Original Article

From policy to practice for school sport: Lessons from South Africa

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Abstract:
Introduction: In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), United Nation agencies and key stakeholders have invested in policy reform to address physical education and sport (PESS) as a basic human right and tool for societal transformation. **Problem and aim:**The national study aimed to provide key insights on how policies play out in the current school sport (SS) practices across four different types of public schools in South Africa. **Methods of research:**A realist evaluationwas conducted in 55 schools using a mixed method design. Qualitative methods included: (i) interviews with 55 school principals or their representatives and 65 teachers; (ii) two to four focus group discussions per school with232 teachers and 441 students from primary (n=274), secondary schools (n=251) of differential socio-economic status in rural and urban communities, and 76 students from schools for learners with special educational needs (LSEN).As part of the quantitative research method, 153 teachers and 2681 students,1333 from primary and 1348 from secondary schools, completed a self-designed questionnaire. **Conclusion:** Implementation practices demonstrate differential levels of functionality that articulates with differential access to multiple resources of which teacher-coaches are most influential for school-level change. The meaningful integration of PESS, school and community sport through resource sharing and multiple stakeholder engagement at all levels inform good practices. Top-down policy implementation and hierarchical power relations limits local agency for poorly resourced (lower quintile) schools, where leadership issues and contextual realities relate to differentialschool sport delivery approaches. A Freirian approach of reciprocal dialogue may enable social change outcomes at operational and structural levels through sport, as well as of within school sport practices.
Keywords: human rights, implementation practices, public schools, good practices, challenges.

Introduction

Under the leadership of United Nations agencies, sport and physical education have become focal areas for addressing basic human rights. About thirty years ago, the ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) set the scene for physical education and sport (PESS) to serve as cost-effective tools for delivering on development objectives as encapsulated by first the Millennium Development Goals, and in the post-2015 era, the Sustainable Development Goals (UNICEF, 2020).At the turn of the Century, the social construction of sport became a tool in sport-in-aid movement, where non-government agencies became the key implementing partners for governments and donor agencies (Kidd, 2011). In this way,multiple stakeholders placed sport at the heart of addressing societal inequalities and deliver on envisaged change, especially with youth as agents for social transformation (Schulenkorf, Sherry & Rowe, 2016).

When the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) closed in 2017, the development focus of sport were integrated into other UN agency functions and the sport sector was roped in through the forming of a direct partnership between the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (Burnett, 2017).The World Health Organization collaborated equally with the government, sport and commercial sectors to promote their agenda for life long healthy living by addressing inactivity as underlying cause for many non-communicable disease profiles (WHO, 2018). A global policy framework and agency for policy reform informed a new agenda for change emanating from the 2017 MINEPS VI meeting of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport in Kazan, Russia (UNESCO, 2017a). The implementation of the Kazan Action Plan (KAP) necessitated policy convergence across sectors and multi-stakeholder collaboration associated with physical education, sport, health and development (UNESCO, 2017b).

An emerging trend in school sport is to meaningfully contribute to positive educational outcomes (Harvey, Gil-Arias and Clover, 2020). Where school sport is part of the extra-curricular program, physical education (PE) content and approaches address various models that focus on facilitation of participation in school sport – intra- and inter-school leagues (Burnett, 2018). Several prominent models of PESS include 'physical literacy' (Dudley, Cairney, Wainwright, Kriellars & Mitchell, 2017), 'teaching games for

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understanding' (TGfU) (Harvey et al., 2020) and 'sport education' (Siedentop, Hastie &van Van der Mars, 2019). Such approaches are evident in most recent policy changes to accommodate a public health paradigm and associated changes linked to an improvement of quality-of-life measures (Berki, Piko & Page, 2020; Camiré, 2014). Policy changes isare not a frequent occurrence as described by Lindsey (2020), who demonstrates how certain global influences (such as the focus on health) and a national decentralized model constitute a punctuated equilibrium for nation-wide PESS reform. The drive for the integration of PE and school sport practices that would translate into life-long learning and active living, influence global, regional and national initiatives to align policy to authentic practices (Lindsey, 2020).

