



## **PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is just some six years to 2030 which is the terminal date for full actualization of the developmental initiative following its declaration in 2015. The aim of this study therefore, was to expose the benefits of Physical and Health Education as a tool for achieving this developmental goal initiative in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the review aimed at exploring the cardinal goals of the academic discipline on SDGs 3, 5 and 17 which bothers on general improvement of people's general health and wellness as well as disease prevention. From the review Physical and Health Education activities has as its cardinal objective compulsory participation by all citizens for overall physical, social, mental and emotional development for possible adjustment of lifestyle behaviours irrespective of age, nature of work, gender, and state of health. Beyond this, the nurturing of positive values and attitudes in Physical and Health Education provide a good foundation for students' lifelong and life-wide learning through knowledge, attitude and practices of health habits. The study subsequently concluded that the observed goals and objectives of Physical and Health Education if effectively implemented in schools as well as in the society at large could be a veritable tool for achieving sustainable developmental goals in Enugu State, Nigeria. The contributions made in this paper allows Health and Physical Education teachers including physical therapists to immediately establish links between the two subject lines in order raise positive awareness in students hence contributing to the attainment of the goal agenda prior to 2030 deadline. Government on their part should immediately provide physical activity resources in schools and recreational arenas in Enugu State to enable the students and general populations meaningfully engage in exercise.*

**Key Words:** Education, Physical education, Health Education, Physical and Health Education, Sustainable Developmental Goals.

### **Introduction**

Education is the process of developing the body physically, morally and mentally. To be educated means to be cognitively developed in handling mental activities; affectively matured in attitudes and skilfully developed in psychomotor domain. Psychomotor domain is an aspect of education that aims to develop students' physical competence and healthy lifestyle. This aspects involves health education. Health education is an aspect of education that can help man acquire functional health knowledge, and strengthens attitudes, beliefs, and practice skills needed to adopt and maintain healthy behaviours. This thought is in consonance with Osokoya (2019) who stated that education helps individual to improve physical and health balance in the world. From the above analysis, one can deduce that physical and health education is a tool for acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary to help the



development of the body, mind and spirit in order to promote health and wellness. All the above enumeration points to the fact that education is a key driver for sustainable development (UNESCO 2018).

Thus, the entire global community has been determined to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality; to protect the planet so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations; to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives; to foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies through a global partnership for sustainable development (United Nations General Assembly 2015). Education plays fundamental roles in facing these challenges and transforming our world. In other words, inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all are indispensable elements for achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also known as Global Goals were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. This was articulated under 17 goals namely no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life on land, peace, justice and strong institution and partnerships for the goals (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). From the outlined SDGs Goals Physical and Health Education could be a veritable tool in achieving some of the highlighted specific goals of SDGs.

Physical and Health Education are learning processes that focuses on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that are imperative for students to embrace a lifestyle of health and fitness. They're recognized as an integral part of general education which aims at the development of physical, emotional, mental and social aspects of an individual through the medium of carefully selected activities with a view to actualizing these outcomes. Specifically, Health Education encompasses environmental health, physical health, social health, emotional health, intellectual health, and spiritual health, as well as sexual and reproductive health education. Physical and Health Education therefore, have as its main focus on the general well-being through fitness enhancement as well as prevention of diseases. From the 17 goal agenda of SDGs, Physical and Health Education has a role to play in the areas of SDGs 3, 5 and 12 respectively. Achieving the SDGs goals in Enugu State requires that all hands should be on deck part of it is exploring the roles Physical and Health Education could play in that regard. This current paper therefore, sought to remedy these problems by exposing the benefits of Physical and Health Education as a tool for achieving sustainable developmental goals in Enugu State, Nigeria. Three steps were used to ex-ray Physical and Health Education as a tool for achieving SDGs in Enugu State namely conceptual perspectives, benefits of Physical and Health



Education as tools for achieving sustainable developmental goals in Enugu State, Nigeria, and finally evaluation and conclusion

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**Education:** This is the simple process of learning and knowing. It is not restricted to the schools only. Education starts from the mother's lap

**Physical Education:** This is a learning process that focuses on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that are imperative for students to embrace a lifestyle of health and fitness

**Health Education:** This is a profession of educating people about health. Areas within this profession encompass environmental health, physical health, social health, emotional health, intellectual health, and spiritual health, as well as sexual and reproductive health education

**Physical and Health Education:** This is the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary to help the development of the body, mind and spirit in other to promote health and wellness.

