



Quality Physical Education Policies and Practice

The Global State of Play

*With the majority of countries around the world investing less than 2% of their education budgets into physical education, the well-being of our future generations is at risk. Quality physical education (QPE) can deliver broad physical, social, emotional, and academic benefits. However, QPE is often under-prioritized and poorly implemented, suffering from deficiencies in funding, inclusivity, allocated time, and well-trained staff. UNESCO's sport flagship, *Fit for Life*, aims to address this by working with governments to develop quality PE policies and building the capacities of teachers and coaches to deliver inclusive lessons as part of a well-rounded curricula. UNESCO's work in QPE is directly informed by data collected via a unique global survey, gathering insights on PE policy and provision. Key data highlights from the most recent survey demonstrate the urgent need to increase the status of this subject in our schools. This requires collective action to establish and implement standards, promote knowledge-sharing, and foster inclusive participation for all youth.*

UNESCO's QPE Survey and Indicators: closing the policy-practice gap

To enhance QPE policy and practice globally across all age ranges, UNESCO developed [Quality Physical Education Guidelines](#) in 2015. UNESCO has undertaken four editions of the QPE Survey and Indicators to measure the state of physical education worldwide, addressing information gaps on the development of PE policy, the inclusivity of and time allocated to PE in school curricula, and the training of specialist practitioners. The survey is unique at the international level and provides an opportunity to support UNESCO Member States to measure, evaluate and enhance QPE policy and provision accordingly.

The most recent, [2021-2022 edition of the survey](#) collected data from 117 countries at the ministerial level and from 2,088 physical education (PE) teachers at the school level. Data was collected in partnership with the International Federation of Physical Education and Sport (FIEPS) and supported by WHO and a QPE Steering Committee of over 20 experts in sport, PE, and development. A supplementary survey collected information from 450 PE teachers from 56 countries to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on PE practice and delivery, as well as on teacher and student wellbeing.

"Participating in the Quality Physical Education Policy Project gave Zambia a strategic opportunity to strengthen and systematize cooperation between national sport, education and health ministries. This was the first time these inter-connections between sport, education and health policies have featured explicitly in a national policy document."

—**Bessie Malilwe Chelemu**, Former Director of Sports, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Zambia

Data collected in the 2021-2022 survey has been analyzed in partnership with Loughborough University, UK. Findings from this analysis are compiled in "The Global State of Play - Report and Recommendations on Quality Physical Education" This report and its insights are designed to encourage and support decision-makers in developing and implementing more inclusive QPE policies and practices. The trends identified in this report make clear the need for systemic change: the inadequate attention given to high-quality physical education within our schools, coupled with inadequate investment and a lack of coordinated and professional implementation, significantly weakens its overall effectiveness.



Key findings

Lack of Funding

57% of countries spend less than 2% of their education budget on physical education

Lack of Inclusivity

1 in 4 disabled students have no access to PE
Only 54.5% of countries report having policies or strategies related to gender equality in terms of the amount of physical education girls and boys receive

Lack of Time

Only 9.1% of upper secondary schools, 16.3% of lower secondary and 42.7% of primary schools meet minimum criteria*

Lack of Training

Only 43% of surveyed primary school PE teachers have specialization in the subject

**Minimum criteria of 120 minutes of PE per week for primary schools; 180 minutes for secondary schools.*

Recommendations for action

By enhancing the quality of physical education worldwide, we can foster a generation of healthy, resilient, and socially responsible citizens. This can become a reality for all students if decision-makers come together to prioritize well-informed policies on QPE and improve teaching practices in our schools.

Invest in & Standardize Policies

- **Consult UNESCO's QPE Policy Guidelines**, and related resources, to ensure national policies and frameworks are inclusive, high-quality and based on evidence
- **Establish and enforce minimum requirements** for key aspects of physical education practice
- **Standardize curriculum development**, establishing a framework for PE teacher training
- **Invest in professional development** by allocating sufficient resources to develop and implement continuing professional development programs for PE teachers

Collaborate

- **Assemble inter-ministerial task forces** to facilitate coordination in promoting QPE
- **Establish a framework for collective action** that involves policy-makers, educators, practitioners, and students

Include

- **Adopt a holistic perspective of PE**, recognizing the physical, social, and emotional benefits of QPE and its potential in whole-school approaches
- **Ensure the equitable inclusion of marginalized individuals**, increasing participation rates of girls, students with disabilities, and other underrepresented students
- **Engage parents, communities, and stakeholders** through awareness campaigns, highlighting the importance of QPE and its impact on students' development

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