

AN ACTIVE AND WINNING SOUTH AFRICAN NATION: CAN THE GAP BETWEEN IDEAL AND REALITY BE NARROWED?

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the development of mass sports is constantly opposed by the prominence of elite sports. South African schools find it challenging to provide a solid foundation and adequate resources in order to sustain efforts to yield a healthy nation and produce champions in sport. In this study, literature related to physical education (PE), school sport and sport development is explored. An overview of core government documents, of which the National Sport and Recreation Plan (NSRP) serves as point of departure, is presented and reflected upon. It is followed by an exploration of the tension between the ideal of an active and winning nation and the present reality. The significance of the delivery of quality PE and school sport to support active lifestyles are acknowledged and the challenges related to addressing the issues derived from the NSRP and supporting documents, such as inequalities in terms of resources and schools, are highlighted. Finally, recommendations are made with regard to the delivery of quality PE and school sport to all children in South African schools. It is proposed that actions taken at school level could potentially narrow the gap between the ideal and reality in the quest of becoming an active winning nation.

Keywords: Active nation; Mass participation; School sport; Physical education; Policy implementation, National Sport and Recreation Plan.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood obesity is considered one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st Century (WHO, 2013). In fact, 13% of children in South Africa (SA) are overweight or obese, which is more than double the global average of 5% (Green, 2017). In the same vein, the deteriorating health of children is amplified by the disappearance of physical activity from most aspects of daily life (Le Masurier & Corbin, 2006). Tappe and Burgeson (2004) highlight the increase in the prevalence of obesity and diabetes among youth, in the absence of daily physical education (PE). This is a major concern for the public health sector and the general public, and subsequently engendered support for PE and other school physical activity programmes (Shilbury *et al.*, 2008).

Ominously, the 2016 Healthy Active Kids Report Card confirms that at least half of the children in SA fail to meet the recommendations for participation in physical activity or in organised sporting activities (Uys *et al.*, 2016). Article 1 of the Revised European Sports Charter declares that governments should ensure that all young people have the opportunity to receive

PE instruction and acquire basic sports skills, take part in sport and physical recreation in a safe and healthy environment to reach levels of personal achievement ultimately and/or levels of excellence (Council of Europe, 2001).

In concurrence with the SHAPE America organisation, NASPE (National Association for Sport and Physical Education) (2007) states that the primary goal of PE is to adopt and value a physically active lifestyle, which, according to Siedentop *et al.* (2011), is achievable when students develop self-efficacy and experience a sense of accomplishment and pleasure. Rink *et al.* (2010) imply that schools should play a major role in attempting to increase the physical activity patterns of youth, both in school and on an extramural level.

Research confirms that the basis of a physically active and healthy lifestyle are the opportunities provided in the school environment for all children to develop fundamental movement skills (FMS), which are considered the building blocks for the learning of sport-specific skills (Pangrazi, 2007; Trost & van der Mars, 2009; Balyi *et al.*, 2013). The importance of a sound foundation of motor skills and providing opportunities for optimal development of physical abilities during the crucial years of growth and maturation are evident in the literature (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006; Pangrazi, 2007; Hardman, 2008; Rink *et al.*, 2010; DBE, 2011; South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee [SASCOC], 2012; Balyi *et al.*, 2013). In addition, FMS as well as advanced sport-specific skills can be enhanced through a variety of movement experiences (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2006; Coté *et al.*, 2009). PE has the potential to provide an effective structure and opportunity for all children to acquire movement skills, attitudes and knowledge for participation in physical activity and sport (Green & Collins, 2008; Trost & van der Mars, 2009; Van Deventer, 2012).

Several deliberations, to drive the promotion of physical activity and ‘Sport for All’ in SA, have taken place between the DBE (Department of Basic Education), Higher Education Institutions and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which culminated in a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) pilot project investigating quality PE in SA (Burnett, 2018). The matter of equal opportunities for all to participate and excel in sport, and school sport in particular, has drawn the attention of several role players, one of which is the Department of Sport and Recreation.

