

THEMATIC PROFILE

SPORT, EDUCATION AND CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

This section will explore the relationships between sport, physical activity and education. Physical activity is vital to the holistic development of young people, improving 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.

Within schools, physical education is an essential component of quality education. Not only do physical education programmes promote physical activity, participants in such programmes are also shown to have improved academic performance under certain conditions. Sport can also provide healthy alternatives to deviant behaviour such as drug abuse, violence and crime.

A number of key themes related to these topics will be explored including:

- The healthy development of children and youth through sport
- Physical education in schools
- Social and emotional development
- Policy developments relating to physical education and sport
- Practical considerations for sport in education

This profile attempts to broadly introduce some of the current themes related to physical education and sport for children and youth. In the literature related to physical education and sport there is much debate across the world over definitions of physical education, sport and physical activity and also great variance in the appropriate age boundaries for youth. These issues will not be explored in detail here. Rather a number of links to further reading and resources are provided after each sub-theme to direct readers to additional information.

Recommended Reading

United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace. (2003) **Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals**

<http://www.un.org/themes/sport/reportE.pdf>

This report analyses the potential contribution that sport can make to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and explores the role of sport in many United Nations programmes. Specifically, in relation to sport and education, this report provides a good introduction to the skills and values learned through sport.

International Working Group on Sport for Development and Peace. (2007) **Literature Reviews on Sport for Development and Peace.**

<http://iwg.sportanddev.org>

Within these comprehensive literature reviews is a chapter on 'The Use of Sport to Foster Child and Youth Development in Education.' This chapter includes a thorough analysis of relevant literature, explores some of the recent debates surrounding the role and impact of sport in education and includes an annotated bibliography.

Healthy Development of Children and Young People through Sport

The educational impact of physical education and sport includes both the development of motor skills and performance as well as educational potential. This refers to the positive relationship between involvement in physical activities and psychosocial development.

Sport and physical education is fundamental to the early development of children and youth and the skills learned during play, physical education and sport contribute to the holistic development of young people. Through participation in sport and physical education, young people learn about the importance of key values such as honesty, teamwork, fair play, respect for themselves and others and adherence to rules. It also provides a forum for young people to learn how to deal with competition and how to cope with both winning and losing. These learning aspects highlight the impact of physical education and sport on a child's social and moral development in addition to physical skills and abilities.

In terms of physical and health aspects of child and youth development, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence that focuses on the (mostly positive) effects of sport and exercise on physical health, growth and development. Physical education and sport also build health activity habits that encourage life-long participation in physical activity. This extends the impact of physical education beyond the schoolyard and highlights the potential impact of physical education on public health.

To achieve broader goals in education and development, sports programmes must focus on the development of the individual and not only on the development of technical sports skills. While the physical benefits of participation in sport are very well known and supported by large volumes of empirical evidence, sport and physical activity can also have positive benefits on education.

Sport is an attractive activity for young people, and is often used as a draw card to recruit children and young people to health and education programmes. Sport and development projects that focus on educational outcomes use sport as a means to deliver educational messages to participants, and spectators in some cases. Additionally, some programmes aim to promote and develop other aspects of education such as school attendance and leadership. Sport does not inherently provide positive educational outcomes. Much of the literature emphasises the crucial role of physical education teachers and other providers of physical activity and sport as determinants of educational experiences.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for example, are using sport and play programmes to encourage young people, particularly girls and young women, to attend school within refugee camps across the world. In addition, UNICEF has a strong focus on using sport to campaign for girls' education, promoting education through events and awareness campaigns.

Sport-based programmes have been shown to improve the learning performance of children and young people, encouraging school attendance and a desire to succeed academically. Whilst a majority of research into the health and development impacts of sport have been conducted in developed countries, there are studies that support this relationship in developing countries. For example, a study on sports involvement among children and young people in Namibia has shown that those who participated in sport and physical activity were more likely to pass the Grade 10 examinations. There is further research that suggests this relationship continues in tertiary education.

