, with this involvement, new talents will be discovered, groomed and trained to compete at the state, national or international level. A few schools were chosen as pilot schools with close supervision from the department and officials and the practices of these schools were shared with others. This school has taken the stand that for a student to take part in a sport, it has to be for a least an hour. There is no point in getting a group of say 40 students lining up to serve a badminton shuttle or kick a ball, as has been done in many schools.

Students will get bored this way and getting them to stay back to touch the ball for a few seconds is really defeating the objectives of this policy. It is assured that academic results would not be affected, instead making the students all-rounders. “ Any effects on sports participants will be determined by the frequency of participation, intensity of participation, and their degree of adherence over time. Although these factors are especially important in order to obtain fitness and health benefits, they also have implications for the development of sporting and social skills and changed attitudes and values.”(Professor Fred Coalter, Institute for Sports Research University of Stirling, (January, 2005)

Playing sports is very beneficial for the development of social skills. Sports teach you to interact with people, communicate with them and collaborate as a team. Sports foster collective thinking and harness your planning and delegation skills too. Sports build confidence. Winning a game gives you a sense of accomplishment, which boosts your confidence further. Participation in sports can have a major effect on children in the classroom as well. Children who are involved in sports often develop time management skills that are helpful with academic studies. Many schools promote the link between sports and academia by establishing minimum grade requirements that must be met in order to participate in sports.

“ Research shows that sports improve Math skills in children. Sports that involve aiming and hitting skills, for example, tennis, badminton, baseball and cricket help them increase focus. Playing sports involves directed thinking. It requires you to strategize. You need to devise ways to score goals, runs or earn points, as the case may be. You need to devise strategies to win, you need to decide whether to take an offensive stand or a defensive one. You need to judge your opponent’s strategy and modify yours accordingly. This definitely involves clever thinking, which sports encourage. Studies show that kids who play sports regularly fare well in academics and do well in school and college. (Manali Oak, 2012. 12 1 articles, benefits-of-playing-sports )”

Government has issued the policy for many positive reasons. One of it is to benefit the teenagers. Teenage depression isn’t just bad moods and occasional melancholy. It’s a serious problem that impacts every aspect of a teen’s life. Teen depression can lead to problems at home and school, drug abuse, self-loathing even violence or suicide. Playing sports makes people happy. The action in playing sport such as jumping about, running around, racing to get ahead, hitting, throwing, bouncing, kicking the ball, shouting, clapping, cheering, falling and standing up again are all a part of playing sports. There is no match to the happiness this brings. This gives the high by increasing the production of endorphins in the brain. In other words, sports are a form of exercise which generates happiness molecules in your body, thus restoring your mental health. People who play sport can’t be sad. In fact, they bust the sorrow and the stress. Sports generate a positive energy in and around people.

As a research by WHO said that –   
“ The WHO has estimated that “ one in four patients visiting a health service has at least one mental, neurological or behavioural disorder, but most of these disorders are neither diagnosed nor treated”. A number of studies have shown that exercise may play a therapeutic role in addressing a number of psychological disorders. Studies also show that exercise has a positive influence on depression. Physical self-worth and physical self-perception, including body image, has been linked to improved self-esteem. The evidence relating to health benefits of physical activity predominantly focuses on intra-personal factors such as physiological, cognitive and affective benefits, however, that does not exclude the social and inter-personal benefits of sport and physical activity which can also produce positive health effects in individuals and communities. ( Sportandev. org, Dis 4, News )” Another research also says that “ Research evidence illustrates that physical activity, and associated processes, can contribute positively to mental health (with the obvious exceptions of overtraining and training addiction) and have a positive effect on anxiety, depression, mood and emotion, self-esteem and psychological dysfunction (SPAG, 1999; Mutrie and Biddle, 1995).”

Government has issued the policy of 1M1S so that Sports and extra co-curricular activities will help develop leadership qualities and foster team spirit in kids. If they involve in competition, it means they will involve in winning and losing. This exposes children to both aspects of life, successes and failures. Sports build a competitive spirit in children and teach them to be participative irrespective of whether the result is victory or defeat. Playing sports teaches them to accept both successes and failures with a positive spirit. Sports teach you to think with a cool head. The most important benefit of sports is the sportsman spirit that they inculcate. Sports help you become more sporting, more positive and stronger. .

As said by Rachel Nelson who is a managing editor for custom health publications, … “ Children who participate in sports must learn to work with other teammates to achieve a goal. Through sports, a child is able to build confidence in his abilities. Winning does not have to be the only confidence builder. A successful pass or assist during a game also boosts confidence. School teams frequently play in front of observers, and it requires confidence to get on the field and perform in public.” ( Rachel Nelson , 2011, 2 28, article)

Malaysian government has undergone a lot of research n studies to makesure what ever policy that they have decided will benefit our future and young generations. Physical activity is vital to the holistic development of young people, fostering their physical, social and emotional health. The benefits of sport reach beyond the impact on physical well-being and the value of the educational benefits of sport should not be under-estimated.

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