It is for this reason that the last three ministers of sport in SA acknowledged the significance of concentrating on the fundamentals for physical activity participation. A former minister of sport and recreation, Makhenkesi Stofile, referred to school sport as the “nursery” for participants in senior competitions (Desai, 2010:3). His successor, Fikile Mbalula, stated during his budget speech that “meaningful investments are required from an early age for enhanced effective participation in sport” (Mbalula, 2014:online). Although the minister who succeeded him, Thulas Nxesi, agreed with the aforementioned, he clearly articulated concerns about major challenges faced with regard to implementation of PE and school sport, which he referred to as “the death of physical education and sport in a majority of our schools”. He maintained further that transformation must include the demand for access for all learners to PE and sport (SASCOC, 2017:online).

In keeping with the sentiments of the three former ministers of sport, PE has the capacity of supporting school sport development if it is acknowledged as the foundation for introducing, exposing and developing all children’s skills and abilities to participate in physical activities and, subsequently, school sport – which might, in turn, lead to effectual sport development (Green & Collins, 2008).

However, a debate on the health of the nation, equality in sport and the role of PE in schools cannot occur without identifying the challenges with regard to the implementation of national policies, plans and proposals. Furthermore, to balance the scales between mass participation in sport and success in the world sport arena, the benefits of each should be considered in order to determine which should be prioritised.

This paper forms part of an extensive study that centred on the need for re-skilling in-service teachers of PE in SA. A full discussion of the findings revealed in the comprehensive study lies beyond the scope of this paper, although it is against this background that several challenges pertaining to PE in schools became apparent, for example, implementation of policies, lack of resources and training of teachers. Furthermore, cognisance of tension between the realities and the ideal of becoming an active and winning nation was taken. Therefore, the focus is on highlighting the current challenges with regard to implementation of the National Sport and Recreation Plan (NSRP) and supporting documents through an exploration of relevant literature informing PE, school sport and sport development.

The overview of core documents links with current discourses regarding the significance of the delivery of quality PE and school sport to support active lifestyles throughout SA. Conversely, the adversities of currently disadvantaged communities and schools are a reality and should be considered when focusing on mass participation and 'Sport for All'. Whilst similar in purpose, mass participation is the concept most commonly used in said documents, and concentrates on opportunities in a wide range of sport and recreation, whereas 'Sport for All' emphasises physical activity as a basic human right. Recommendations are subsequently made to address the issues that are highlighted in core documents in order to deliver quality PE and school sport to all children in South African schools.

OVERVIEW OF CORE GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

A number of core documents, such as policies, plans and frameworks that address PE, school sport, mass participation and elite sport, transpired in South Africa. An exploration of the said core documents reveals the intentions and commitments made by relevant stakeholders and the shortcomings with regard to the implementation thereof. Initially, the commitment originated from a deliberation between DBE and Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA), in the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The third White Paper for Sport (the first White Paper was tabled in 1996, and was updated in 2001 and again in 2012) followed suit, in tandem with the NSRP. This was followed by appraisals, in the form of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report and the SA School Sports Championships Implementation Evaluation document that were released. The documents are reviewed according to the time of issue, from 2011 until 2016, in order to portray the sequence and development of strategies for PE, school sport and sport in SA, and simultaneously unravel the course of pursuing an 'active and winning nation'.

Memorandum of understanding between DBE and SRSA

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed by the ministers of Basic Education and Sport and Recreation in 2011, declaring their commitment to encourage mass participation and physical activities that are aimed at enriching the school curriculum (DBE & SRSA, 2011). Furthermore, a sustainable integrated plan to afford opportunities to take part in PE and organised sport through the creation of an accessible and implementable school sport support system was delivered (DBE & SRSA, 2011). In the MOU the significance of early exposure to

a variety of healthy physical activities to ensure optimal physical and motor development in children is emphasised. If it is integrated into the school day, all children, regardless of their ability, will have access to PE and sport, which potentially can have them leading healthier lifestyles (DBE & SRSA, 2011). In keeping with the abovementioned, the MOU set certain requirements for school sport:

- schools are expected to allocate time for school sport during or after formal school hours, in addition to a structured extramural sport programme that promotes mass participation;
- there are to be opportunities to participate in school sport leagues and competitions that include prospects for progress to district and advanced tournaments, on the premise that opportunities for participation shall be made available to all learners and not only a select elite.

Though the partnerships were established eight years ago, Burnett (2018:2) reports that it “still has to bear fruit for the implementation of meaningful and impactful quality PE in public schools”.