In low socio-economic environments, societal reform is highly dependent on government'stop-down approaches. At the national level, it is evident that physical activity and sport participation show a higher socio-economic bias, whilst multiple barriers exist for students from impoverished communities to take part in sport (Draper, Tomaz, Bassett, Harbron, Micklesfield, Monyeki, Lambert, & HAKSA Scientific Advisory Group, 2019). In the Freire's (1996) reformist perspective as argued in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* such hierarchical power arrangements disempower schools as effective policy actor. A critical inquiry related to the Freirean model, demonstrates the necessity of a dialogical relationship at all levels – between government agencies, schools, as well as teachers and students. Meaningful change necessitates grassroots participation and pitch the central role of the teacher as role model and mentor (Raymond, 2016; Thomas, 2009). The professional development of teacher-coaches is key to successful school sport that shows causality to broader societal outcomes (Camiré, 2014).

For South Africa, the National Sport and Recreation Plan (SRSA, 2012) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Ministry of Sport, Arts and Culture (then known as Sport and Recreation South Africa or SRSA) informed a policy framework for operationalization (SRSA, 2012 & 2018). South Africa is a highly socio-economically unequal country globally with 20% of the population holding 68% of the income and 40% of the population holding 7% of the income (IMF, 2020). This severe inequality finds expression in 87.7% of South African public schools accommodating 77.2% of the total school population and are poorly resourced (Ndebele, 2017, p. 483).

These no-fee schools are ranked in the lower quintiles from 1-3, out of a ranking system of 1 to 5. At the launch of the School Sport League Program in 2012, about 41.2% public schools registered in the formal system - a figure that has improved slightly to 55% in 2020, but still excludes most lower quintile schools (Burnett, 2020).

Strategic decision-making, policy and curricular reforms are dependent on robust research as evidenced in the national research aiming to describe and reflect on the *State and status of school sport in South African public schools* (Burnett, 2020). Most prominent findings related to emerging practices and differential access to resources, stakeholder engagement and reflective learnings for strategic decision-making are included in this brief overview.

Materials and methods

The realistic evaluation intersect with a theory of change approach to explain context, mechanisms and outcomes (CMO) as it relates to policy-projected outcomes and situational analysis of school-based sport participation practices (Blamey & Mackenzie, 2007). Fifty-five schools in all nine provinces of South Africa took part in the research, inclusive of rural and urban geographical settings and different socio-economic status (SES) (lower SES schools, Quintiles 1-3 compared to higher SES schools, Quintiles 4-5).

Primary and secondary schools within these categories, as well as schools for learners with special educational needs (LSEN) made up a purposive sample. The sampling entailed a clustered comparison as per school type and associated contextual realities (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The purposive sampling of research participants include representatives from school principals, teachers (also teacher-coaches) and from randomly selected primary (Grade 7) and secondary school (Grade 11) classes.

The Mixed Method Research (MMR) ensured the capturing of qualitative and quantitative data to include multiple experiences, insights and sense making of lived-world realities (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research methods include: (i) Interviews with 55 school principals or their representatives and 65 teachers; and (ii) Two focus group discussions per school in which 232 teachers and 274 primary, 251 secondary and 76 students with special educational needs, participated, ranging from 4–12 research participants per focus group session. Quantitative research methods include a self-designed questionnaire, completed during research visits by 153 teachers and 2681 students (1333 from primary and 1348 from secondary schools). The different methods ensured triangulation of method, research participant cohort and four different researchers (Spicker, 2014).

Different data sets were semantically integrated to report on trends, experiences and perceptions through descriptive statistics using IBM SPSS 21 (quantitative data), and theme generation (qualitative data) through sequential forms of coding (line to line, axial and selective) (Houlihan, 2014). A pubic South African university provided ethical clearance and all four researchers upheld high ethical standards by ensuring voluntary participation, the protection and anonymity, as well as obtained written consent and assent for all research participants.

