

Hands-On Brochure for Primary School Teachers

# The Relevance of Physical Education



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



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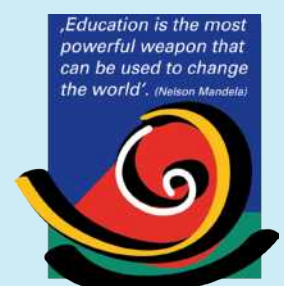


**KaziBantu**

*Healthy Schools for Healthy Communities*



UNIVERSITY OF BASEL  
Department of Sport, Exercise and Health



# Table of Contents

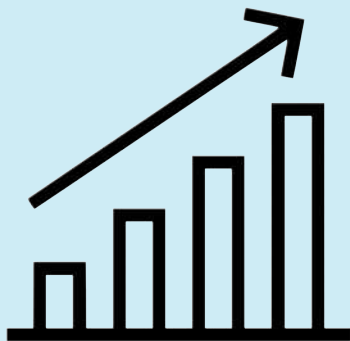
04	The Basics: Benefits of Physical Activity
05	Global Physical Activity Recommendations
06	How Active are Children Worldwide and in South Africa?
07	Why Is Physical Education So Important in the School System?
08	Elaborating on Physical Education Further: What Is Quality Physical Education?
09	The Status of Physical Education in South Africa
10	South African Policies and Efforts for Quality Physical Education
11	Further Requirements for Quality Physical Education in South Africa
12	<i>KaziBantu</i> and <i>KaziKidz</i> : A Hands-On Approach to Assist Physical Education Teachers

# The Basics:

## Benefits of Physical Activity

Being physically active is good for the body and the mind!

**T**his is true at all ages, the benefits of regular physical activity are significant. Physical activity is, however, especially important for children and adolescents. Recent research suggests a dose-response relationship, which means that the more physically active children are, the greater their benefits will be. More precisely, physical activity is associated across all age groups with a multitude of physical and mental health benefits including:



Improved...



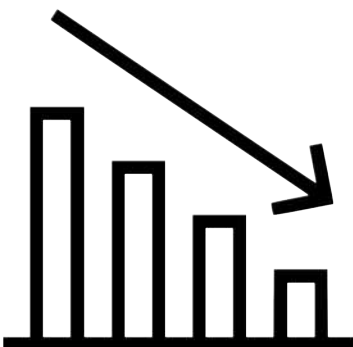
... motor and cognitive development



... functional and bone health



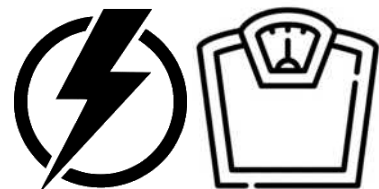
... cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness



Reduced risk of...



... non-communicable diseases and development of such when getting older (e.g. high blood pressure, strokes, diabetes and even types of cancer)



... overweightness and obesity respectively assistance in weight control and energy balance



... stress depression and anxiety



# Global Physical Activity Recommendations

Remember: Sit less, move more, more often! The more you move, the more health benefits you'll experience!

**D**ue to all the benefits of physical activity, international physical activity recommendations were developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). These recommendations are adjusted to different age ranges, as needs differ between these ages (see below). However, in order to profit from the benefits, the intensity of the activities should reach a certain level for all age groups. This means activities during which we can talk but not sing (moderate intensity) or not be able to say more than a few words (vigorous intensity) – as for example dancing, jogging or playing soccer.

The bare minimum required to promote health and prevent or treat lifestyle-related diseases amounts to:



**Children and adolescents**  
(6 to 17 years old)

60 minutes / day



**Adults**  
(18+ years old)

150 minutes moderate physical activity / week  
OR  
75 minutes vigorous physical activity / week

# How Active are Children Worldwide and in South Africa?

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The majority of adolescents do not meet current physical activity guidelines.

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**W**orldwide, not even 20% of adolescents between the ages of 11 and 17 years meet the mentioned guidelines as highlighted in Figure 1. This means that more than 4 out of 5 adolescents are not sufficiently active which underlines the seriousness of this current physical inactivity crisis. What is even more alarming is that across the world physical inactivity is on the rise despite a minor increase in physical activity among adolescents. This situation has been linked to substantial disease risks and has even been described as a pandemic.