White Paper on Sport and Recreation

The intention of the White Paper on Sport and Recreation is to ensure that all South Africans have equitable access to sport and recreation in order to develop and excel at all levels of participation by focusing on transforming the delivery of sport and recreation (SRSA, 2012b). In the White Paper development is explained as “early identification and nurturing of talent on the entire spectrum of participation from local to national level” (SRSA, 2012b:24). Moreover, the White Paper states that PE and sport participation in schools must be a matter of priority in pursuit of a better future for South African children. The White Paper argues that PE and sport can play a role in motivation for lifelong participation, and claims that school sport has a valuable contribution to make to the development and transformation of sport. In addition, the necessity, value and benefits of PE are accentuated (SRSA, 2012b). Unfortunately, aforementioned enunciations and deliberations confirm the incessant marginalisation of PE and limited sport participation (Uys *et al.*, 2016; Burnett, 2018) .

National Sport and Recreation Plan

The National Sport and Recreation Plan (NSRP) focuses on access to sport, recreation and PE in every school in SA (SRSA, 2012a). The NSRP refers to “two internationally recognised pillars for any successful sports system”, namely increasing levels of participation in sport and recreation, and achieving success in high-profile sports (SRSA, 2012a:21). In building an active nation, the NSRP recognises that a solid participation base in the community could be where elite sport successes originate (SRSA, 2012a). Elite sport is organised and competitive, hence it is also associated with ‘a winning nation’. On the other hand, mass participation includes efforts to improve participation opportunities in a wide range of sport and recreation activities for as many people as possible, and is associated with an ‘active nation’ (SRSA, 2012a). The NSRP notes that limited or no investment into sports infrastructure, development, talent identification or competitive sport opportunities for the previously disadvantaged groups existed during the apartheid era. For this reason, the need for transformation to ensure equitable access to sporting opportunities was recognised, translating into the equitable delivery of school sport, recreation and competitive sport, emphasising an enabling environment (SRSA, 2012a).

Eminent Persons Group (EPG) transformation status report, 2014/15

The differences in terms of aims and needs between grassroots-level sport and high-performance sport are substantial and should be managed to diminish “an ever-increasing gap between the quality of programmes at the top and bottom ends of the sport development continuum”, according to the report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on transformation in sport (EPG, 2016:9). The report further explains that “the introduction of PE as part of the school curriculum did not, as was anticipated, improve the organisation of sport in the school environment. PE teachers are primarily responsible for teaching PE as a school subject.” (EPG, 2016:37) Consequently, it comes as no surprise that the two previous audit reports and the most recent report under discussion emphasised the urgency to fast-track the implementation of agreed interventions of the DBE and the Department of Sport and Recreation with regard to training and reskilling of PE teachers to facilitate and coordinate school sport (EPG, 2016).

The main topic of this report is school sport and how it is affected by uncoordinated and non-aligned national/provincial/local government and national and provincial sport federation school programmes and projects. According to the report (EPG, 2016:109), the number of participating schools remain low, despite efforts to ensure that all schools participate in school sport. In part, this can be ascribed to resource constraints. Especially in township schools, insufficient organised and structured opportunities contribute to the unsatisfactory participation levels. Another factor is the scarcity of facilities and underutilisation and coordination of existing facilities to such an extent that the report accentuates the magnitude of the problem in no uncertain terms: “no facilities, no organizers, no under-age teams and no competitions translate into inadequate access!” (EPG, 2016:109).

South African School Sports Championships implementation evaluation report

In the South African School Sports Championships implementation evaluation document it is reported that several objectives have been met, including the encouragement of mass participation, the presentation of school sport competitions and adherence to the requirements of inclusive participation (DBE & SRSA, 2016). However, there are a plethora of challenges listed in this document, including the current inconsistent implementation of the Schools Sport Strategy and the need for improved collaboration between SRSA and DBE (DBE & SRSA, 2016). In addition, the inaccessibility of the School Sport Manual influences the adherence, standardisation and uniformity among all relevant stakeholders. The discrepancies with regard to implementation across the provinces reflect in the school sport competitions at intra-school and up to district and national level. Tournaments are apparently a major problem, since not all role players adhere to the structure of the tournaments as set out by national federations and school sport code structures (DBE & SRSA, 2016).

