

Chapter 7

Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All (SDG 4)

7.1 Introduction

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* offers a transformative and universal vision that commits to the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels, for all people and across the life-course. The scope of this holistic vision builds on the advances made across the period of the MDGs, during which net enrolment rates in primary education increased from 83 to 91 per cent in developing regions of the world (United Nations 2015). As reinforced by the *Incheon Declaration* of the 2015 World Education Forum (World Education Forum 2015), education and lifelong learning are recognised through SDG 4 as being fundamental human rights and as vital in realising the broader aspirations of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

Provision for physical education and sport-based activities within schools and other formal and informal education settings can make various contributions to SDG 4 and its targets. High-quality physical education is essential to young people's development of physical literacy and can enhance wider educational outcomes in line with SDG target 4.1 (see Box 7.1). The focus of SDG target 4.5 on inclusion and equality highlights the need to make physical education and sport-based activities accessible by all, and also the need to enhance the potential contribution that such activities can make to engage particular groups in both formal and informal education. Finally, many sport-based initiatives have also been oriented towards the holistic development and empowerment of young people and the dissemination of educational messages, and so are relevant to SDG targets 4.4 and 4.7.

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Box 7.1 Enhancing the contribution of sport to Sustainable Development Goal 4: Key policy implications

- Physical education and sport-based activities in schools play an essential role in developing the skills and competencies required for long-term engagement in physical activity, and its concomitant health and well-being benefits.
- There is also good evidence regarding the contribution that high-quality physical education and sport-based activity can make across a range of other educational outcomes.
- Sport-based activities may be attractive to some who may be otherwise disengaged from educational provision, but, equally, teachers and others delivering physical education need to ensure that provision is inclusive of all young people.
- Capacity-building and training for those delivering physical education and sport-based activities is a priority, in order to ensure high-quality and inclusive practice.
- Policy impetus is commonly required to ensure the implementation of existing commitments to physical education together with increasing its status within education systems.

7.2 Analysis of sport and specific SDG targets

Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

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Multiple international conventions and declarations have recognised the importance of physical education, physical activity and sport as a fundamental right for all (United Nations 1989; UNESCO 2013a; UNESCO 2015a) Aligned specifically with SDG 4.1, the revised *International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport* that was adopted in 2015 by all UNESCO member states declares that:

Each education system must assign the requisite place and importance to physical education, physical activity and sport in order to establish a balance and strengthen links between physical activities and other components of education.

(UNESCO 2015a, 3)

As a constituent part of holistic education, formative childhood experiences are essential to the development of physical literacy. Older children and adults who have not gained fundamental movement proficiencies – or the knowledge, confidence and motivation that also contribute to physical

literacy – face significant and lifelong barriers to involvement in physical activity and sport (Whitehead 2010; Giblin *et al.* 2014). Conversely, those children who do gain the foundations of movement patterns from an early age are well placed to develop more fine-grained skills through late childhood and into adulthood. Evidence indicates that young people do not develop physical literacy and its underpinning range of movement skills and proficiencies automatically (Fairclough *et al.* 2002; Bailey *et al.* 2009). It follows that Physical education, complemented by other sporting opportunities, is vital to the development of movement competencies and all other aspects of physical literacy among young people. As recognised in UNESCO’s policy guidance for *Quality Physical Education* (UNESCO 2015b), all children must, therefore, have regular and sufficient access to age-appropriate opportunities for physical education and sport-based activity as a fundamental component of education, and to enable and enhance lifelong physical activity, with its benefits for all aspects of health and well-being (SDG 5).

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A range of further contributions to young people’s personal, social and educational development can also be made through high-quality opportunities for physical education and sport-based activity. Reviews of research (Coalter 2007; Bailey *et al.* 2009) indicate that:

- enjoyable experiences of physical education and sport-based activity, which enable young people to feel a sense of competence and skill mastery, can contribute to improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence
- skilled leaders can use multiple ‘teachable moments’ during and after activities to promote and reinforce values such as fair play, teamwork and respect for rules and other people
- movement activities and games can be utilised and adapted to contribute to knowledge acquisition relevant to other academic subjects
- relationships between young people and teachers can be improved within and through physical education and sport, especially as non-classroom settings provide opportunities for the adoption of non-traditional and child-centred pedagogical approaches

- students' concentration, arousal and broader engagement in school may be enhanced through appropriately managed and timed activities.