Results

The **different approaches** that emerged at schools relate to the differential access to multiple resources and represent a continuum with low functioning to high functioning school sport system at the different school types. At the lower quintile schools, there is ad hoc or sporadic participation in a few sport for short periods, mostly dependent on the availability of teacher-coaches, or an NGO offering sport activities and some intra- or inter-school competitions at schools or community sport centers. If this practice increases in frequency, it features an events-driven approach. Access to relatively more resources, school management and parental support lead to a more structured program of school sport in a wider spectrum of sports that provides increased access to girls' sport participation and parental involvement. At the most functional end of the continuum is well structured and professionally delivered competitive school sport based on mass participation feeding into more competitive teams and leagues. A comprehensive or integrated approach exist for PESS and school-community-based collaboration to offer students access to a development pathway in competitive sport or active participation as per student choice and ability.

Sport participation

The spectrum of sport participation in some higher quintile schools may be as many as 15 whereas some lower quintile schools may offer only two sports – soccer (also known as football) for boys and netball for girls. The diversity of sports provide more opportunities and choices for students, especially where students can participate in a number of sports as indicated in Fig. I.
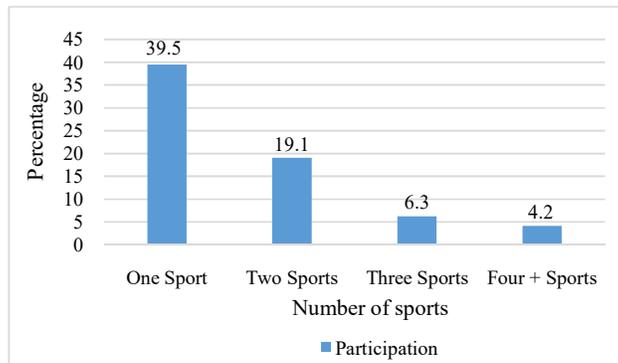

Fig. I. **Percentage secondary school sport participants and number of sports**

The overall sport participation at school and outside school is rather high at 82% for primary school respondents and 64.5% for secondary school respondents. Considering the proportion of primary and secondary school learners who play sport either at school, or outside school, it shows that 25.4% and 15.7% of primary and secondary learners, respectively, play sport at school and outside school (see Fig. II).
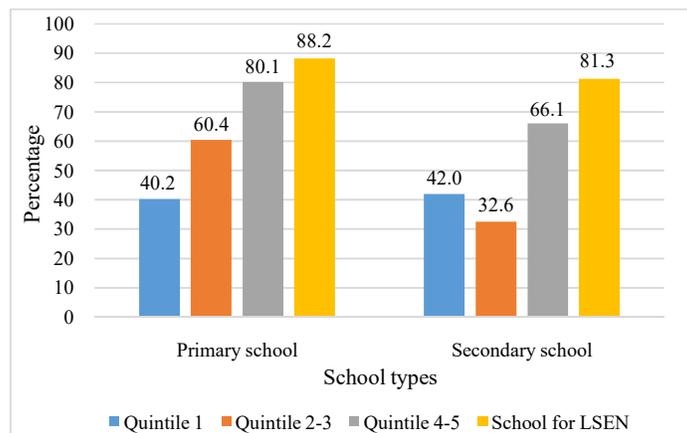

Fig. II. **Sport participation of primary and secondary school learners per school type**

A socio-economic picture emerges in comparing the percentage of sport participants of primary and secondary schools as per recorded quintile rankings. The participation figures are highest at Special Needs schools with 88.2% and 81.3% respectively, Quintiles 4 and 5 with 80.1% primary and 66.1% secondary school learners, Quintile 2 and 3 primary and secondary learners with 60.4% and 32.6% respectively and for Quintile 1, 88.2% primary and 42.0% secondary school learners. The Pearson Chi-Square values (χ^2 =137.503, df=3,