Recommended Reading

Bailey, R. & Dismore, H. (2004) **The Role of Physical Education and Sport in Education (SpinEd)**

<http://spined.cant.ac.uk>

An international research project that gathers and presents evidence from over 50 countries and more than 6,000 children regarding the benefits to schools of quality physical education and school sport. The full report also includes a comprehensive literature review available in each of the SpinEd domains – physical, lifestyle, affective, social and cognitive development. In each domain there is evidence that physical education and school sport can have a positive and profound effect on children and young people.

Whitehead, M. (2001) **The Concept of Physical Literacy**

<http://www.physical-literacy.org.uk/concept.php>

This paper introduces the concept of physical literacy, developed by Margaret Whitehead in the United Kingdom, that states, "physical education creates literacy in movement, which is as vital to every person as literacy in verbal expression itself." The paper raises some critical questions that remain unanswered as this concept is developed further.

Physical Education in Schools

Physical education both inside and outside of schools is an important and vital avenue for young people to learn and develop life skills. A number of crucial components to the delivery of quality education have been identified by UNICEF and these include sport and opportunities for play, consistent with the rights of the child to optimum development.

Young people in developing countries face an uncertain future given the latest reports on school enrolment. Net secondary school enrolment is only 52 percent for boys and 44 percent for girls, compared to 90 percent enrolment rate for both boys and girls in developed countries. For the period 2005 to 2006, UNICEF estimated that 90 million children were not enrolled in school.

Despite recognition of the positive impact sport has on education and child development, physical education is being increasingly challenged within education systems across the world. This includes a decrease in the amount of time allocated to physical education, the number of trained staff, the amount of training provided for physical education teachers and spending on resources required to deliver physical education in schools. Additional barriers are faced by girls and young people with disabilities' limiting, and in many cases preventing, participation in physical education and sport in many countries.

Whilst physical education systems are vastly different across the world, a recent study conducted in 126 countries indicated that the marginalisation of physical education is near universal. A large number of researchers are focusing on comparative studies in physical education and there have been examples of good practice, however, the situation in developing countries and regions has changed little in the past decade. This has serious implications for access to holistic and quality education for young people, particularly those living in developing countries.

It is important to note that in some countries where physical education is minimal or non-existent within the school system, children and young people may access sport and physical activity through community programmes. These may be introduced by community clubs, a range of other organisations, or through unstructured or casual games and play. Given the very poor rates of school attendance, opportunities for physical education and sport outside of schools can also provide educational advantages to children and young people.

Recommended Reading

Hardman, K. (2007) **An Update on the Status of Physical Education in Schools Worldwide: Technical report for the World Health Organisation**
<http://www.icsspe.org/document/PEworldwide.pdf>

This report analyses key features of developments since the 1999 World Summit on Physical Education in selected regions and countries. It explores further the theme of inclusion and disability in physical education and also presents a focus on inter-governmental and non-governmental agencies' recent initiatives.

Bailey, R. & Dismore, H. (2004) **The Role of Physical Education and Sport in Education (SpinEd)**
<http://spined.cant.ac.uk/documents/spinedreportmineps-full.doc>

An international research project that gathers and presents evidence from over 50 countries and more than 6,000 children regarding the benefits to schools of quality physical education and school sport. The full report also includes a comprehensive literature review available in each of the SpinEd domains – physical, lifestyle, affective, social and cognitive development. In each domain there is evidence that physical education and school sport can have a positive and profound effect on children and young people.

Bailey, R., Wellard, I. & Dismore, H. (2004) **Girls' Participation in Physical Activities and Sports: Benefits, patterns, influences and ways forward, Technical Paper for the World Health Organisation**
<http://www.icsspe.org/documente//Girls.pdf>

This report offers a synopsis of research into girls' participation in physical activities and sports. With a focus on exploring the barriers, patterns and influences affecting participation of girls in sport and physical activity, this report also includes examples of innovative practices and key recommendations.

Social and Emotional Development

In terms of the social aspects of child and youth development, there are three main areas that have been under consideration: inclusion and community building; character-building; and delinquency and community safety.

