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Derrick Okpoti Charway

Sustainable Development Goals through Sport:

An Analysis of Policy Implementation in Ghana

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Dedicated to my mum

Acknowledgements

My doctoral journey has not been without its challenges. Since I began this journey in 2019, I lost my father in 2021, but my wife and I have been blessed with two children, in 2021 and 2023. Before the commencement of the journey on 1 March 2019, Ghana had not passed the Right to Information Act, which had been in parliament for over 20 years. I was faced with an uncertain future since my PhD required access to government officials for information and relevant documents, such as sport policies, expenditures, and sport implementation guides at the district level. Luckily, and thanks to the efforts of the Ghana parliament, the Right to Information Act 989 was passed on 26 March 2019, and the president assented to it on 21 May 2019. This was a few months after my doctoral journey began. The Act became effective in January 2020 following the president's assent

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Derrick Okpoti Charway
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Summary

Introduction: The explicit mention of sport as an enabler for sustainable development in the United Nations' *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* policy document marked a significant development milestone. This prompted several governments to partner with relevant stakeholders in order to incorporate sport into their development plans. In Ghana, like in many countries, sport policies are identified as social development objectives linked to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nevertheless, acknowledging or recognising the potential of sport does not, in itself, constitute conclusive evidence of a deep commitment or successful implementation in local communities.

Aim: The primary aim of this study is to analyse the policy goals and implementations of state and non-state sport organisations in Ghana and the extent to which they contribute to national development. To this end, this study addresses three of the 17 SDGs: healthy living (SDG 3), gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment (SDG 5), and disability (SDG 10).

Theoretical framework: Two levels of theories were used to analyse the policy and implementation of the SDGs through sport in local Ghanaian communities. (a) As a starting point, macro-level theories of the state – such as themes on state power, neo-pluralism, and neo-institutionalism – helped to explain how the SDGs were translated into national sport policies. (b) Furthermore, three specific theories that underpin implementation involving different actors were used as the primary analytical frameworks: Matland's ambiguity-conflict model, Cooky and Messner's socio-structural perspective and the Rhodes and Marsh's policy network theory were used to analyse the implementation of healthy living, girls' and women's participation in community sport and sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities, respectively. These theories point to barriers and social mechanisms operative in the processes of implementing sport and SDGs (healthy living, gender, and disability) within Ghanaian communities.

Methodology: The case study methodology is based on qualitative data collected from authorities that design and implement policy, regional sports directors, representatives from District Sports Units (DSUs), national sports federations/associations officials and representatives from organisations that use sport as a tool for development and peace. In total, 52 participants participated in semi-structured interviews (n=25) and focus group discussions (n=27). In addition, the document analysis of sports policies and other relevant documents was conducted to complement the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with the research participants. Key point to note: DSUs work closely with regional sport offices and are funded by district assemblies.

Findings: The findings show the complexity of the policy implementation nexus concerning sport and the SDGs in Ghana. They are presented in five articles that address various aspects of the main research questions. The findings of Articles 1 and 2 concern the translation of the SDGs into national sport policy guidelines. Articles 3, 4, and 5 focus on the implementation of healthy living, girls' and women's participation in community sport, and sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities within Ghanaian communities, respectively.

Article 1 presents the historical overview of the institutionalisation of sport in Ghana and examines the political, economic, and socio-cultural implications of sport for nation-building and development. Sport as a tool for sustainable development was only incorporated into national policy agendas following the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals and SDGs recommendations at the beginning of the millennium. Football dominance and contemporary issues such as migration, gender equality, and disability are also discussed in terms of their impact on sport policy. The article shows how the government's involvement in sport focuses on sport-for-sport's-sake rather than sport for development and peace (SDP).