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p<0.0001) show a high associated statistical significant level between the different quintile schools and sport participation of primary school learners, as well as secondary schools and (χ^2 =91,072, df=3, <0.0001). In all cases, schools for LSEN have the highest percentage of sport participants, followed by Quintile 4 and 5 schools, with a difference between primary and secondary schools relating to the lower quintile schools. The lowest participation figure lies with the Quintile 2 and 3 secondary schools. Competitive school sport is by nature exclusive and access inevitably requires resources and similar schools to ensure inclusivity and broad representation, as voiced by the Sport Director of a township primary school who said: 'For an athletics team that will go and represent us, we are being restricted by the numbers given by our circuit structure that is around 120. But, you may have 200 or 300… training.' Genderbrings another level of social stratification as most schools, and especially lower quintile schools prioritize traditionally male sports like football as expressed by a female netball player from a former township Quintile 3 secondary school:

'We aren't getting our support as netball players. The only thing that gets support is soccer. On the 28 January we had to go to trials for the province, but our netball teacher was outside [not available] and we didn't go. I did ask other teachers if they could take us there and the teacher said that they need the money from the principal and so we couldn't go.'

The male bias of school sport participation has roots in patriarchal ideology and deep-seated cultural norms guiding gender-role construction. Many girls have to assist in household duties (private spaces) compared to boys who would have relatively more free time to engage in activities such as sports in public spaces.

Despite the level of functionality, teacher-coaches find sport participation empowering for positive social interaction and identify formation. A teacher-coach from a school for LSEN view the value of sport participation as fostering a sense of closeness and belonging, saying:

'Learners with learning disabilities can let go, vent their frustrations and feelings. For them, sport is beneficial because sport is a place where they feel they belong and fit in, because they can do things what others can do or even do [it] better.'

A trusting relationship between teacher and student is essential for positive social outcomes. The sport environment creates a dialogical relationship as voiced by a teacher from a higher quintile school, stating that: 'You also get to know a learner on another level than inside a confined classroom.' Another teacher at the same school said that coaching sport is 'a different ball game for you and the children, because now you laugh together, you work together…you are not an authoritative (sic) person that stands in class'. Such outcomes are evident at all schools, despite many resource deficits and other challenges of intersecting barriers.

Barriers

Three main barriers emerged that present an interrelated and confounding picture of enfranchisement. Firstly, contextual issues and the lack of stakeholder involvement present subjective and structural barriers. Secondly, issues of policy frameworks and ineffective national strategy found expression in local practices, and lastly entails the lack of different resources – physical, financial and human resources.

Broader culture and contextual realities have spillover effects to schools as in the case of impoverished crime-ridden communities as voiced by different research participants:

'Basically we are in an informal settlement – the socio-economic issues are very rife here and unemployment, crime… our learners are disadvantaged in most things. The school has been vandalized from time to time… Most of the parents like they are uneducated, unemployed, despondent – you know – there is not anything positive that is encouraging them…' (Interview, Deputy-Principal)

'We've got kids misbehaving, they [parents] don't attend practices because their parents don't even come to the games to see the child excelling, so that's the parents…' (Interview, Sport Director)

Poverty has many manifestations and in addition to parental neglect, some learners are compelled to contribute to their household work and, in some instances, they have to supplement the household income. Public violence adds another layer to an impoverished existence in many schools situated in 'gang infested' communities were children are intimidated and talented players aggressively recruited to join a particular gang.

National-level leadership issues are apparent in resource-dependency from most low quintile schools and restrictive policy requirements for high quintile schools. The implementation of the 2018 MoU (between DBE and SRSA) seeks for national level service agreements to afford schools access to municipal facilities for regular use and for sport events. The persisting challenges regarding the policy framework and implementation include:

- A perceived lack of information and strategic plan of sport infrastructure available to, and at South African public schools;
- Shared and separate responsibilities of two ministries where school-based resource provision (DBE) is essential for competitive sport participation at higher levels responsibility (Sport, Arts and Culture);
- There is no clear funding model for school sport and standardization of minimum infrastructure requirements;
- Successful sport schools would like less governmental interference compared to their less successful counterparts that see the lack of leadership, monitoring and evaluation, and top-down approach as problematic.

