



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

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Education through sport

Sports and physical education provide the foundations necessary for the development and well-being of younger people in society and the educational system.

The general public sees the sports phenomenon from a preconceived angle of "games", "competitions", "clash of teams" and/or "adversaries", "doping", "hooliganism", "victory at any price", and "commercialization". While sport is gaining in importance in society and social development, it is also considered a social and cultural phenomenon that goes beyond sports facilities, stadiums and other areas where it is practiced. In fact, the spectacular development of sport through the media and its popularity, able to attract massive numbers of fans with diversified interests, lead inevitably to greater consideration of its educational role, to convey messages and contribute to the communication of UNESCO's ideals.



Children practising martial arts in Japan.

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It is from this perspective that the Organization promotes physical education and sports, through its International Charter adopted in 1978 by the 20th session of the General Conference. It establishes the crucial role the educational system can play in the growth and cognitive and physical development of children and young people, as well as adults, throughout their lives. Education is an essential key to achieving development and progress. In such a context, physical education and sports are considered an integral part of quality education within the framework of Education for All (EFA). Physical education and sports do indeed contribute to developing "generic" skills,

the cognitive and physical potential of a child, and provide him with the foundations necessary for complete development and well-being. Educational systems constitute the basic foundations for building physical and mental well-being, as expressed in the phrase "Mens sana in corpore sano", a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Civic foundations

Another educational aspect, as important as physical and mental well-being, is related to the inherent values that sports transmit:

- . respect for rules
- . rejection of cheating, meaning to seek victory at any price
- . respect of the winner for the loser, as well as the loser's acceptance that the winner is the best at that moment

These civic and democratic foundations forge the values for living together in diversity and respecting differences. Sports stir up passion and excess, unfortunately highlighted by the media and the news, which tend to obscure the essential aspect: an athletic encounter allowing us to surpass ourselves and do our best in peak condition. High-level sports activity has engendered larger-than-life symbols that externalize commonly-held values: commercialization and the escalation of financial stakes that lead to cheating and scandals may remain marginal

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UNESCO Champions for Sport

In late 2005, five world-class athletes were appointed UNESCO champions for sport. These sports personalities communicate the Organization's message: to promote the values of physical education and sports to build a better future for younger generations.

Edson Arantes Do Nascimento Pelé (1994), triple football world champion, campaigns against adolescent drug use and promotes sports as a means of social expression.

Michael Schumacher (2002), seven times Formula One world champion, has made financial contributions to projects in Senegal, Sarajevo and Peru. He has chosen to help young people to give them an opportunity for a better future.

David Douillet (2002), twice Olympic judo champion (1996 and 2000), supports several projects of UNESCO's Education Sector, including the "Hope and Solidarity through Ball Games" programme in Niger that mixes educational, cultural and sport activities.

Serhiy Bubka (2003), the "vaulting tsar", was designated Champion for "his humanitarian activities in favour of young people, his action to enable disadvantaged children to benefit from physical education, and his dedication to the Organization's ideals".

Viatcheslav Fetisov (2004), ice hockey champion, promotes sport among young people in difficult conditions and advocates making sport a more integral part of education and training.

occurrences but they are nonetheless serious and troubling.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, UNESCO contributes to promoting and developing physical education and sports from the angle of education. This makes it possible to emphasize an approach that promotes the values attached to its ideals of equity, ethics and peace.

UNESCO strives to improve the quality of physical education and sports notably through its follow-up of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (2005) and MINEPS (International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for Physical Education and Sport).

Its action concerns mainly the special attention that the educational system must devote to quality training for PES teachers, and reinforcing capacity-building of training facilities for PES teachers. This need implies recognizing the necessity of incorporating the "universitization" process for such teacher training facilities in a large number of Member States, particularly the developing ones. In the same way, teaching PES at the basic education level helps to meet the requirements of

an Education for All that integrates teaching cognitive and physical values to children.

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