Inclusion and community building

The role of sport in inclusion has shown to be strongly linked to building social cohesion and social capital among young people and adults in communities. Sport has been used as a practical tool to engage young people in their communities through volunteering, resulting in higher levels of leadership, community engagement and altruism among young people.

Positive peer relationships between young people are encouraged through physical activity and coaching is considered a key aspect of how physical activity can contribute to social inclusion among young people.

Social inclusion also relates to offering equal opportunities to sport and education programmes regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability. There is increasing attention on programme development both in and out of schools for girls, people with disabilities and refugees.

Character-building

Of all the literature on the social benefits of sport, the most intriguing is that which outlines sport's positive impact on the moral development of children and young people.

The reasoning is that moral behaviour is acquired through social interaction that occurs through sport and physical activity conducted in a collective. However, whether or not sport has a positive impact on character-building in an individual is highly dependent on the context of the programme and the values promoted and developed.

In this respect, physical education teachers and other providers (such as coaches, trainers or community leaders) have a determining influence on a young person's sporting experience and on the degree of character-building. Some research also indicates that 'physical activity outside of competitive sport' may be more effective in promoting mutual understanding and empathy among young people.

Delinquency and community safety

In general, research suggests that sport can be used as a means to reduce deviant behaviour among children and youth.

The majority of programmes that target delinquent youth aim to act as either: diversions for delinquent youth away from other delinquent youth or behaviours; rehabilitation activities for those previously involved in delinquent behaviour; or gateways to engage the target group in sport in order to establish relationships with authority figures, social services, educational programmes and marginalised groups.

'Gateway' programmes seek to address the underlying risk factors for crime involvement, early school leaving, and other social problems that contribute towards delinquency by providing 'at risk' youth with access to social and job-skills training, education programmes and/or leadership programmes.

To increase the success of a sports programme in this area, activities should be provided through supportive, 'bottom-up' approaches; the activity must be purposeful

to the individual, tailored to their individual needs and de-emphasise regulations and winning. Participating in physical activity and sports skills does not directly impact on deviant behaviour and accordingly, programmes should combine sports and physical activities with leadership and job-skills development and training to address risk factors in children and youth.

Recommended Reading

Donnelly, P. & Coakley, J. (2002) **The Role of Recreation in Promoting Social Inclusion**

<http://www.laidlawfdn.org/cms/file/children/donnelly.pdf>

A working paper that provides an in-depth analysis of the impacts of recreation, physical activity and sport on social inclusion. It includes a review of key literature and importantly explores some of the key prerequisites for successful social inclusion through sport and recreation.

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport. (2006) **Sports and Character Development**

http://www.fitness.gov.au/pcpfs_research_digs.htm

Three aspects of character building may be influenced by sport participation: perspective-taking and empathy; moral reasoning; and motivational orientation. This paper explores these aspects and offers research-based recommendations in each area for coaches, teachers and others in sports leadership positions. The authors conclude that sport *can* build character, but only if coaches deliberately seek to do so and have adequate training.

Nichols, G & Crow, I. (2004) **Measuring the Impact of Crime Reduction Interventions involving Sports Activities for Young People**

http://www.sportengland.org/vosm/document_98

Different methods of impact evaluation on crime reduction are appropriate and practical depending on the nature of programmes. The authors categorise sports-based interventions in three categories – primary programmes directed at conditions that lead to committing offences, secondary programmes that focus on at risk behaviours and early identification and tertiary programmes working with offenders. The problems associated with definitions, measurement, the impact of sport on crime and evaluation methods are discussed.

Policy Developments

A number of international policies and declarations exist in relation to physical education and sport. Selected policies and international instruments are presented briefly to highlight the key developments in this area.

In 1959, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child was one of the first international instruments linking physical activity and education for children stating that “the child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education.”

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the UN’s lead agency for physical education and sport, introduced the first landmark policy related to physical education in 1978. Titled, the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport introduced by UNESCO in 1978, it declares that “every human being has a fundamental right of access to physical education and sport, which are essential for the full development of his personality.”