Article 2 is a comparative analysis of the distinctive features of government-led policy implementation using sport as a tool for development in Ghana and Zambia. It also discusses the global policy impetus for SDP and how it has been adopted in several countries around the globe. The article shows how the SDGs have been incorporated into policy agendas in Ghana and Zambia. Interviews with state officials and SDP organisation officials and textual analysis of national policy documents show substantial similarities in the challenges that SDP actors (state and non-state) face, as well as the opportunities they can offer in the government-led policy implementation paradigm. Although both countries devote considerable resources to football activities at the expense of SDP in local communities, Zambia (unlike Ghana) has made strides in engaging SDP organisations.

Article 3 analyses how sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) have been involved and resourced in implementing the Ghana government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy. The article was based on a textual analysis of government policy documents and interviews with senior government officials and key actors from non-state sport organisations. Using Matland's ambiguity-conflict model, the findings reveal symbolic-political implementation challenges. Symbolic implementation shows how sport policies meant for health outcomes in local communities are often vague, abstract, and poorly defined. Political implementation is determined by the actors who are favoured by policy makers or have sufficient resources to influence policy. As a result, there was a skewed distribution of resources, a lack of involvement of local implementers in the policy process, an overbearing reliance on football over other sport and a neglect of sport for development organisations.

Article 4 analyses the cultural and structural factors that account for the low participation of girls and women in Ghanaian community sport at the district level. The document analysis shows that there is a policy commitment to gender participation and empowerment in community sport. However, interviews with regional sport directors and DSU representatives revealed cultural and structural challenges associated with implementation. Cultural barriers include house chores and gender stereotypes, religion, and early child marriages. Structural barriers include institutional barriers (such as gender policies and recruitment) and organisational practices (such as the underrepresentation of women within organisations and partnerships). The article also discusses how cultural factors influence or interact with organisational practices and policy implementation.

Article 5 analyses the implementation of sport inclusion policies and the extent to which they exclude or include disabled sport associations in Ghana's DSUs. This study draws insights from the policy network theory to analyse membership, integration, resource distribution, and

power balance. The document analysis shows evidence of inclusive provisions for persons with disabilities but interviews with officials from the DSUs revealed challenges in the policy-implementation process. As DSUs lack autonomy and legal support, the district assemblies decide how to use and implement disabled sport funds. Other challenges include the lack of disabled sport association representatives in DSUs; the lack of integration of sport programmes for persons with disabilities; conflicts between disabled sport associations, DSUs, and district assemblies; and the use of disabled sport for political purposes. Furthermore, the article discusses the implications of ableism for policy networks.

Conclusion: The aim of this study is to analyse the policies and implementation of sustainability goals through sports organisations in Ghana. Significantly, the findings of the study show that Ghana's government policies regarding sport for sustainable development are clearly formulated and widely promoted, echoing trends in Zambia and other nations. Across the five articles, the study reveals four significant concerns encompassing politics, socio-cultural dynamics, organisational conditions and institutional frameworks. All of these significantly undermine policy outcomes and hinder the effective implementation of sport and SDGs in Ghana. Entrenched within the four are notable social mechanisms comprising the following: *politics* – skewed allocation of sport funds towards football; *socio-cultural dynamics* – patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society, religious beliefs and entrenched perceptions of gender roles, attitudes towards persons with disabilities and pervasive football culture; *organisation conditions* – lack of sufficient funds, qualified sports leaders and women in leadership roles; *institutional frameworks* – absence of clear policy implementation guidelines, non-inclusive policy making process and limited legitimacy of SDP organisations. These challenges compromise Ghana's commitment to using sports as a tool for sustainable development. To this end, it is essential to conduct a rigorous assessment of local needs and in order to consult with state and non-state actors, including those at the district and regional levels.

