

International Benchmarks for Physical Education Systems

Developed by ICSSPE's International Committee of Sport Pedagogy

The International benchmarks for physical education were developed by members of ICSSPE's International Committee of Sport Pedagogy, following intensive discussion and extensive consultation, during 2010-2012. Input and feedback were received from countries in all continents and from countries with varying degrees of wealth, infrastructure and school systems. The benchmarks are informed by ICSSPE's International Position Statement on Physical Education (see Appendix I), which has been endorsed by UNESCO (CIGEPE), UNOSDP, IOC and IPC.

Extensive international consultation on earlier drafts provides confidence that these benchmarks are globally applicable, but recognise the nature and scale of commitment to resources which are required to establish and develop systems of quality physical education. The benchmark framework provides self-evaluation guideline indicators that can help to improve the practice of physical education and sport in the education system. Regular lessons in physical education / sport are essential for all young people because they provide the only means for bio-psycho-social development within the curriculum and for improving education for physical activity and healthy life-styles – increasingly recognised as essential actions to combat the global challenges and costs of inactivity. The benchmarks address specific minimal requirements for quality physical education and sport systems which embrace diversity and inclusion. The intention is to support countries, allowing for different phases of progress: *Establishment, Development and Maturity/Review*. They provide for *Government ministers and policy-makers, Curriculum designers, School providers, Teachers and Learners*, indications of ways in which they can improve educational provision for young people to learn in and through physical education and sport as one of their human rights; and to implement the international agreements that have been signed in favour of access to high quality physical education and sport in education.

	Establishment phase	Development phase	Maturity/review phase
1. Government Policy-makers /	<i>Where there is ...</i>		
1.1	Government / policy-maker level recognition of the significant contributions that physical education and school sport make to holistic health, lifelong physical activity habits, intellectual achievement and positive development of youth in communities.	Government / Policy-maker level action in funding, education policy, training, monitoring and assuring a progressive and appropriate curriculum framework, time and space for physical education.	Systematic monitoring and reviewing of policy and practice regarding the quality and effectiveness of schools-based physical education and sport
1.2	Government-level human rights commitment for all young people to have access to physical education / sport within the education system.	Human rights entitlement specifying provision, inclusion and equity embedded in and through physical education policy and practice.	Systematic review of progress in implementing fundamental human rights for equity in the provision of physical education and school sport.
1.3	Ministerial level discussion and planning for investment in funding, specialist support, curriculum development, teacher education and strategic development of school-based PE policies and programmes.	Ministerial level responsibility for networking with schools and teacher/coach training institutions to plan, implement and review commitment to and investment in physical education.	Collaborative networking at local, national and international level for the benefit of ongoing review of policy, provision and practice in physical education / school sport.
2. Curriculum designers	<i>Where there is ...</i>		
2.1	Base line definition of physical education within the context of the goals and objectives of the ministries of education to enable development planning to proceed.	Shared understanding of the definition of physical education and its outcome, physical literacy (as compared with 'sport' education), amongst government, teachers, learners and parents.	Ongoing discussion to refine and reposition physical education in schools in order to reflect broader societal and educational developmental priorities, ie inclusive view of physical literacy to embrace embodied health, development and practice of positive values.
2.2	Recognition of the need for a developmental approach to curriculum learning and teaching, PE subject specialists' knowledge, best practices, context specific adaptation, and consideration of accompanying facilities, equipment, time and resources.	Ongoing development of in-depth subject knowledge in PE, principles and best practice in physical education, curriculum planning for diverse learners and learners with multiple abilities and challenges, learning and teaching theories, and developmental approaches.	Support for robust research projects, linked to practice, and for the establishment of networks, at local, national and international level, of critically reflective teachers who contribute to ongoing understanding of pedagogy, strategies for meeting learners' needs, overcoming challenges and sharing best practice.

	Acknowledgement that different interests exist amongst learners in physical education and school sport.	Provision of diverse and challenging activities, relevant to the school context and the community life-world of its young people: for example, in and out of curriculum time, competitive and non-competitive activities, creative and problem-solving activities, and in various environments as appropriate to context – <i>for example, aquatic and local hillsides.</i>	Utilisation of the cultural and traditional heritage of the situation and learners' interests in planning and reviewing curriculum content.
3. School Providers	<i>Where there is / are ...</i>		
3.1	Recognition that diverse learners have different needs in physical education. (<i>For example, acknowledging the challenges of providing for those with physical and / or intellectual impairment, girl and boy children and young people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds</i>).	Evidence of equity and inclusion statements in policy, and adoption of appropriate teaching and learning strategies in practice, to cater for the needs of diverse learners.	Monitoring and review of equity and inclusion policies in practice.
3.2	Engagement in the process of securing appropriate, safe, clean environments and facilities for physical education lessons in all schools.	Specific safe, clean and supervised spaces for participation in physical education in every school.	A range of quality indoor and outdoor facilities, equipment and resources for safe participation in a variety of physical activities.
3.3	Evidence of planning and action to ensure that learners have weekly access to physical education / sport on their timetables, and that physical education lessons provide informed and programmed instruction to facilitate progress and success.	Systematic timetabled and programmed lessons in the weekly schedule for all young people.	Commitment to regular lessons during the week in physical education, out-of-hours and club opportunities and links with local sports clubs, encouraging development of positive attitudes, knowledge and skills and a vision for life-long participation in physical activity.
3.4	Evidence of planning and action to ensure resources, equipment and apparatus are available for lessons and clubs.	Quality resources in relation to class sizes, enabling all young people to access equipment and space to enhance skill learning and understanding.	Commitment to ongoing funding to enable all young people to have the range of resources necessary to maximise active participation and to ensure success in learning.