A serious decline in the presence of physical education during the 1990’s led to the development of two World Summits on Physical Education. The first World Summit was held in Berlin, Germany in 1999 and the second in Magglingen, Switzerland in 2005. A major outcome of each World Summit was an Action Agenda presented to Ministers responsible for Physical Education and Sport. These initiatives highlight the level of international policy interest, awareness of governments around the world and subsequent calls for action to promote and develop physical education world-wide.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Taskforce on Sport for Development and Peace advocates the use of sport to achieve each of the Millennium Development Goals, not only the second MDG that aims for universal primary education. The taskforce recognises that education is central to the achievement of all of the MDGs and sport is a key component of quality education.

A large number of countries have introduced national policies related to the provision of physical education in schools and yet even with these international activities and national instruments in place, there is a large gap between policies and the actual realities of physical education practices in schools worldwide.

Sport and physical activity as an entitlement

Many international and domestic policies highlight the role of sport as a key component of child development along with the associated aspects related to sport, play and recreation, such as the right to participate, to freedom of expression and a right to be involved ‘freely in cultural life and the arts’ (as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). This allows for sport, recreation and play to be considered not only as a *necessary* component of child and youth development (a ‘needs’ based perspective) but also one in which sport, recreation and play are considered as *entitlements* (a ‘rights-based’ perspective).

Action that incorporates sport in education and child & youth development should be aware of how sport, recreation and play can be considered as both a necessity and as an entitlement.

Recommended Reading

UNESCO. (1978) **International Charter on Sport and Physical Education**
<http://www.sportanddev.org/newsviews/search.cfm?uNewsID=24>

Specifically relating to the relationship between sport and education, Article 2 on 'Physical education and sport for an essential element of lifelong education in the overall education system', declares physical education and sport as an essential dimension of education and culture and reinforces its impact on individual abilities, will-power and self-discipline contributing to fully integrated members of society.

UNICEF. (1959) **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child brings together the children's human rights included in other international instruments and articulates more completely a set of guiding principles that sets out the necessary environment and means to enable every human being to develop to their full potential.

International Olympic Committee. (2002) **Education through Sport Forum: Wiesbaden, Germany Final Declaration**
<http://archive.sportanddev.org/data/document/document/111.pdf>

This declaration is the result of the world forum on "Education Through Sport" organised by the IOC's Commission for Culture and Olympic Education. The forum aimed to emphasise the importance of sport as a means of educating all people and the declaration outlines the points of entry for the IOC family to promote the educational role of sport.

International Olympic Committee. (2006) **Fifth World Forum on Sport, Education and Culture: The Beijing Declaration**
<http://archive.sportanddev.org/data/document/document/243.pdf>

During this forum, over 700 delegates addressed the critical role of education and culture in bringing a meaning to sport and making positive contributions to development of young peoples' physical and psychological upbringing and well being. The declaration calls upon the IOC to provide education and training to encourage National Olympic Committees to focus on universal education.

International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, (1999) **The World Summit on Physical Education**
<http://www.icsspe.org/index.php?m=13&n=78&o=41>

This call for action is aimed at governments and reinforces the importance of physical education in the development and life-long education process. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of national level intervention.

International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, (2005) **Maggingen Commitment for Physical Education**
<http://www.icsspe.org/download/deklaration/Maggingen%20Commitment%20for%20Physical%20Education.pdf>

This declaration reinforces the need for action on the steps identified at the Berlin World Summit and further highlights the need for cooperative action to promote physical education and school sport for children and its value for educational, sports and social systems.

Practical Considerations for Sport and Education Programmes

Leadership in sport

Evidence shows that the real benefits of sport involvement derive from the positive aspects that are released in children and youth who have experienced appropriate forms of leadership.

Efforts should be concentrated towards leadership training, the processes of training both professionals and volunteers who are likely to lead such programmes.

Coaches and physical educators have the potential to provide strong leadership if they fully activate this aspect of their work with children and young people. This is illustrated by research concluding that martial arts taught with a philosophy of respect, patience, responsibility and honour were related to decreased delinquency, when compared to martial arts taught with a focus on free sparring and self-defence.