**Source:** Guthold, R., Stevens, G. A., Riley, L. M., & Bull, F.C. (2019). Global trends in insufficient physical activity amongst adolescents: A pooled analysis of 298 population-based surveys with 1.6 million participants. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(1), 23-35.

**Sufficient physical activity of adolescents (11-17 years old; in percentage)**



**Figure 1:** Sufficient physical activity among school-going adolescents aged 11–17 years around the world

Grade	Definition
A	Succeeding with a large majority of children and youth (81% to 100%)
B	Succeeding with well over half of children and youth (61% to 80%)
C	Succeeding with about half of children and youth (41% to 60%)
D	Succeeding with less than half but some children and youth (21% to 40%)
F	Succeeding with very few children and youth (0% to 20%)
INC	Inconclusive due to Insufficient data

**Figure 2:** Grading system in the HAKSA report

Indicator	2018
Physical activity	
Overall physical activity	C
Early childhood physical activity	A-
Sedentary behaviours	F
Family and peer support	C-
School	D-
Community and environment	C-
Government	C

**Figure 3:** Results from the HAKSA report

**A** similar picture arises for the physical activity of young South Africans (3-18 years old). A report called HAKSA (Healthy Active Kids South Africa) illustrates that even though children in South Africa are highly active in early childhood, the amount of physical activity decreases noticeably when they enter school (see Figures 2 and 3). The results point out that the majority of school-aged children is not sufficiently active and that they experience a general deficiency when it comes to support and encouragement from their environment to be physically active. Instead, South African children seem to spend too much time sitting still in front of screens, such as a TV or cell phone. An additional and remarkable outcome of the report was that a low level of physical activity was found especially in lower socioeconomical areas, such as informal township areas.

**Source:** Draper, C. E., Tomaz, S. A., Harborn, J., Kruger, H.S., Micklesfield, L. K., Monyeki, A., Lambert, E. V., & members of the HAKSA 2018 Scientific Advisory Group. (2019). Results from the Healthy Active Kids South Africa 2018 Report Card. *South African Journal of Child Health*, 13(3), 130-136.

# Why Is Physical Education So Important in the School System?



**P**hysical Education is increasingly confronted around the world with the challenge to justify its significance within school curricula in the face of more academic subjects such as mathematics, languages or the sciences. These latter subjects receive more attention in politics, media and evaluations of academic performance. So, why should Physical Education be a mandatory school subject in the first place when it does not appear to be of any value to the education of the next generation?

First of all, the context of schools provides the only official setting which can inclusively support all children in fulfilling physical activity guidelines and Physical Education includes physical activity by its very definition. Therefore, the foundations for a healthy and active lifestyle need to be supported by a proactive school environment. This is particularly crucial in less advantaged communities, where the Physical Education classes often provide children with the only regular sessions of physical activity throughout their day. Furthermore, the perception of Physical Education as not being able to foster the cognitive development of schoolchildren is a

common misunderstanding. In fact, studies have produced substantial evidence that Physical Education may enhance schoolchildren's concentration level, academic behaviour and cognitive abilities, which ultimately improves academic performance across school subjects. So, Physical Education is positively associated not only with the development of physical but also mental capacities of schoolchildren. This has resulted in a scientific consensus of accrediting and defending the legitimacy of Physical Education in every curriculum and demands to raise time allocated to Physical Education to at least 2 hours per week.



# Elaborating on Physical Education Further: What Is Quality Physical Education?

Quality Physical Education is the ideal to which every Physical Education lesson should strive.



**Q**uality Physical Education is an instructional philosophy that is characterized by planned, flexible, interactive and progressive learning experiences. It requires qualified teachers who consciously and cautiously deal with the development of physical and mental capacities of all schoolchildren and who are able to support them in being physically active throughout their whole life. This is done in an inclusive way meaning children with different dis-/abilities, background, religion or gender are all considered equally and without prejudice. Thereby, schoolchildren learn underlying values of sport, such as *fair play* which reinforces pro-social behaviour and allows them to become responsible, independent, healthy and well-rounded adults. Moreover, these values are linked to a great potential to decrease violence, gangsterism, drug and substance abuse. So, when attention is given to quality in this way, Physical Education contributes to the development of social skills within every child and reinforces already beneficial effects, such as the positive associations with academic performance and the growth of physical and mental abilities.