Table of Contents

Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ASD	Association of Sports for the Disabled
CABOS	Commonwealth Advisory Body on Sport
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COS	Central Organisation of Sports
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CR	Critical realism
DACF	District Assembly Common Fund
DSA	Disabled Sports Association
DSD	Department of Sport Development
DSU	District Sports Unit
DSWCD	Department of Social Welfare and Community Development
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
FGDs	Focus group discussions
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
GCASC	Gold Coast Amateur Sports Council
GCFA	Gold Coast Football Association
GCAA	Gold Coast Amateur Athletics Association
GFA	Ghana Football Association
GFD	Ghana Federation of the Disabled
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GNI	Gross National Income
GOC	Ghana Olympic Committee
GPRPS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GSGDA	Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
GAA	Ghana Athletic Association
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOC	International Olympic Committee
LI	Legal instrument
LMICs	Low and middle-income countries
LNDP	Long-Term National Development Plan
MDAs	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MGWCA	Ministry of Gender, Women and Children Affairs
MINEPS	Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies
MOYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NCD	Noncommunicable Diseases
NDC	National Democratic Party

NDP	National Development Plan
NDPC	National Development and Planning Commission
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NIH	Norwegian School of Sport Sciences
NLC	National Liberation Council
NOCZ	National Olympic Committee of Zambia
NPCZ	National Paralympic Committee of Zambia
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NSA	National Sports Authority
NSAC	National Sports Advisory Council
NSCW	National Sports College Winneba
NSCZ	National Sports Council of Zambia
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
NSF	National Sport Federations
PE	Physical Education
PHC	Population and Housing Census
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PRGT	Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust
PSACs	Provincial Sport Advisory Committees
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RQs	Research questions
RSDs	Regional Sport Directors
RSOs	Regional Sport Offices
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SCSF	Colleges Sports Federation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDP	Sport for Development and Peace
SDP-IWG	Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group
SfD	Sport-for-Development
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SMCD	Supreme Military Council Decree
STIs	Sexually transmitted infections
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WAJUs	Women and Juvenile Units
WHO	World Health Organisation
WOSPAG	Women’s Sport Association of Ghana
YSRCEs	Youth and Sports Resource Centres of Excellence

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List of Articles

Article 1

Charway, D., & Houlihan, B. (2020). Country profile of Ghana: Sport, politics and nation-building. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, *12*(3), 497–512. https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2020.1775677

Article 2

Charway, D., Banda, D., Bitugu, B. B., & Lindsey, I. (2024). A multi-stakeholder approach to sport as tool for development in Africa: Comparing Ghana and Zambia. In B. Graeff, S. Šafaříková, & L. C. Sambili- Gicheha (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of the Global South in Sport for Development and Peace.* Routledge.

Article 3

Charway, D., Antwi, B. B., Seippel, Ø., & Houlihan, B. (2022). Sport and sustainable social development in Ghana: Analysing the policy-implementation gap. *Sport in Society*, *26*(8), 1319–1339. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2022.2130051

Article 4

Charway, D., & Strandbu, Å. (2023). Participation of girls and women in community sport in Ghana: Cultural and structural barriers and dilemmas. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 0(0).* https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902231214955.

Article 5

Charway, D., Asare, F., & Grønkjær, A. B. (re-submitted). Leave no one behind? Analysing the implementation of sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities in Ghana's District Sports Units. *Social Inclusion.*

1.0. Introduction

This study analyses how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were translated into national sport policy guidelines in Ghana and Zambia as well as how sport institutions in Ghana contribute to three national development goals – health, gender equality, and disability – within the context of sustainable development. Replacing the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with 21 targets, the 17 SDGs with 169 targets were adopted in September 2015 by 193 countries (including Ghana) at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York. The SDGs were officially enforced on 1 January 2016. The SDGs cover three interlinked dimensions of sustainable development – "economic, social and environmental" (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2015, p. 3). The UN SDGs are an indispensable component of Ghana's long and medium development goals and thus form the basis for the policy goals of Ghana's Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). In this light, this study addresses three of the 17 SDGs: healthy living (SDG 3), gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment (SDG 5), and disability (SDG 10). Three reasons guided the choice of these three focal areas for this research. First, since 2016, these focal areas have consistently appeared in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (herein referred to as sport ministry) and implemented nationwide, although with limited details. Second, although the government of Ghana has instituted the SDGs to work with a diverse range of stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, it is unclear how this works in practice at the community level. Finally, little is known about the implementation of the SDGs and sport in local communities across Ghana and throughout Africa.