For some teachers, the overarching philosophy of school sport remains unclear as voiced by a sport director:

'First of all I think they [DBE] need (sic) to establish why we do sport (sic). Is it in order to feed into our national teams? Is it to holistically develop the learners? Is it to give learners the opportunity to get rid of physical energy and to tone their bodies – What is the reason?Why do we do sport' (WPPC)

Many schools, where resources are limited or where academic performances are prioritised, sport participation is not seen as a key educational activity. The lack of ring-fenced funding and limited participation in a coordinated school sport system with multiple stakeholder involvement is out of the reach of most public schools. Other subsequent barriers include:

- The lack of free or affordable public transport for inter-school competitions or exclude most learners who are dependent on a unreliable public transport system;
- Inadequate access to material resources (clothes/attire or kit) and provision of enough quality equipment;
- Cost occurred by parents and the school for attending to sport injuries and possible legal action to be brought against schools and/or educators in case of neglect, harm or legal rights transgressions.

Stakeholder collaboration

This collaboration is in terms of addressing existing concerns through shared ownership. If DBE is to take care of implementing levels 1-3 (intra- and inter-school competitions up to cluster level) and Sport, Arts and Culture is responsible for funding and facilitating levels 4-6 (district, provincial and national levels) (Sport, Arts and Culture, 2011), the question remains about shared responsibilities for funding, infrastructure development and provision of equipment for school-based practices. Articulation and progression between primary and secondary schools are lacking, but needed for developing school sport and progressive development trajectory across school phases.

Resources

Physical resources

For many such schools that do not have adequate school facilities, the location and access to community facilities are often problematic. In many schools, the lack of enough sport facilities or safe spaces extends to the poor quality that renders some existing facilities unusable. In some poorer schools, teachers had to buy balls and smaller equipment out of their own pockets. A comparison of different quintile schools with most of the Special Needs schools are relatively better equipped, but students face other confounding barriers that exist for having access to a diversity of opportunities for regular competitions and pathways to excel in sport. In some rural schools, water scarcity and extreme weather conditions make active participation extremely difficult.

Financial resources

Only 15% of the teacher respondents indicated that the lack of financial resources is not a problem for implementing school sport, whilst 60.6% identified it as a "big problem" and 24.4% identified it as a "problem". Inadequate financial resources trigger multiple other resource deficits. For instance, if schools would had access to finances, they could contract qualified coaches, subsidize learners or pay for public transport, purchase sports kit and equipment and pay for the maintenance of facilities.

The absence of a dedicated budget for school sport for 38.3% of schools, paints a rather bleak picture as most of the lower quintile schools have to channel funding dedicated for essential learning materials and to keep the school "functional". A high percentage (72.2%) of public schools have no or little funding compared to other schools having on average of four times more, or in one case where a school has a substantial budget. Most affluent schools have access to external funders and sponsorships, whereas fundraising for impoverished schools remains a challenge.This demonstrates a vast discrepancy and high level of inequality.

Human resources

The lack of qualified staff for teaching PE and coaching sport as a 'big problem' identified by 42.6% and 47.3% respondents respectively is possibly the current biggest obstacle in schools. Another major contributing factor relates to the 'heavy workload' of teachers as indicated by 64.3% as a 'big problem'. The education and training background of teacher-coaches are linked to their role in sport and level of qualification as indicated in Table I.

Table I. **Role and level of qualification of teachers involved in sport**

Role in sport	No formal training Count (%)	Introductory Level Count (%)	Intermediate Level Count (%)	Advanced Level Count (%)	Total Count (%)
Coach	44 (32.8%)	53 (39.6%)	23 (17.2%)	14 (10.4%)	134 (100%)
Administrator	53(54.1%)	24 (24.5%)	12 (12.2%)	9 (9.2%)	98 (100%)
Technical Official	54 (59.3%)	19 (20.9%)	14 (15.4%)	4 (4.4%)	91 (100%)