# The Status of Physical Education in South Africa

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In most township schools, the status of Physical Education is very low as parents, school management and educators emphasise the importance of academic subjects.

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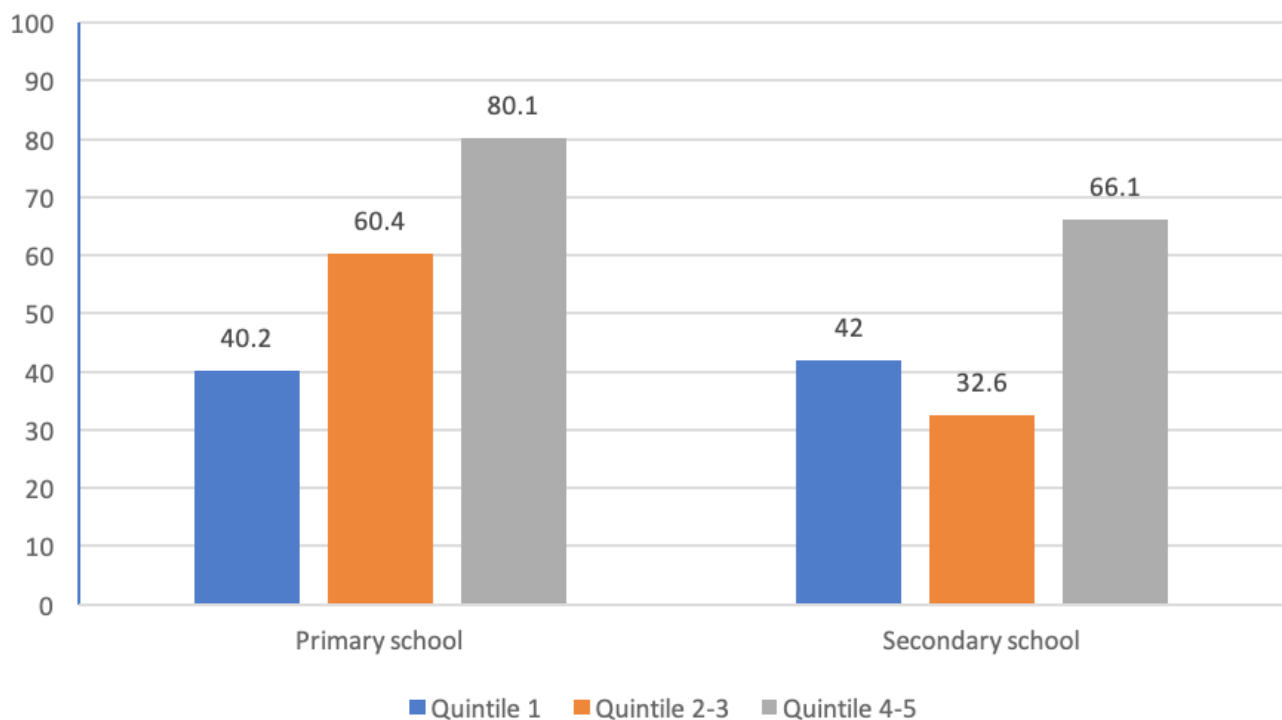


Figure 4: Participation in physical education lessons according to school types (in percentage)

National research specifically on physical education echoes the call for physical activity to play a recognized and meaningful role in South African schools. This research found a vicious circle of attitudes and behaviours from government, parents, school management, and educators which influence each other and result in the widespread absence of a supportive sports culture.

This, in return, leads to a low status of physical education, a scarcity of adequate resources and not least a frequent lack of confidence and competence of *Life Skills / Life Orientation* teachers to teach quality physical education. These shortages are particularly evident in underprivileged areas, which presumably influences physical education participation amongst lower quintile schools (as illustrated in the figure above).