The UN and academics alike have claimed that sport has the potential to contribute to development and nation-building. For instance, UN recognises sport as "an important enabler of sustainable development" (UNGA, 2015, p. 10), although many academics have written about the potential social and economic benefits of sport to societies (Keim, 2003; Labuschagne, 2008; Schulenkorf, 2012; Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014). In respect to the SDGs, the UN believes that the unique characteristics of both sport and sport-based activities (like Sport for Development and Peace [SDP] programmes) can complement global commitments and governmental and non-governmental policies for fostering development and peace; promote tolerance and respect; empower women and young people; and contribute to health, education, and social inclusion objectives (UNGA, 2015, p. 10).

The significance of sport in achieving developmental objectives is not a new idea (Lindsey & Chapman, 2017); nevertheless, the relationship between sport and the SDGs in particular lacks academic scrutiny to date (Lindsey & Darby, 2018). Also, despite advocacy for a multi-stakeholder partnership approach (of state and non-state organisations) to accomplishing sustainable development, it is important to empirically address the regulatory, implementation, and participation deficits of such partnerships (Biermann et al., 2007), which have the propensity to destabilise the autonomy, identity, and effectiveness of non-state organisations in particular (Mcloughlin, 2011). Accordingly, this study adds to the growing academic interest in addressing the SDGs through the multi-stakeholder engagement of state and non-state sport organisations.

There have been several references to Africa in the sport and development literature, but few studies have focused on the use of sport as a means of community development. Among the well-known and often-cited researchers who focus on policy implementation and SDP in local communities are Cora Burnett, Davies Banda, Iain Lindsey, and joint authors Marion Keim and Cristo de-Coning. It is important to point out that the majority of their research has been conducted in the Southern African region, with very little conducted in the Western African region. Apart from Lindsey et al. (2015), who examined sustainability among stakeholders in Ghana's sport for development sector, no research has examined sport and the SDGs or the MDGs in Ghana. My research thus addresses this research gap. I contribute to the literature on Ghana and Africa regarding sport policy implementation. I also address the challenges associated with achieving sport and sustainable development in the fields of health, girls' and women's empowerment, disabilities, and partnerships.

1.1. Research questions

The study analyses the policy goals and implementations of state and non-state sport organisations in Ghana and the extent to which they influence the collective capacity for sport to contribute to national development. The following questions thus underpin the research:

RQ1. How were the SDGs translated into national sport policy guidelines?

RQ2. How have sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) been involved and resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy?

RQ3. What are the cultural and structural barriers to girls and women participating in community sport in Ghana?

RQ4. How has the implementation of sport inclusion policies excluded or included disabled sport associations in Ghana?

I present the case of Ghana and the selected relevant theories that underlie the importance of implementation in the policy process. These research questions (RQs) form the foundation of the dissertation articles: RQ1 relates to Articles 1 and 2, whereas RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 relate to Articles 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

1.2. Research model and article development

For the first time, after the UN endorsed the SDGs, which underscored sport's role in 2016, Ghana's National Development Planning Commission integrated sport into its social development dimension. Subsequently, the Ministry of Youth and Sports commenced the implementation of some aspects of the SDGs nationwide. This prompted my curiosity about the policy implementation of sport and the SDGs in Ghana. Eager to delve deeper, the first phase of my project involved studying how the SDGs were translated into Ghana's national sport policy (Article 1). This first part of the project was guided by macro-level theories of state encompassing theories of state power, pluralism, and neo-institutionalism. These theories provided me with nuanced perspectives on the policy landscape of Ghana, including how power is distributed between state actors and non-actors, exchange relationships between sport and other actors, and the institutionalisation of sport and development in Ghana. Here, I reviewed how sport policies have evolved and legitimated to the point where they are considered integral or a key part of achieving the SDGs. This is detailed in Articles 1 and 2. It is important to note that Article 2 serves the purpose of comparing Ghana and Zambia.

