School Sport in Australia: Complexities & tensions in policy and practice

Data availability
- Limited
- Outside of schools

Sport is a central feature in schools
- Coaches are integral – within and outside of school workers
- Tensions with HPE regarding time

Sport in school snapshot – early primary school
- 5-14yr olds engaged in organised physical activity twice per week
- 'Infrequent' participation is high ~71%
- 35% participate at least three times per week
- 6% are engaged in organised activities seven or more times per week
- Participation in organised physical activity peaks early

Sport in school snapshot – late primary school
- Emphasis on 'physical literacy' and 'fundamental movement skills'
- Schools as a basis to overcome elements of disadvantage?

Sport in school snapshot – secondary school
- Further decline in participation rates
- Factors beyond physical competence are important
Policy initiatives – Federal Government

- Multiple, comprehensive policy changes
- Largely unsuccessful

Policy initiatives are a key site

Policy initiatives – Federal Government
- Launched in 2015
- Aimed to increase children’s participation and lifelong interest in organised sport

Policy initiatives
- $100 million initiative
- Targeting 70% of Australia’s children
- Involves registration process and varied delivery

Policy initiatives – Federal Government
- Schools are a key site
Policy initiatives – Federal Government

- Benefits related to addressing the disconnect
- Funding for pilots is valued

Policy initiatives – Federal Government

- Problems for NSOs already engaged with schools
- Tensions regarding costs

Policy initiatives – Federal Government

- Use of ‘unqualified’ coaches
- Complexities in using commercial providers

Policy initiatives – Federal Government

- Limited evidence of NSOs actively working to facilitate transition to community sport
- Limited promotion of quality of students’ experience

Policy initiatives – Federal Government

- Unintentional and problematic displacement of H/PE class time

Summary

- Overall limited data available
- Large-scale policy initiatives are a prominent feature in Australia
- Sporting Schools is the current initiative at work in the school-sport interface
- There are largely unintended consequences of policy enactment that are potentially problematic
Useful literature


Anna Hogan & Michalis Stylianou (2016): School-based sports development and the role of NSOs as 'boundary spanners': benefits, disbenefits and unintended consequences of the Sporting Schools policy initiative, Sport, Education and Society; DOI:10.1080/13573322.2016.1184638


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