The fact that about a third (32.8%) of the teacher-coaches have no formal qualification in sports coaching or officiating resonates with multiple statements that there is anurgent need for professional development (PE) and coaching coursework (sport) among staff. Most teachers required to administer (54.2%) or officiate at sport competitions (59.3%) are in need of training. Another area of concern is the pathway provision of qualified human resources, as only a very small percentage of teachers can coach at an advanced level (10.4%), act as an

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administrator (9.2%) or officiate (4.4%) at that level. Only a slight majority (n=85, 55.6%) indicated that they received mentorship in their sport coaching career. A national sport federation is the preferred service provider for the training of coaches (42.2%), followed by training facilitated by the school (19.8%). A similar picture emerges for the training of technical officials by federations (25.9%) or schools (18.5%). For administrative training, schools take the lead (45.6%) and sport federations only provide such training for a small percentage (10%) of teachers.NGOs offering sport coaching at school have to find their own funding that limits their involvement and offering.

Many teachers lack the qualifications and technological knowledge and competencies to coach different sports. Some have to rely on their own experiences and background as former players, whilst others simply supervise training. Such practices compare poorly to those of well-qualified teacher-coaches and (external) coaches paid for their services by more affluent (sport) schools, where highly functional School-Governing Body members assist in obtaining sponsorships, fundraising and provide good governance structures. At affluent schools, such members often make individual donations and would have a committee to assist with stakeholder liaisons and professional service provision.

Discussion

This research shows parallel universes of policy framework alliances of global, regional and national levels policy actors from different sectors and public schools as implementing agencies. At the core of development philosophy, lies addressing global and national inequalities as per higher and lower quintile schools in the South African context. The articulation of 'development' stems from a focus on using sport as a tool for youth empowerment and societal transformation (Kidd, 2011). The political rhetoric and inter-governmental collaboration follow the same commitment and urgency to deliver on the KAP's key performance areas, whilst following a human rights agenda (UNESCO, 2017a & b). The focus on PESS, assumes a high level of integration between PE and school sport, but emerging models at schools, particularly the poorly resourced schools, show just the opposite scenario (Burnett, 2018 & 2020).

Where resources are scarce, implementing agencies (in this case district offices and schools) have to make strategic choices, as it is not possible to deliver on a global or even national agenda that requires sport to serve competitive ('winning nation') and health agendas ('healthy nation') within an (differential) enabling environment (SRSA, 2012). Systemic challenges in and a high level of resource dependency of the majority of South African public schools, question the preferred versus realistic role of sport –what sport at schools can and should deliver, and how schools can form part of an equitable and functional school sport system (SRSA, 2018). The fact that only 55% of public schools are registered members in the national (competitive) school sport system and that national strategies of establishing sport-focused schools and sponsored leagues, are but supplementary structures that cannot produce societal transformation or inclusion (Burnett, 2020). Another matter concerning the drop-out rate from primary to secondary school of about 50% in lower quintile schools and that only 10.5% students take part in three of more sports at school, are issues to be examinedas outcomes of the current dispensation (Burnett, 2020). The neo-colonial underpinnings of a hierarchical structure without meaningful dialogue between different agencies at and between different levels, the policy-practice divide becomes more severe. Lindsey (2020) demonstrates the challenge of policy and institutional reforms in the UK context. In the Freirian conceptualization of radical change and eradication of structural and subjective inequalities, realisticand informed decision-making is based on inter-stakeholder collaboration and recognizing schools as co-decision makers and policy actors (Freire, 1996; Thomas, 2009). Teachers can act as change agents and role models, but need to make informed choices about effective implementation strategies, and need professional qualifications and relevant experiences to do so (Dudley et al., 2017; Harvey et al., 2020; Raymond, 2016). Understanding the contextual realities, existing practices and possibilities may add to the complexity of how school sport could address a collective agenda for all constituents, stakeholders and partnerships. Most principals and sport directors embrace the philosophy of inclusion, redress, transformation of school sport and lifelong participation in sport, but find it difficult to serve as hooks for policy directives rather than see their roles on delivering meaningful and impactful school-driven sport practices. Unpacking the political jargon in pragmatic ways, whilst allowing and learning from school-level agency through well-informed integrated structures (PESS, inter-school or cluster and school-community) and through robust monitoring and evaluation may be a place to start.