Positive social interaction between peers also links strongly with the sporting and educational outcomes and as such, peer educators and leaders also require quality training and support.

Attitudes towards school

There is growing interest among the relevant Sport & Development actors in the relationship between sport and attitudes towards school among children and young people. A number of studies show a positive relationship between pupil attendance and the introduction of sports activities (i.e. there is an increase of children and young people in school where sports activities have been introduced). There is also evidence that among those at risk of being excluded from school, an increase in the availability of sports activities would make the prospect of attending school more appealing. In this sense, sports activities in schools act as a gateway (*if presented in appropriate ways*) to drawing children and young people towards attending school.

On the other hand, research has shown that excessive and intensive training for competitive youth sport can act as an obstacle to fulfilling educational and academic pursuits among young athletes who compete in higher-level sports competitions. Cases in which adults (including sports coaches and even parents) push young athletes to abandon their studies to focus almost full-time on their sport pursuits are prevalent in competitive youth sports. The distinction between recreational and competitive youth sport and physical activity must be drawn to understand the extent to which sport acts as a magnet or a repellent to school.

Recommended Reading

Eley, D. & Kirk, D. (2002). **Developing Citizenship through Sport: The impact of a sport-based volunteer programme on young sport leaders**

<http://tandf.co.uk/journals/carfax/13573322.html>

An analysis of a programme, conducted in England that provided training and support for young sports leaders to undertake volunteer work in school and in the community. The authors conclude that sport volunteering is a means of encouraging pro-social behaviour and citizenship among young people.

Further Reading and Resources

Bailey, R. (2006). Physical Education and Sport in Schools: A review of benefits and outcomes, *The Journal of School Health*, Volume 76, 8, pp397 – 401 (5).

Bailey, R. (2005). Evaluating the Relationship between Physical Education, Sport and Social Inclusion, *Educational Review*, vol. 57, no. 1, pp71 – 90.

Chappell, R. (2001). The Problems and Prospects of Physical Education in Developing Countries, *International Sports Studies* 23, 88-95.

Coalter, F. (2005). The Social Benefits of Sport: An overview to inform the community planning process, Edinburgh: SportScotland.

Doll-Teppe, G. (2006). The Potential of Sport for Youth Wellness in an Educational Context, in Y. Auwele, C. Malcolm & B. Meulders (eds.) *Sport and Development*, Leuven, Belgium: Lannoo Campus.

Ewing, M., Gano-Overway, L., Branta, C. & Seefeldt, V. (2002). The Role of Sports in Youth Development, in M. Gatz, M. Messner & S. Ball-Rokeach (eds.) *Paradoxes of Youth and Sport*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 31 – 47.

Lindner, K.J. (1999). Sport Participation and Perceived Academic Performance of School Children and Youth, *Paediatric Exercise Science*, 11, 129 – 143.

Petitpas, A.J., Van Raalte, J.L, Cornelius, A.E. & Presbrey, J. (2004). A Life Skills Development Programme for High School Student-Athletes, *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 24 (3), 325 – 334.

Pühse, U and Gerber, M. (Eds.) (2005). *International Comparison of Physical Education: Concepts, problems and prospects*, Meyer & Meyer Sport: Germany.

Standeven, J., Hardman, K. & Fisher, D. (1991). Sport for All into the 90s, *International Society for Comparative Physical Education and Sport*, Vol. 7, Meyer & Meyer Verlag: Aachen, Germany.

Project Case Study

Title

Active Community Club (ACC)

Target group

Children aged 5-15 living in impoverished communities in southern Africa.

Location

South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland and in other southern African countries.

Organisations involved

Lead organisation: Australian Sports Commission

Partner organisation(s): Invomvo Management and Training Services (South Africa), Botswana Department of Sport and Recreation, Swaziland Sports Council (Alliance).

About this Project

The Active Community Club (ACC) is designed and owned by the community and provides sports as well as a range of other social and home-based activities. The ACC was created to give children an opportunity to develop their sports skills in a safe environment.