4. Teachers	<i>Where there is / are ...</i>		
4.1	Recognition that well-qualified teachers are essential to quality physical education / school sport. Identification and training of motivated teachers on accredited courses that include, for example, principles, commitment to positive sporting values, subject knowledge, method, inclusion of diverse learners.	Degree level initial teacher training/education that focuses on linking research and practice, developing critical, reflective teachers able to contribute to quality physical education in schools.	Career-long continuity in initial and continuing teacher education for ongoing development of knowledge and skills and personal advancement in a clear career structure.
4.2	Teacher-engagement in planning teaching and learning to maximise the quality of young people's experiences in their situations.	Teacher-networking through national associations, to exchange knowledge of best practice and contribute to development of practices in specific contexts.	Teacher-engagement in research to create knowledge on effectiveness and quality learning and teaching relevant to their situation. Exchange of knowledge through national and international networks.
4.3	Local infrastructure support systems in place to ensure ongoing improvement in teacher effectiveness.	Local and national support systems for the advancement of teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning in physical education, <i>for example, through symposiums, conferences, collaborative reviews.</i>	Teacher-contribution to support systems intra- and inter- schools, engagement in collaborative research and critical review to enhance progress.
5. Learners	<i>Where there is ...</i>		
5.1	Participation in regular structured and supervised physical education / school sport lessons developing confidence, physical competence and understanding of movement potential.	Demonstration of progression in movement confidence, competence and self-expression. Knowledge and understanding of movement efficiency, body management and control, in and through systematic learning opportunities.	Identification of qualities of effectiveness in movement and evidence of physical literacy. Demonstration of efficient, effective and responsive movement capability, with knowledge and understanding, across a range of physical activity environments. Contribution to planning, monitoring and assessment of personal development in and through physical education and school sport.
5.2	Engagement in physical education / school sport lessons with motivation to learn and improve health through physical fitness across a range of activities.	Demonstration of positive attitudes towards, and healthy engagement with, physical activity and sport, understanding the values sport can instil in social, community and sporting contexts as leaders and participants.	Understanding and articulation of the principles underpinning the contribution of movement capability to life-long activity and health enhancement and situation-specific ways in which this can be achieved and sustained.

APPENDIX I

ICSSPE International Position Statement on Physical Education November 2010/12

Physical education develops physical competence so that all children can move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome, physical literacy, is an essential basis for their full development and achievement.

Physical education in school is the most effective and inclusive means of providing all children, whatever their ability/disability, sex, age, cultural, race/ethnicity, religious or social background, with the skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding for lifelong participation in physical activity and sport.

It is the only school subject whose primary focus is on the body, physical activity, physical development and health; and helps children to develop the patterns of and interest in physical activity, which are essential for healthy development and which lay the foundations for adult healthy lifestyles.

It contributes to children's confidence and self esteem; enhances social development by preparing children to cope with competition, winning and losing; and cooperation and collaboration. It is increasingly being used as a tool in development, including recovery from trauma and conflict; and encouragement for school attendance and retention.

ICSSPE reaffirms the 1978 UNESCO International Charter on Physical Education and Sport and the Berlin Agenda for Governments, agreed at the 1st World Summit on Physical Education in 1999 in Berlin, and endorsed by the Declaration of Punta del Este at MINEPS III in the same year, which calls on governments' commitment to:

- implement policies for physical education as a human right for all children;
- recognise that good quality physical education depends on well qualified educators and scheduled time within the curriculum, both of which are possible to provide even when other resources like equipment are in short supply;
- invest in initial and in-service professional training and development for educators;
- support research to improve the effectiveness and quality of physical education;
- work with international financial institutions to ensure physical education is included as part of their aid programmes in education;
- recognise the distinctive role of physical education in health, overall development and safe, supportive communities.

This Position Statement has been endorsed and supported by UNESCO, the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee and the UN Office for Sport for Development and Peace.

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