

The effect of schooling on sport performance and participation from 16 to 18 years of age: A UK perspective

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Research suggests that schooling can dictate both opportunity and performance levels (Bailey et al, 2010), and that whilst there is an assumption that the type of school attended has an effect on sporting opportunity (Rowley, 1993), much of this evidence is anecdotal. This work explores the effect of schooling on playing level and performance post compulsory physical education.

After ethical approval an online questionnaire collected retrospective recall data on the sport practice patterns of people raised and schooled in the UK. 1,006 individuals provided information about their schooling along with their sport participation between 16 and 18 years old.

There was a significant association between type of schooling and the highest playing level achieved aged 16 to 18, $\chi^2(8) = 29.1$, $p < 0.001$. Individuals who received state schooling were less likely to play at national level than those who received grammar (0.94 times) and private (0.34 times) schooling. This pattern continued at the representative level (grammar, 0.73 times; private, 0.34 times) and school level (grammar, 0.43 times; private, 0.19 times). Compared to not playing at all individuals at private schools were more likely to play at national level (2.78 times), representative level (2.13 times), club level (1.67 times) and school level (2.25 times) than individuals at grammar school. In terms of overall sports participation individuals aged 16-18 at private schools were 2.7 times more likely to play sport than those at state schools a similar pattern was seen between grammar and private schools (2.5 times more likely to play sport).

The data suggest that there is a clear need to explore and address the imbalances in playing performance and participation created within the current UK schooling system. Such imbalances surely serve to undermine an individual's opportunity for both sporting achievement and participation.

Bailey, R., Collins, D., Ford, P., MacNamara, A., Toms, M., & Pearce, G. (2010). Participant Development in Sport: An Academic Review.

Rowley, S. (1993). Training of Young Athletes Study (TOYA): Identification of Talent. (pp. 1-20). London: The Sports Council.

The authors can be contacted for further information on this study.