Mbalula (2014) referred to school sport in his budget speech as the foundation from which to develop potential, therefore the school sport championships can be regarded as opportunities for identifying and nurturing talent to the elite performance level. However, if elite performance becomes the aim, mass participation might become less important. In fact, there seems to be a history of divergence between advocates of elite sport development and wider mass participation (Green & Houlihan, 2005) that causes conflict over which of these issues should be prioritised. In the same vein, Bloyce and Smith (2010) suggested that the inclination towards elite sports as opposed to the development of mass sports results in considerable tension in some countries. Correspondingly, the substandard achievements at the Beijing Olympics in 2008,

resulted in a shift from mass-based sport to the production of elite athletes by SA sport federations (Desai, 2010). In view of this, it is deemed appropriate to contrast the ideal with the reality.

IDEAL OF AN ACTIVE AND WINNING NATION

According to Robson *et al.* (2013), creating opportunities for all individuals to reach their sporting potential incorporates enabling the advancement of elite sport in addition to transformation that benefits individuals and communities through sport. In countries such as Canada, New Zealand, the UK and Singapore, investment in sport focuses on developing elite sporting success (Houlihan & Green, 2008). Accordingly, many sport federations in SA shifted their focus from the long-term development of mass-based sport to the nurturing of elite athletes, with the expectation of short-term results (Desai, 2010).

Interestingly, Murray (2009:1) paints a different picture which may explain the success of Jamaica on the athletic front: "The Jamaican education system has paved the way enabling the island's Olympic gold glory. Through its PE syllabus and its dedicated PE teachers we now reap the benefits." In agreement with this, the appeal of Amusa and Toriola (2012) that in Kenya the emphasis should rather be on curriculum development that embraces the physical education of all youth, instead of focusing on elite athletes only. De Bosscher *et al.* (2008) refer to one of the nine pillars leading to sporting success, namely the impact of a broad base of sport participation. A broad base may have a significant influence as it provides a supply of young talent, training opportunities and competing at various levels of ability (De Bosscher *et al.*, 2008). However, the supposition that individual capability inexorably leads to success is questioned by Darnell and Hayhurst (2011), since numerous variables and restraining circumstances can play a substantial role. Hence, it is suggested by Shilbury *et al.* (2008) that a broad base is not always a condition of elite sport success and not all participants are likely to be elite athletes (Bloyce and Smith, 2010).

Nevertheless, leading countries in sport seem to have successfully implemented a long-term approach to sport development, emphasising that a solid foundation and sustained efforts are paramount to have a healthy nation and produce champions (SRSA, 2012a). The Australian Institute of Sport promotes the Foundations, Talent, Elite and Mastery (FTEM) framework that integrates three key outcomes of sport participation: active lifestyle, sport participation and sport excellence (Cale & Harris, 2006). The Active After-school Communities (AASC) programme in Australia, that was created with the purpose of increasing sport participation among primary-school-aged children, signals a course change from using mass sports as a platform to produce elite athletes (Green & Collins, 2008).

Finland promotes sport programmes that aim to increase levels of mass participation as a means of ensuring that all citizens have equal access and are encouraged to participate in sporting activities. Green and Collins (2008) pointed out that Finland had been able to attain levels of sport participation across various age groups and between gender groups that few other countries had been able to achieve. Bailey (2009) supports the notion that contexts emphasising positive PE and sport experiences are typically characterised by enjoyment, diversity and the engagement of all. School sport would thus be more appealing if emphasis was placed on its educational potential rather than its competitive side (Bailey, 2009).

Balyi *et al.* (2013) agree that it is critical that children have experiences in a wide range of sports and activities from a young age and avoid early specialisation. It is important to note that the worldwide survey of Hardman and Marshall (2009) revealed that one of the factors for quality PE provision to be mindful of is that an inconsistent foundation may undermine the start of the pathway. Green and Collins (2008) and Dudley *et al.* (2011) agree that quality PE provides learners with the skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding needed for ongoing participation in physical activity and sport. Evidently, through positive sporting experiences, such as those in Australia and Finland, sport programmes build competence for the “creation of an active and winning nation” (SRSA, 2012a:33). In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one could suppose that the ideal of a healthy nation and achieving international sporting success is attainable. In the South African context, however, realities pose unique challenges that must be addressed in pursuing the ideal.