It should be stressed that these benefits may not be automatically derived from participation in physical education and sport-based activity. Further claims of overall effects on educational attainment also require careful, context-specific and methodologically rigorous evaluation (Coalter 2007).

While physical education has been declared compulsory in 97 per cent of countries, levels and quality of provision often vary significantly across countries, localities and schools.

Nevertheless, the development of education policy in respect of physical education and sport-based activity in school settings can be valuably informed by considering the contextual relevance of various overarching concerns. While physical education has been declared compulsory in 97 per cent of countries, levels and quality of provision often vary significantly across countries, localities and schools (UNESCO 2013b). In 29 per cent of countries, physical education is not implemented in accordance with mandatory obligations or policy guidance (UNESCO 2013b). Enhancing implementation of statutory requirements requires specific and ongoing reinforcement of the status of physical education, especially given general pressures on educational systems and customary prioritisation of other subjects (UNESCO 2013b). Education-wide systems of monitoring and quality assurance, which can be informed by UNESCO's benchmarks for quality physical education (UNESCO 2015b), can provide incentives for compliance and enable identification of specific areas for improvement.

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High-quality provision is essential to enable the realisation of all educational benefits of physical education and sport. The differentiation of activities can support universal engagement, especially as some young people are less likely to engage if competition is inappropriately promoted (Fairclough *et al.* 2002; Wilkinson *et al.* 2013). In particular contexts, indigenous games can also be valuably implemented as part of educational curricula (Burnett 2009; Chepyator-Thomson 2014). Such requirements for high-quality provision point to the importance of widespread, but effectively differentiated, training for teachers and others who contribute to physical education and sport in school settings (Morgan and Hansen 2008; Wang and Ha 2009).

In a number of contexts, enhancing the capacity and confidence of primary school teachers to deliver physical education is a priority (UNESCO 2013b; Keim and de Coning 2014; Sanders *et al.* 2014). Ensuring sport coaches are appropriately qualified

and conversant with their role in fostering the wider personal and educational development of young people can be a priority where their contribution to provision in schools is increasing (Cope *et al.* 2015). Skilled staff can deliver physical education and sport in a variety of conditions. However, as further considered in relation to SDG 11, working towards ensuring access to appropriate facilities and equipment – especially in the 57 per cent of countries where these are regarded as limited or insufficient – can make important contributions to young people’s engagement and learning in physical education and sport (UNESCO 2013b).

Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

Addressing disparities of access to physical education and sport-based activity in education settings is important in itself, and can also make further, long-term contributions to the development of more inclusive societies. Ensuring that inequalities are eliminated in school contexts from early ages is vital for sustained inclusion in physical activity and sport. Participation by young people who may otherwise face exclusion – for example, girls and people with disabilities – can raise awareness and address wider discriminatory misconceptions across communities and societies (UNICEF 2013). However, progress towards inclusion in physical education is variable across localities and vulnerable groups. While there have been some positive trends towards equal access and provision for girls, there has been little global change in access to physical education for people with disabilities (UNESCO 2013b).

While policy development needs to take account of the local contexts and different barriers that affect groups suffering from exclusion, some important principles for working towards equal access to physical education can be identified. Mainstreaming and child-centred pedagogies are central to reducing existing inequalities (UNESCO 2015b). Implementing flexible and inclusive curricula requires well-trained teachers with appropriate knowledge, skills and awareness (Vickerman 2007). The provision of specialist teachers and addressing inadequate facilities and equipment is especially important where, in particular, people with disabilities may suffer exclusion from physical education. Wider efforts to address societal barriers to inclusion are also an important component of strategies to promote inclusion in physical education (UNESCO 2015b).

Play for the Advancement of Quality Education

Ghana, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda and Tanzania

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Right To Play has used sport and play since 2001 to educate and empower children and young people across 20 countries. Currently the organisation is harnessing the power of play to improve education outcomes with the implementation of Play for the Advancement of Quality Education (PAQE) in five commonwealth countries: Ghana, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda and Tanzania. PAQE aims to influence the policy and regulatory environment in these countries to support the integration of play-based learning to enhance quality education. While the benefits of play as an active learning, pedagogical tool to improve learning outcomes have been recognised, many countries lack the implementation of policies and a supportive regulatory environment.