Firstly, a lesson from schools regarding school sport policiesshould provide clear guidance on expected outcomes of extra-mural sport participation through:

- A focus on holism though an integrative Physical Education School Sport (PESS) approach;
- Community integration (a whole school whole community approach) and local level stakeholder engagement through tangible incentives (e.g. tax benefits);
- School sport policies stating active participation by all learners (e.g. one summer and one winter sport), and include issues of safeguarding, a code of conduct for teacher-coaches, participants (learners and athletes) and parents.

Secondly, addressing functional structures that form the backbone for functional and thriving school sport practices at all levels. Current good practices observed, include:

- Active and engaged school sport committees at the circuit, district and school levels (reported by schools in several provinces);
- Regular meetings, good communication and mentorship at school level lead by a Sport Manager or Sport Coordinator to ensure:
    o Regular competitions and active engagement;
    o Teacher-coach empowerment and training;
    o Effective collaboration with external agencies (e.g. coaches and other service providers);
    o A functioning school-sport system within the school and articulation with the circuit and district levels to channel talent identification and development, as well as facilitate inclusive (mass) participation.

Thirdly, policy implementation requires an enabling environment that exists for high performing schools and feature:

- A supportive school-community sport culture and appreciation of the value of sport that is also status-conferring for a particular school;
- Active leadership and policy initiatives driven by teachers in collaboration with SGBs;
- Representative school, cluster and/or district committees or structures that ensure regular competitions, timely communication and optimal school participation;
- Well-qualified teacher-coaches to present meaningful, progressive and age-appropriate PE linked to optimal sport participation (e.g. mastery of skills, game play and competitive participation);
- Successful engagement of expert coaches and volunteers to collaborate with teachers;
- Access to quality facilities, equipment and funding.

The fourth lesson learnt, relates to power sharing and decision making where choice and voice constitute a loop for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). The communication channels should be functional to close the loop between a top-down cascading of policy requirements and bottom-up agendas of possible and preferred agendas from schools. This requires a different configuration of stakeholders and power relations at all levels without a reductionist perspective of reality and see how sport can contribute. Learnings should be from real situations and community-level expectations, as schools are but mere social institutions within communities and would benefit from an integrated school-community approach, sharing of resources and finding a meaningful agenda for social change (Higgins, 2016; Schulenkorf et al., 2016).

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates how policy integration for successful school sportpractices needs vertical alignment and horizontal articulation so that UN-level policies may find expression in real terms with a high degree of relevance for a specific context. The danger of pursuing SDG-targets without a significant level of stakeholder engagement, particularly between the Ministries of Sport and of Physical Education, perpetuates a fragmented approach and competition for resources. The integration and between PE and schools sport, with a reach into community sport, is essential to provide more students with opportunities for sport participation and to share scarce resources in impoverished communities. A holistic educational design that is also evident in emerging global trends has the potential to bridge current competing paradigms of value-based education, positive health outcomes and the emphasis on talent identification and development for competitive sport performances.

In most poorly resourced schools, the lack of access to a variety of sports limits the potential of school sport to deliver on broad educational goals for a significant number of participants. The decline from secondary to primary sport participation among students relates to systemic challenges, such as the lack of infrastructure, equipment and lack of adequately qualified and experienced teacher-coaches. As envisaged by within a Freirian perspective, the emphasis is on how coaches negotiate their roles and find support from school-level leadership and school sport structures that are well-governed and positive enablers to facilitate successful and impactful school sport practices. Furthermore, the latter is further reliant on open communication and consultations to ensure that the policy-practice loop closes with strategic decision-making, informed by duplicable good practices and shared challenges. Practices should inform policies as much as the latter find expression in current school-based practices. A national study provides an opportunity for a government to revise policies, form strategic alliances and institute structural reform with a regular flow of information through a rigorous monitoring, evaluation and learning system.

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There is no potential conflict of interest.

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