**Sustainable Developmental Goals:** This is the education goals which are indivisible and encompass economic, social and environmental dimensions. SDG4 focuses on education and aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

### **Physical Education as a Tool for Achieving Sustainable Developmental Goals in Enugu State, Nigeria**

It is important to signal our concern to the contribution of physical education to the SDGs which is a universal call to action that aims to create an equal and inclusive community with improved health by 2030. This ambitious plan consists of 17 goals with their corresponding 169 specific targets. After the establishment of the SDGs, researchers in the field of education, particularly Physical Education and sporting activities, conducted several studies to ascertain the contribution of physical education and sports in the context of SDGs and revealed that the majority of the SDGs can be achieved through the involvement of school-aged children and adolescents in quality physical education. There is considerable evidence indicating that physical education has a potential to create a favourable context which allows the promotion of different aspects associated with the development of the current SDGs, such as coeducation, entrepreneurship, cooperation, and respect (Fröberg & Lundvall, 2021; Baena-Morales, et al. 2022 & Baena-Morales & González-Víllora, 2022).

The international conference of ministers and senior officials responsible for physical education (MINEPS VI), UNESCO (2017) established 9/17 and 36/169 goals and associated targets whereby sports-based approaches could make a significant



contribution. To support the view of MINEPS VI, the study undertaken by Baena-Morales and González-Víllora (2022), explained the way in which 10/17 SDGs equivalent to 58.8% and 24/169 targets; that is, 40.5% could be achieved through physical and health education/ sporting activities. Of little difference, Baena-Morales et. al. (2022), made great strides in analysing the role of Physical and Health Education/ sporting activities to SDGs in three major dimensions, namely social, environmental, and economical dimensions, commented that SDGs should not be given much consideration as a reference, since they are too generic, but the specific targets make up SDGs.

Though some research studies raise a concern that the contribution of Physical and Health Education/ sporting activities to the SDGs is slightly explored, according to Fröberg and Lundvall (2021) and Baena-Morales, et al. (2022), explored the role of physical education, sports, or exercises in general, Dai and Menhas (2020), focused their attention to the contribution of education/ sporting activities in relation to some selected SDGs, with particular aspects such as health and well-being partnership as explored by Lynch (2016), it is clear that physical education, sports, or exercises is a transcendental subject toward the achievement of SDGs, provided that it is given a top priority in schools worldwide. It is important to note that physical education, sports, or exercises teachers should plan their lessons by linking the lesson instructional objectives with those of SDGs.

In Enugu State, the State government has been able to trained 793 residents on skill acquisition programme smiling home with a seed money of 150 thousand naira each. Regular physical activity can help children and adolescents improve cardio-respiratory fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing health conditions such as heart disease among students. The above input by the Governor is in line with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), which is a UNESCO supported global body controlling standards in Physical Education. In the guidelines as provided, the extant roles that Physical can play in the attainment of SDGs are highlighted as follows:

1. Skill development – Develops motor skills that allow for safe, successful, and satisfying participation in physical activities.
2. Regular, healthful physical activity – Provides a wide range of developmentally appropriate activities for all children and youth. It encourages young people to choose to be physically active and aware of the benefits.
3. Improved physical fitness – Improves the health-related components of physical fitness (cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition).
4. Support of other subject areas – Reinforces knowledge learned in/across the curriculum and serves as a laboratory for application of content in science, mathematics, and social studies, communication skills, and literacy. Researchers have shown that one of the best ways children learn effectively is through play.



Physical education provides the platform for effective teaching of many of these other subjects

5. Self-discipline – Facilitates development of responsibility for personal health, safety, and fitness.
6. Improved judgment – Influences moral development and students assume leadership roles, co-operate with others, and accept responsibility for their own behaviour.
7. Stress reduction – Physical activity becomes an outlet for releasing tension and anxiety and facilitates emotional stability and resilience.
8. Strengthened peer relations – Physical education is a major force in helping children and youth socialize with others successfully and provides opportunities to learn positive social skills.
9. Improved self-confidence and self-esteem – Physical Education instils a stronger sense of self-worth based on their mastery of skills and concepts of physical activity. Children become more confident, assertive, independent, and self-controlled.
10. Goal setting – Gives children and youth the opportunity to set and strive for personal, achievable goals.

In spite of its known value, Physical Education routinely falls to the bottom of the priority list of governments and schools systems especially in the developing world. In Enugu state today, Physical Education has lost its pride of place as a compulsory subject in our primary and junior secondary schools. Even though it is still recognized on the time table, now, its periods are mostly used for relaxation or as an adjunct period for other subjects. This leaves much to be desired in the attempt to benefit from the opportunities provided by this great subject in schools by the children. Most schools, especially in the urban, are making frantic efforts to return Physical Education to their elementary schools and make it the foundation and arrow head for their children to live a healthy active lifestyle. This may be a reminder to reawaken all and sundry to enrol in the pursuit of SDGs in Enugu State. Therefore, this study is to reawaken all from their slumber so as to remind us of the benefits of SDGs. These will help to make sure that the message of making physical education a vital part of the children education cannot be overemphasized, though Enugu state indeed has a long way to go in this regards. For sustainable development goals to be achieved in 2030 as planned there is the need to make physical education an integral part of child development and adult normal living.