The Government of Rwanda has been determined to bridge the gap between policy and implementation. The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) through the Rwanda Education Board (REB) initiated a revision of the national pre-primary, primary and secondary curriculum in July 2013. This aimed to shift the curriculum from a knowledge- to a competence-based curriculum.

Right To Play had previously provided support to REB on the development of the Physical Education and Sport Teacher Guide. In light of this successful partnership, REB asked Right To Play to join the Physical Education and Sport and the Cross-Cutting Issues panels of the curriculum review process, both sitting within the larger Curriculum Working Group. To support these efforts, Right To Play worked with stakeholders to demonstrate the effectiveness of a play-based learning methodology to deliver a curriculum on cross-cutting issues as well as physical education and sport.

REB's curriculum developers quickly recognised the potential of play-based learning approaches in delivering the competence-based curriculum across all subject areas. REB and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the co-chairs of the Curriculum Working Group, invited Right To Play to feed into the curriculum review for all subjects and to map play-based activities from its repository onto the 'key learnings' (competencies) of the new competence-based curriculum, across all subject areas. To support this, REB worked with teacher trainers, teachers and Right To Play staff to identify activities for specific subject topics, sub-topics and learning objectives. Participants adapted activities to target the development of specific key learnings (knowledge, attitudes and skills) under the new curriculum and integrated a

Play for the Advancement of Quality Education (cont.)

play-based reflect-connect-apply teaching and learning strategy into sample lesson plans.¹

The Rwandan Ministry of Education Teacher Training Manual, which aligns with the new curriculum, identifies play-based learning as an important and beneficial active learning technique. It includes detailed background on the benefits of play and instructions on the play-based learning methodology. It also features a section on effective questioning drawing on the reflect-connect-apply teaching and learning strategy (MINEDUC 2015).

Right To Play is now working with the University of Rwanda's College of Education and REB to integrate play-based learning into the pre-service teacher training curriculum, as well as to develop sample lesson plans and the Teacher Play-Based Learning Guidelines to support implementation in the classroom.

The integration of sport and play-based learning methodology into the national curriculum, teaching resources and pre-service teacher training has the potential to contribute to SDG target 4.1, through enhancing the quality of the education environment, and to SDG target 4.5 as the methodology promotes a more inclusive learning environment and privileges different learning styles and approaches.

Rwanda's case prominently demonstrates the potential for governments to engage with international organisations and partners to support innovative approaches to sustaining education outcomes using sport and play-based approaches.

The PAQE initiative is supported by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

¹ Right To Play's RCA methodology is based on the work of educationalists such as Freire, Brown, Piaget, Brantford and others who support the concept of an educational process that is active, relevant, reflective, collaborative and applied. With its roots in experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984), RCA is a teaching strategy that guides learners through a three-step processing of their experience during a play-based learning session.

For some vulnerable or disengaged young people, targeted initiatives can draw on the popularity of sport and other forms of physical activity to facilitate their engagement with formal and non-formal education (see Figure 7.1). Individual evaluations have indicated that improved sport and physical education provision has positively contributed towards addressing problems of non-attendance in specific schools (Stead and Nevill 2010; Burnett 2014). Taking account of the particular characteristics of intended beneficiaries is a feature of well-designed initiatives. In particular, for those who may be vulnerable, the activity context must be perceived as safe and, for some, reintegration into formal education may initially be encouraged through participation in alternative environments (Sandford *et al.* 2006). A positive and supportive relationship between participants and activity leaders is recognised as a key factor in improving engagement,

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Figure 7.1 Enhancing the contribution of sport to formal and non-formal education



and activities that are peer led may be particularly attractive and contribute to valuable mentoring for some young people (Coalter 2013a; Nicholls 2009).

Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Numerous possibilities exist for the utilisation of sport as a forum for knowledge dissemination and for the development of skills relevant to various aspects of sustainable development. Broadly, these possibilities build on the capacity of sport to effectively and efficiently engage both young people and adults, often in large numbers and across different population groups. Perceptions of sport as a primarily leisure-based activity can both enable and inhibit its contribution as such a forum. On the one hand, the sporting environment can, in some local contexts, be seen as relatively depoliticised and free of particular cultural constraints, making it highly suitable for community integration and dissemination of potentially sensitive information (Spaij and Schulenkorf 2014). On the other hand, sport can sometimes be dismissed or overlooked, where the significance of other development issues takes precedence (Lindsey and Banda 2011). Realising the full potential of sport requires a balanced approach that draws on the strengths of its distinctive status while complementing approaches in other sustainable development sectors.