REALITY OF UNIQUE CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Cleophas (2014) argues that the majority of South African schoolchildren were denied purposeful opportunity to participate in PE under the apartheid regime and that the situation persists to the present day with regard to access to meaningful PE. This is confirmed by Du Toit and Van der Merwe (2013) who reported that prior to 1994, several schools were deficient with regard to well-organised PE programmes, facilities and equipment. Regrettably, not much has changed in terms of the state of PE in schools, apart from curriculum changes, policy changes and idealistic campaigns. For the most part, the intentions, goals and commitments declared in the core documents discussed are exposed as mere ‘promises’, potentials and plans, lacking actual implementation, mainly due to lack of human and physical resources. On the one hand, the policies and plans are reassuring, yet, on the other hand, a disparity exists with regard to practice and implementation.

According to the 2016 Healthy Active Kids (HAKSA) Report card, at least half of the children in SA do not meet the recommendations for participation in physical activity (Uys *et al.*, 2016), consequently, the grade assigned for overall physical activity levels is a C (41% – 60%). Less than half of children and youth are participating in organised sporting activities, reflecting a D classification (21% – 40%). Moreover, it is reported that South African primary school children have relatively low levels of in-school physical activity, and the grade assigned remains a D, the same as in 2014. Uys *et al.* (2016) postulates that this unequivocally indicates failure of the implementation of PE in SA schools. Undoubtedly, PE in South African schools endured turbulent times. Academic subjects have always taken precedence over PE, which has been regarded as a subject of low priority (Van Deventer, 2002). The diminution of budget and time allocation reinforced the prevailing perception that it is not a valued subject (Lindner, 2002). The lack of resources at many schools to deliver PE and sport further impacted negatively on the subject (Van Deventer, 2004).

In contrast to the findings of the HAKSA report, SRSA (2012a:21) has the vision of “an active and winning nation”. However, the majority of our nation struggle with poverty and poor health, according to Mbalula (2014). He suggests that sport and quality PE should be prioritised, laying the foundation for heightened sport participation and ensuring that the efforts are sustained (Mbalula, 2014). Contrary to this stated priority, the Sport for Life Long Term Athlete Development document (SASCOC, 2012) reports that the vast majority of children attending the 27 000 schools throughout the nine provinces lack access to regular, quality programmes of

sport and/or PE. This state of affairs brings the words of Nelson Mandela (1994:42) to mind: “It was not lack of ability that limited my people, but lack of opportunity.” Furthermore, this limitation has serious consequences for the development of physical literacy, skills development and the exploration of talents for these unfortunate learners (SASCOC, 2012). At present, the fact that PE is situated in the subject Life Skills (LS) in the foundation and intermediate phases and in Life Orientation (LO) in the senior and further education and training phases, as one of four interrelated study areas (DBE, 2011), contributes to its marginalisation.

In light of the importance of a solid foundation to build on, it is presumed that every school in SA is adequately resourced to deliver PE and school sport, as endorsed by the Revised International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (UNESCO, 2015). This charter states that “every human being has a fundamental right to physical education, physical activity and sport” (UNESCO, 2015:online). Simultaneously, it is emphasised that resources for these purposes must be allocated discerningly to avoid exclusion being experienced by vulnerable or marginalised groups.

This is, however, not the reality in South Africa. It is obvious that the lack of physical and human resources contributes to marginalisation. Although PE may have the potential to play a significant role when it provides the only opportunity to engage with sport or physical activities, some children are deprived of opportunities to participate in particular sports or extramural programmes, since the barriers they have to overcome, for example transport and safety issues, are too challenging (Trost & van der Mars, 2009; Green, 2012). The focus should be on inclusivity and addressing the inequalities that may exist in terms of opportunities for participation, for every child to reap the benefits of PE and sport.

The vision and mission of The Association for International Sport for All (TAFISA) are all-encompassing: “to achieve an active world by globally promoting and facilitating access for every person to Sport for All and physical activity” (TAFISA, 2011:online). More than two decades ago, Roberts (1996) noted that PE teachers had confidence in the ‘Sport for All’ approach, because they believed that a variety of activities and sports would provide sufficient experience to discover competency and derive enjoyment, leading to extended participation after leaving school. Likewise, TAFISA (2011) considers access to sport for all and physical activity as a basic human right, so programmes and events should be open for participation by all as it can contribute to individual, community and general quality of life.