The Active Community Club (ACC) was born out of a desire to address the socio-economic landscape through providing an opportunity for children to learn uncomplicated sporting skills in safe environments, while having fun.

The ACC was founded in 2001 in the South African province of Eastern Cape with only four clubs. By 2008, there were more than 25 ACCs spread across southern Africa. An ACC is designed and owned by the community, providing various activities in a safe environment such as sports, music, HIV/AIDS education, cooking, gardening, early childhood facilities and elderly citizen's programmes.

Supported by the Australian government's Australian Sports Outreach Program (ASOP), the ACC initiative works towards the ASOP goal which is to achieve, in targeted communities:

Increased capacity to deliver inclusive sports-based programmes that contribute to social development.

Impact

Strengthening social relations, networking and developing leadership skills among the project beneficiaries has been the most significant impact of the Active Community Club. Read more here about the impact the Active Community Club has had at the community, regional and national levels.

Facts and Figures

The most significant impact for members of impoverished communities relates to the forging of social relations, networking and leadership.

Community members cited the provision of access to education and training for volunteers as another major impact. The focus on capacity building and investment in human resources is one of the most important attractors for unemployed youth

who obtained access to formal courses, training, experiences and gained life and job-related skills that enriched their lives and assisted them in building a personal and public profile for possible employability and status.

One of the main outcomes of the ACCs is to allow access to regular sport participation. Coaches and players are recognised as role models helping to increase a sense of self-worth and the healing of emotional scars inflicted by chronic poverty and lack of empowerment.

Satisfaction levels were high when needs-based programmes were offered, (for example different sports, gardening and HIV/AIDS and health education).

Lessons Learned

Evidence has shown that the programme helps to foster social relations by creating mobilisation networks. An ACC club offers a central point of contact and access to the community. Furthermore an ACC can assist in the coordination of other community-based initiatives, including HIV/AIDS education.

At the Community Level - Clubs are encouraged to engage with children and youth, parents and elderly citizens and people with special needs (e.g. people living with a disability or with HIV/AIDS). They are supported in setting up club committees that will be active in mobilising networks - developing delivery systems, which operate on existing resources.

At the Regional Level – Clubs are encouraged to register as non-profit organisations to access grants and other forms of support.

At the Country Level – ACC Centres in the three countries are encouraged to establish *Advisory Networks*. The Networks help to expand the knowledge base so the ACC can strengthen its delivery position within existing systems. In doing so, the Networks serve the clubs in respect of their needs – so long as those are aligned with project guidelines and ACC principles (e.g. equity, broad-based participation, fun and learning).

Recommendations

The experience of the Active Community Club shows that ownership of the project by the targeted community is essential. Read the full set of recommendations, based on the Active Community Club experience.

Intensive community consultations are essential to establishing a community club. The consultation phase can take up to 6 months before a club is launched. Community ownership is crucial as the ACCs are designed to be owned and led by the communities. The overall programme design aims to build the capacity of communities to manage their own clubs and contribute to the capacity of regional/national organisations to support the community-led activities.

If a community is not willing to fully embrace the concept of a community-led initiative then it is best to leave the idea until the community is ready and prepared to fully take responsibility for the running of the club.

A high level of interest and commitment among existing stakeholders is essential, particularly from local partners (NGOs, national and local government organisations). Leadership, guidance and local knowledge from individual 'champions of the programme' are also important determinants in the project outcomes as these individuals inspire others to join in and give back to their

communities.

Gathering robust evidence and the constant analysis of impact trends with respect to project goals are also important in keeping the project manageable and flexible enough to respond to unexpected effects.

Voices from the field

Stakeholders from the rural community of Tsabo (South Africa), shared their thoughts on their local Active Community Club of Siyakhula:

“The under-fifteen rugby team has opened up their own gym and trained with weights on their own. They bonded well as a group. They are not in trouble and even have a rule that the one who smokes, is out.”

“There is definitely a reduction in the crime rate, especially in the case of smaller crimes that used to be committed by youth. They do not smoke dagga anymore or gamble so much with dices. In this sense children are set free because of sport.”