Especially when they have a high profile, sports competitions and events offer particular opportunities for broad-scale information dissemination among both participants and spectators. Marketing expertise both within and beyond sport can be harnessed to ensure that messages are effectively presented and carefully tailored towards particular audiences. New forms of social media also offer the potential for widespread engagement (GMSA 2012), although ensuring that information is distributed in forms that are locally appropriate to those engaged with sport remains

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vital. Furthermore, planning to use high-profile sport as a communication platform should take into consideration any risks of becoming associated with critical incidents where the integrity of sport may be compromised (see SDG 16).

Sport can also be used locally as an environment in which specifically designed experiential learning activities can contribute to youth empowerment and the acquisition of a range of 'life skills'. Young people have been supported to take peer education and leadership roles in many such interventions (Nicholls 2009; Coalter 2013b). With locally appropriate curricula and training, peer leadership can foster dialogical and mutually supportive learning and enable young people to play important roles in decentralised decision making (Wallhead and O'Sullivan 2007; Lindsey *et al.* 2016). However, systems of quality control are necessary to guard against risks that peer education could perpetuate misinformation or transgressive behaviour. Ensuring that those young people involved in peer leadership also have opportunities for progression within initiatives – and, especially, pathways whereby they can productively utilise transferable skills – is a vital consideration that is further addressed in relation to SDG 8.

7.3 The means of implementation: Policy options for Sustainable Development Goal 4

Approaches to implementation can build on the complementary alignment and mutual contributions that physical education and sport-based activities can make across formal and non-formal education.

Approaches to implementation can build on the complementary alignment and mutual contributions that physical education and sport-based activities can make across formal and non-formal education. Governments and non-state providers of education have a responsibility to ensure that physical education is appropriately resourced in all schools. Capacity-building is a key issue for all stakeholders associated with SDG 4, and consideration can usefully be given to the use of different policy instruments to encourage co-operative and complementary approaches to training for teachers, sports coaches and others involved in delivering sport-based activities in formal and informal educational settings. Even if sport-based initiatives operate autonomously or semi-autonomously, information sharing with educational stakeholders can also bring value to work with individual and targeted groups of young people. Finally, it can be through a combination of policy developments, and their demonstrated effectiveness, that problems associated with the relatively low status of physical education and sport within many education systems can be addressed.

Table 7.1 Policy options to enhance the contribution of sport to SDG 4

	Government-led Implementation	Structured implementation partnerships	Complementary Implementation	Autonomous Implementation
Country-leadership and policy coherence	Review curricula for physical education so that they represent best practice in developing physical literacy, differentiating activities to enable universal engagement and supporting cross-curricular links and the wider personal and social development of young people			
	Provide design guidance so that all new-build and renovated school facilities include appropriate and accessible facilities for physical education and sport			
		Develop and adopt standards for the delivery of sport-based activities that draw on quality indicators for education and physical education		
		Develop locally based structures and approaches to foster mutual development of sport-based activities across school and other education and community settings to enable pathways for continued engagement by young people		
	Utilise specifically designed sport-based approaches in formal and informal education settings to engage young people that are not in education, employment or training, and to contribute to the personal and social development of all participants			
Mobilising financial and human resources	Consider ring-fencing meaningful proportions of education budgets for physical education and school-based			
	Ensure that physical education is systematically included in all initial teacher training and continuous professional development programmes, and that specific guidance and support is provided for implementing inclusive pedagogies			
		Draw, as appropriate, on the expertise of sport and development organisations in designing and delivering training for generalist teachers in the use of physical education and sport-based activities for educational outcomes		
		Design new or develop existing vocational qualifications so that young people in sport leadership roles can gain appropriate accreditation for their involvement, training and achievement		

(Continued)

Table 7.1 Policy options to enhance the contribution of sport to SDG 4 (cont.)

	Government-led Implementation	↔	Structured implementation partnerships	↔	Complementary Implementation	↔	Autonomous Implementation
Country-specific and disaggregated 'measures of progress'	Ensure that measures of the provision and quality of physical education delivery are included in national systems for monitoring, reporting and accountability across all schools			Work at different levels towards common and integrated approaches to evaluation to triangulate evidence regarding the progress of vulnerable or disengaged individuals or groups through sport-based, non-formal and formal education activities			

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