

PART I *Education Through Sport as a learning approach*

»» *Benefits of practicing ETS*

This section explains the benefits of using sport, mainly in adult education contexts. The potential effects of ETS practice are defined and further explanation of the added value, brought by ETS to adult education sector is presented.

The United Nations states that, *“By its very nature sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship. Sport brings individuals and communities together, highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural or ethnic divides. Sport provides a forum to learn skills such as discipline, confidence, and leadership and teaches core principles such as tolerance, cooperation, and respect. Sport teaches the value of effort and how to manage victory as well as defeat. When these positive aspects of sport are emphasized, sport becomes a powerful vehicle through which the United Nations can work towards achieving its goals”*⁴

Many non-formal educational practitioners consider sport a powerful learning tool and know that ETS can bring strong added value to the sport sector within adult education and non-formal learning contexts. Sport practice may have a structural impact on education and socialisation. It is natural, therefore that the main actors involved in ETS practice analyse sport beyond its borders, to build projects where sport becomes a tool for social transformation. To better understand the context of ETS and its potential effects, it is important to see both sport and educational sectors separately at first, to be able to make the link and combine them later on.

Consider first the sport component. It is needed to refer to many pieces of research which have already been done. It is proven that sport and physical exercise have a variety of positive effects on health. They help people to stay physically fit, to reduce body fat, to control weight, to increase stamina, to strengthen bones and improve balance and flexibility. Engaging in regular physical activity reduces coronary mortality. It also reduces the likelihood of Type 2 Diabetes and Alzheimer’s disease in older age. Sport and physical exercises also help to prevent other chronic conditions including cardiovascular disease, cancer, hypertension and osteoporosis. Regular physical activity is also helpful when addressing a number of psychological disorders. Studies have shown that moderate intensity exercise can have a positive influence on depression, anxiety, self-worth, self-esteem and body image. Physical activity reduces stress, improves mood and helps in general wellbeing.

On the other hand, adult education focuses on the learning needs of every learner, allowing adult learners to identify their own needs and to propose solutions. The adult educational approach sees learners as a resource and respects their values and contributions. Learners share experiences to be able to learn from each other. The approach combines relevant activities adapted to the needs of the learners and aimed at achieving practical outcomes.

Within their manual, The Peace Corps provide a very good explanation of non-formal education, as an approach to adult and general education. It is distinct from formal education by its methods. Learners exercise varying degrees of control over the process, from designing their own learning and using the facilitator as a resource person, to attending a learning activity where the content is planned in advance. In a nutshell, non-formal education is an approach to education that can be used with adults, youth, or children, within the working room or outside of it. An integral part of non-formal education is that learners participate in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of their own learning.

According to Hartmann and Kwauk's research, alongside the visible physical and psychological effects, participation in sport also has positive social and economic effects. Sporting activity helps to combat poverty, unemployment and to prevent crime and segregation. It can enhance empowerment and social connection, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hartmann and Kwauk say that participation in sport and physical exercise improves social behaviour and helps social relationships to be consolidated. It can serve as a vehicle to improve social and professional skills and also as a tool to increase educational attainment.⁶

In other words, if sport is to be used with an educational purpose, it is essential to make effective use of the aforementioned non-sport components. This should be done in a structured, reflective and well-planned way. In the context of adult education, the methodology provides insight in planning and designing the learning process while using sport. This is beneficial to all practitioners who regularly use sport as a tool for adult education and are aware of the positive effects that it brings to their communities.

According to the same article, sport is considered a strong and highly effective tool for development, education and learning. It is believed that it confers life skills, social knowledge, values and leadership qualities. Further research in this field shows that there are some key elements required in order to make the sport-based interventions more efficient.

In their article, Hartmann and Kwauk state ***"The success of any sport-based social intervention program is largely determined by the strength of its non-sport components – of what it does within participants they are brought into the program through sport."***⁷ So the components, such as education, mentorship, skills, training, reflection and intervention, not directly related to sport remain very important and have to be taken into consideration when sport is used for an educational purpose. All of these elements play a significant role in the learning process. They actually become the central focus which stimulates development and social transformation, rather than the sport program itself.

⁵ *Non-formal Education Manual, Peace Corps, 2004, INFORMATION COLLECTION AND EXCHANGE, ICE NO. M0042*

⁶ *Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) Sport and development: Critique and Reconstruction: Journal of sport and social issues*

⁷ *IBID*