It is therefore vital that the basic principles should receive attention in order to progress to the ensuing stages resulting in elite performance. However, Burnett (2016:18) contends that “socio-political constructs have the facade of political agency, but fail to deliver equitable opportunities for all”. Regrettably, Van Deventer (2012) concurs that political rhetoric is nothing new and, as a result, plans do not materialise. In order to advance, plans and promises should be put into action, *as action speaks louder than words* in policies or documents. The question arises whether it is possible to narrow the gap between the ideal and the reality to move forward in SA and eradicate inequalities that still exist.

NARROWING THE GAP BETWEEN IDEAL AND REALITY

It is noteworthy that all the above-mentioned core documents emphasise that accessibility is a priority. Unfortunately, the reality is bleak, as the reports under discussion accentuate an enabling environment on the one hand, such as in the NSRP and the White Paper, and on the other hand lament the shortfalls in terms of resources, as in the EPG report and the school sports report. Mbalula (2014) raises a critical point by reiterating that the lack of facilities will remain an obstacle for delivering sport in schools and sustaining participation levels. The reason for this is that, under the National Norms and Standards for building of new schools, sport and recreation facilities must be constructed as the school is built, but this has been ignored repeatedly (Mbalula, 2014).

SA's previous minister of sport and recreation (Nxesi) contended that there was an ever-increasing gap between private former Model C schools and rural and township schools. He reiterated that schools attended by the majority of learners were often neglected and advocated for the reinstatement of PE in the curriculum with dedicated, qualified teachers (Gallan, 2017). The minister's views were in alignment with the strategies planned in the NSRP (SRSA, 2012a) and the commitments made in the MOU (DBE & SRSA, 2011) to ensure that PE is a stand-alone subject in the school curriculum, delivered by qualified educators, and that re-skilling/up-skilling of educators to deliver PE takes place and schools are provided with the necessary resources.

Rink *et al.* (2010) contend that the purpose of a good PE programme is to educate students for a physically active lifestyle, as well as satisfy their daily need for physical activity. Similarly, as indicated in the White Paper, the NSRP restates that the impetus for life-long participation emanates from sport and physical education at schools, consequently regarded as the "central starting point for sport development in this country" (SRSA, 2012a:23). Lengthening the time frame of youngsters' involvement in sport appears to be related to the establishment of wide sporting repertoires (Green, 2012). According to Birchwood *et al.* (2008), continuous participation in sport throughout adulthood usually derives from being introduced and becoming committed in childhood. They further advise that to maximise participation among children and minimise drop-out in the future, seems to be the best way to increase continuing sport participation (Birchwood *et al.*, 2008).

Barnett *et al.* (2013) suggest that the importance of developing FMS proficiency during childhood and its importance as a foundation for a physically active life is evident and, thus, recommend that FMS development be emphasised in all relevant policy documents (Barnett *et al.*, 2013). In teaching children FMS they are provided with the foundation they need for a physically active lifestyle (Barnett *et al.*, 2013). The National Sport and Recreation Plan states that the basis underpinning mass sport participation and high performance consists of the ABCs of athleticism (agility, balance, coordination) and the ABCs of athletics (run, jump, throw) (SRSA, 2012a). Cale and Harris (2013:435) state emphatically that "every child of every size matters" and can reap the benefits from "regular engagement in physical education and physical activity". Hence, schools are instrumental in addressing health in the broader sense and obesity specifically.

Apart from the abovementioned health benefits, PE is also believed to be a "learning gateway for the skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary for lifelong physical activity and sport", according to the Revised International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (UNESCO, 2015:online). Contrasting views exist with regard to the claims made for

PE. For instance, MacNamara *et al.* (2011) suggest that regular curricular PE do not guarantee lifelong involvement in sport or physical activity, a fact which can be attributed partially to the poor quality of the PE experience. This highlights the importance of an enabling environment and quality delivery. Green (2012) concurs that PE can provide opportunities for all to participate; influence behaviour and attitudes and instil knowledge regarding the value of PE to make healthier choices with regard to physical activity and future sport participation.

