

Abstract

A growing body of literature highlights the influence that participation in sport activities has towards the academic achievement of the students. Despite the fact, most of the researchers have focused on university level students and only few studies have been found that examine the academic achievement of the secondary level students who excel in sport activities in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to investigate the academic achievement of the secondary level students who excel in sport activities. A qualitative methodological approach in the design of a case study was used for the research. Data was gathered from semi-structured interviews from five students who have achieved a provincial level award or an award higher than that and from focus group discussions of the class teachers and parents of the five students in order to investigate those students' academic achievement.

Findings from the interviews and focus group discussions revealed that out of the five, for four students their participation in sport activities has helped them to progress in their academic achievement. However, it was discovered that all the five students have followed common as well as inherent study techniques and strategies on their learning to foster academic success. Through the current study it was learnt that there had been various factors such as; motives of encouragement and support, motives for personality development, motives for concentration, motives for physical suitability and motives for future success, for those students to involve in their respective sport.

Some limitations of the study were identified. The small sample size (5 students) does not allow generalization of the findings to students who excel in sports activities at large and since the participants were selected from one AB type boys' school in the western province in Sri Lanka, the applicability of the study may be limited to schools with similar demographics.

This study is significant not only to students but also to teachers, curriculum planners, parents and educators as they provide an empirical data on importance of sports and



enormously, to teachers upon which to base their future judgements and decisions. The findings may also assist school administrators in making policies on using facilities and equipment to improve students' participation in sport activities. This study also found out that there is a strong relationship between participation in sports and school connectedness. The implication of this finding to school management and education sector is that there is a need to invest heavily facilities and equipment in order to promote sports participation leading to school connectedness and eventually address cases of indiscipline and reduce absence in the schools.