Critical Writing Exercise

Part A: 'Childhood obesity – its causes, treatment and prevention': Critically analyse recent literature, policy and research on this topic

According to Wikipedia (2009) an increase in rates of obesity appears to be caused by modern lifestyles, with greater access to large amounts of high calorie food and limited need for physical activity due to technological advancements.

According to the British Medical Association (2005), there were one million obese children in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2005. This is a vast number, and it is clear that action needs to be taken to tackle this problem. The National Audit Office et al (2006) say that obesity costs the NHS around £1 billion per year. Fox (2003) states that childhood obesity poses a serious threat to public health. Whiting (2008, p36) notes that rates of childhood obesity are continuing to rise and describes this rise as an 'epidemic'. She suggests that the causes of obesity are poor diet and lack of exercise amongst children. Lempert (2005) suggests that marketing strategies used to promote food products are another underlying cause of the rise in childhood obesity. Hawkes (2007) suggests that another cause of obesity is insufficient exercise. And Martin (2007) indicates that parental neglect is another factor underlying childhood obesity.

Many documents explore how the rise in childhood obesity can be tackled, including government reports and policies as well as academic reports, which explore the possible causes of childhood obesity, and suggest strategies both for prevention and treatment of the condition.

Some initiatives that have been set up by the UK government at primary school level to try to tackle these problems include the School Meals Programme (National Audit Office et al 2006), which aims to improve nutritional standards of school meals, and the School Sport Strategy (Department for Education & Skills & Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2002), the goal of which is to increase the levels of children participating in exercise within school. The Healthy Schools Programme (Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills 2005) is another initiative which aims to assist schools to introduce these initiatives to encourage healthy eating and physical activity amongst children, particularly targeting schools in deprived areas.