Even with the overwhelming evidence of the benefits of PE and the pronounced need for quality PE, there are no dedicated, qualified PE teachers in the system, which implies that the LS and LO teacher is accountable for the demands of a multi-faceted subject with diverse areas, including PE – almost like being a “jack of all trades and a master of none” (Stroebel *et al.*, 2017:166). Additionally, the new generation of teachers expect remuneration for involvement in school sport, whereas previously it was inevitably accepted as part of teaching responsibilities (EPG, 2016). Finally, the key challenge remains inequalities with regard to resources at schools, in particular physical resources (adequate facilities and space) and human resources (qualified teachers), which, as expected, have a negative impact on the delivery of quality PE.

In order to narrow the gap between the ideal and reality, the starting point should be to assist schools in implementing and sustaining PE programmes. This necessitates trained, competent educators that effectively facilitate opportunities to enhance the physical education experience of children to lay the firm foundation for leading active and healthy lifestyles (NASPE, 2007; SASCOC, 2012; SRSA, 2012a; Balyi *et al.*, 2013; UNESCO, 2015). The challenge would be to empower the PE teachers to make an impact with minimum physical infrastructure. Consequently, to have specialist inventive PE teachers in allotted PE classes would be the foremost triumph in the fight for quality PE in all schools. The DBE needs to take responsibility for curriculum implementation with regard to PE, curriculum enrichment programmes in schools inclusive of mass participation in sport and recreation, intra-/interschool leagues and teacher development (DBE & SRSA, 2016).

Future research should explore the prospect of changing the profile of LS and LO teachers (ideally the PE teacher) to qualify as sport coaches with a professional coaching certification, in line with SASCOC and SRSA’s Coaching Framework (SASCOC, 2017). SASCOC is working towards ensuring that the Coaching Association of South Africa (CASA) is launched to direct the execution of SASCOC regulations and sport legislation (SASCOC, 2017). For the collaboration between stakeholders, in particular the DBE, the Department of Health, SASCOC and SRSA, including clubs, provincial and national sport federations, to align and integrate their programmes is essential (SASCOC, 2012). As expressed in the MOU signed in 2011 (DBE & SRSA, 2011), SRSA should take responsibility from inter-school to national level for school sport competitions.

Assistance with tournaments, coordination of sport programmes and capacity building lies with national federations, whereas the DBE should be held accountable for the funding of school sport competitions and provision of adequate sport facilities and equipment from intra-school level to circuit level (DBE & SRSA, 2016). Burnett (2016:23) advises that the social policies of SRSA and the DBE should be adapted to “ensure equal participation opportunities for all through quality, value-based PE programmes”. The alignment and integration of programmes delivered by the mentioned stakeholders have the potential to generate opportunities for children in sport, as well as “place more South Africans on the podium and support the health and wellness of the nation” (SASCOC, 2012:67).

CONCLUSION

The core government documents under discussion all point to the prioritisation of accessible physical and human resources. The barriers disadvantaged communities and schools face with regard to the lack of physical and human resources at schools should not be disregarded, as it has a direct influence on opportunities for mass participation and ‘Sport for All’. By implication, this also influences elite sport excellence, thus the building of a winning nation. It is clear that PE, school sport and ‘Sport for All’ have the potential to contribute positively towards the endeavour to become an active nation, provided that the objectives stated in above mentioned documents are implemented.

Although numerous plans, policies and frameworks have been proposed, it might have been too ambitious, since the implementation thereof is non-existent or minimal. The major stumbling blocks are the current priority or lack of priority allocated to PE in schools, as well as the lack of adequate infrastructures and PE teachers. Therefore, it is recommended that the said implementation will be best addressed by focusing the actions to be taken on school level. In this way, Vision 2030 of the NSRP (SRSA, 2012a) strives towards restoring and regenerating the provision of sport and recreation to meet the needs of sports people at all levels of participation, might be within reach. Whilst it is still uncertain whether an active nation *and* a winning nation can be achieved, the authors believe that an *active, winning nation* is certainly possible. The children of today have the potential to become the ‘active nation’ of tomorrow – and that, in itself (from our perspective), constitutes a ‘winning nation’.

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