### **Health Education as a Tool for Achieving Sustainable Developmental Goals in Enugu State, Nigeria**

Health Education is an important school subject due to the numerous roles it plays in the academics and lives of learners. Chakma (2020), lists the importance of Health Education as follows:



- a) Health Education provides information to the students and the teachers about the functions of the body the rule of health and hygiene and precautionary measures for keeping off diseases.
- b) It helps in discovering physical defects of children and discovering various types of abnormalities of children.
- c) Health Education develops health habits like need of fresh air, hygienic feeding and various classroom habits.
- d) It provides knowledge regarding good health habits.
- e) It provides knowledge regarding prevention and control of various diseases.
- f) It develops better human relation between school, home and community.
- g) Health Education provides first aid training essential for everyone a emergency may come to any one and at any time.

In Enugu State, Nigeria, sustainable development goal number 3 (SDG3) aspires to ensure health and wellbeing for all, including a bold commitment to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable diseases by 2030. It also aims to achieve universal health coverage and provide access to safe and effective medicines and vaccines for all. This third SDG has a central place that is to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages. Almost all of the other 16 goals are related to health or their achievement will contribute to health indirectly. This is evidenced by the SDG3 indicators by target as enunciated by WHO (2015).

Indicator 3.1.1: maternal mortality ratio

Indicator 3. 1.2: proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

- a) 3.1 by 2030, end preventable deaths of new born and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births.

Indicator 3.2.1: Under-five mortality rate

Indicator 3.2.2: Neonatal mortality rate

3.3. By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.

- a) Indicator 3.3.1: Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population by sex, age and key populations.
- b) Indicator 3.3.2: Tuberculosis incidence per, 1,000 population
- c) Indicator 3.3.3: Malaria incidence per 1,000 population
- d) Indicator 3.3.4: Hepatitis B incidence Per 1,000 population
- e) Indicator 3.3.5: Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases

3.4. By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and wellbeing.





a) Indicator 3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease

b) Indicator 3.4.2: suicide mortality rate

3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

a) Indicator 3.5.1: Coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders

b) Indicator 3.5.2: Harmful use of alcohol defined according to the national context as alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol).

3.6 By 2030, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents

a) Indicator 3.6.1: Death rate due to road traffic injuries

3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programs.

a) Indicator 3.7.1: proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods

b) Indicator 3.7.2: Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years: aged 15-19 yearly) per 1,000 women in that age group

3.8. Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all

a) Indicator

3.8.1: coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access among the general and the most disadvantaged population)

b) Indicator

3.8.2: Number of people covered by health insurance or a public health system per 1,000 population

3.9. By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination

a) Indicator

3.9.1: Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution



b) Indicator

3.9.2: Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe water, sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) services)

c) Indicator

3.9.3: Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning

3.a. Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization framework convention on tobacco control in all countries, as appropriate Indicator 3.a.1: Age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older

3.b. Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all.

a) Indicator 3.b.1: Proportion of the population with access to affordable medicines and vaccines on a sustainable basis

b) Indicator 3.b.2: Total net official development assistance to the medical research and basic health sectors

3.c. Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing states.

a) Indicator 3.c.1: Health worker density and distribution

3.d. Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks

a) Indicator

3.d.1: International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness.

Health Education helps individuals to be empowered and communities to live healthier by improving the physical, mental, emotional and social health through increasing their knowledge and influencing their attitudes on caring for their well-being. Hence, to increase the national awareness on major public health issues and to promote a better understanding of the role of health education, yearly every third (3rd) week of October is observed as Health Education Week. Hence, the Enugu State government through his Commissioner for health believes that Health education is





achievable in Enugu State Nigeria through sustainable development Goals. This is done when they are able to motivate people to improve and maintain their health. The importance of health education impacts many areas of wellness within a community, including; chronic disease awareness and prevention, maternal and infant health promotion, tobacco use and substance abuse prevention, injury and violence prevention, mental illness among students as a result of substance abuse, yahoo yahoo and yahoo plus. If well integrated among the students, all these anomalies will become history.

### **Evaluation**

From the critically reviewed literature, it has been established that physical and health education is a tool used for achieving sustainable developmental goals in Enugu State, Nigeria. The reviews pointed out the benefits of Physical and Health education as a tool for achieving sustainable developmental goals in Enugu State, Nigeria. This was to ensure that the findings are in harmony with both local and global needs.

### **Conclusion**

In the light of the above, the benefits of physical and health education in achieving the sustainable development goals cannot be overemphasized as its highly effective and strongly connected in actualizing the seventeen goals, therefore, continued participation in physical and health education should be an aspiration for all regardless of age, colour and race

### **Recommendations**

- i. Schools should emphasize more on quality programmes that improve mental alertness, academic performance, readiness and learning enthusiasm for child development.
- ii Schools, governments and stakeholders should engage in programme that promote sound mind through a sound/ fit body using physical education and exercise.
- iii. There should be adequate provisions of Physical and Health Education resources and personnel in schools to enable the programme facilitators and learners participate and enjoy every aspect of the programme.



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