# South African Policies and Efforts for Quality Physical Education

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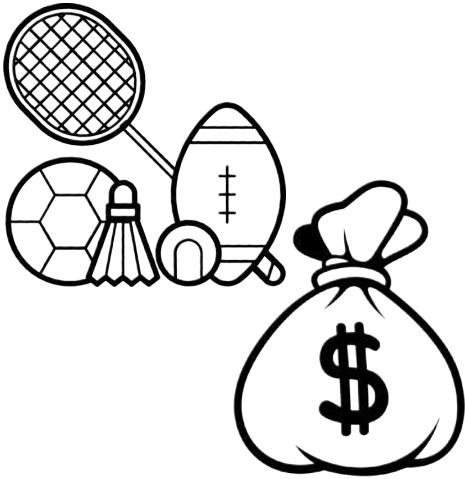
**A**s part of *Life Skills / Life Orientation*, Physical Education makes up a minor part of the current South African curriculum. However, the curriculum essentially aims to cater aspects of quality Physical Education such as age appropriate content that is progressive throughout the children's schooling. Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education has committed itself to provide an enabling physical teaching and learning environment and the Department for Sport and Recreation has published an implementation plan in 2012 that aims to maximize the access to Physical Education and to ensure equal opportunities for every South African child. Part of that implementation plan is also the reintroduction of Physical Education

as a stand-alone subject, which however has remained unsuccessful until today. Additionally, the South African government has agreed to revise the current Physical Education policy. In 2016, South Africa became a pilot for UNESCO's *Quality Physical Education Policy* project. This project aims to facilitate the implementation of quality Physical Education and initiated nation-wide research on how this can be achieved.

So, efforts and commitments from the government to advocate and establish quality in Physical Education are present but no major curriculum or policy changes have resulted out of these so far.

# Further Requirements for Quality Physical Education in South Africa

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## **P**rovision of adequate Physical Resources and funds:

One argument that is raised repetitively is that quality physical education requires adequate resources and funds. Current expenditures do not seem to cover the persisting needs as the government's commitment to provide an enabling environment for every schoolchild cannot be fulfilled at the moment. However, the provision of adequate resources alone would probably not effectuate positive change automatically when everyone continues to attribute a low status to Physical Education and / or educators do not have the necessary skill set to make adequate use of these resources.

## **I**mprovement of teacher qualification and training:

If teachers lead by example and are capable to provide quality Physical Education, then the status and acknowledgement of Physical Education may rise again. Therefore, educators need to receive effective pre-service training programmes which are tailored to current needs. Researchers have made a call to establish a Physical Education qualification that is recognized by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Additionally, in-service teachers need to be supported, enriched and empowered through continuous professional development programmes particularly when lacking confidence or competence to teach Physical Education.



## **R**evision of the curriculum & assistance with implementation:

The Physical Education curriculum contains quality aspects but it also entails structural barriers. In order to provide quality Physical Education, UNESCO recommends that Physical Education be presented at least 2 hours per week as a stand-alone subject. While the Department of Basic Education actively supports their current curriculum, the manpower and capacity to implement seems challenging. Therefore, assistance with the implementation of the current curriculum through establishing support tools (e.g. contextually relevant teaching materials, further training of teachers and subject advisors etc.) could contribute to quality Physical Education being offered in schools.



# KaziBantu and KaziKidz:

A Hands-On Approach to Assist Physical Education Teachers



## KaziBantu

*Healthy Schools for Healthy Communities*

The *KaziBantu*\* project is a specially tailored school-based intervention programme developed by a Swiss-South African partnership of academic institutions. It aims to consolidate the practice of Physical Education and ensuring healthy active living of school children and teachers. Thereby, it channels its efforts primarily on underprivileged areas in an attempt to contribute to sustainable health promotion independent of socio-economic status.

\* Go to [www.kazibantu.org](http://www.kazibantu.org) for detailed information on the programmes.



## KaziKidz

*Teaching Material for Schoolchildren*

The subprogramme *KaziKidz*\* provides a hands-on approach to tackle current Physical Education issues. More precisely, *KaziKidz* assists teachers through a holistic educational and instructional toolkit that provides teaching material. Thereby, three content pillars have been designed: Physical Education, Moving-to-Music, and Health-and-Hygiene and Nutrition Education. The relevant material is freely available and can be integrated directly in everyday *Life Skills* and *Life Orientation* teaching as it aligns with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).





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# Would you like to be part of our journey? Please join and contact us...

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