At the formative stages of my doctoral journey in 2020, Article 2 became apparent following discussions with my doctoral supervisors about situating my study within the African context, wherein Ghana could be compared with another African country. This period also coincided with the call for consideration in the *Routledge handbook of the Global South in Sport for Development and Peace*, which included a topic on "Sport and the Sustainable Development Goals". The discussion regarding the appropriate African country for the comparative study led one of my supervisors to suggest Nigeria. The reason was that Nigeria, being a West African country with a similar history and the closest anglophone neighbour to Ghana, might be suitable. However, Nigeria is not the most suitable option due to its federal system of government, which differs from Ghana's unitary system. This variance extends to the governance structure and subnational state frameworks through which policies are implemented. Moreover, Nigeria has not been extensively featured in the academic literature

concerning SDP or sport and the SDGs. After consideration, Zambia emerged as a more fitting country for comparative analysis. The Zambian decision was influenced by the fact that Zambia prominently features in the academic literature on SDP, practices unitary system of government, and shares developmental trajectories, sports structures and similar historical ties with Ghana. This was followed by a proposal to academic collaborators with insights into Zambia's sport and development. It is important to mention that I have known the academic collaborators through past shared research collaborations and by reading their publications.

In the second part of my thesis (Article 3, 4, and 5), I would seek to understand local-level implementation. Working my way through data collection for the three studies on health, gender, and disability, it became clearer to me how many of the sport development policies were reframed and worked out at the local level. Although this came as no surprise to me, I found myself needing to adjust my theoretical framework and supplement the macro-level theories with new theoretical tools to delve more deeply into how these policies were implemented at the local level. It is also worth mentioning that, although a lot information exists at the top level (policy or macro-level), there is a dearth of information and research concerning implementation at the local (meso or micro) level.

The evolution of articles entered its second phase with an interest to delve deeper into the processes of, and collaborations and pertinent stakeholders responsible for implementing policies regarding sport and the SDGs in Ghana. My review of Ghana's Ministry of Youth and Sports' Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (2016-2021) in Article 1 revealed the consistent reporting on the implementation of initiatives promoting healthy living, gender equality, and disability sport. These reports illustrate the Ministry's endeavour to advance the SDGs within Ghanaian communities. Regrettably, such reporting has been undertaken with limited information and insight into the practical unfolding of local implementation processes. My interest in the local implementation of the three specific SDGs – health, gender equality, and disability – forms the basis for Articles 3, 4, and 5, respectively. To analyse how health, gender equality, and disability are implemented at the local level, I utilised specific theoretical perspectives for each of the three articles. The specific theories are relevant because they address factors that influence policy implementation at the local level.

Article 3 addresses how the governmental and non-governmental sport partners have been involved and resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy. In this article, I utilised Matland's ambiguity-conflict model because it addresses issues of policy clarity and comprehensibility, as well as the success or

failure of implementation. Matland's theory helped me to analyse the Ministry of Youth and Sports' implementation of healthy living programmes, such as the Youth and Sports Resource Centres of Excellence in local communities, which commenced in 2016, as well as the "Reprotalk (Reproductive Talk)" and "Community Information Dissemination for COVID –19 ", introduced in 2020.

Article 4 aims at understanding barriers to girls' and women's participation in community sport in Ghana. In this article, I utilised Cooky and Messner's socio-structural perspective that suggests analysing barriers and changes in girls' and women's access to sport at various analytical levels: the structural, cultural and individual levels. Because my data were interviews with leaders and administrators, I chose to focus on barriers at the structural and cultural levels and how they are intertwined and restrict the implementation of gender equality in grassroot sport in Ghana. The socio-structural perspective is pertinent as it complements previous studies that primarily focused on cultural or personal barriers in Ghana.

Article 5 addresses the inclusion of disabled sport associations in local-level sport policy implementation. Because the interaction between state and non-state organisation in implementation at the grassroot level is the main concern in this article, I employed Rhodes and Marsh's Policy network theory. Policy network theory emerged from the Global North where the advent of pluralism (the shift from government to governance) and the proliferation of the private sector/Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), allowed frequent interaction between state and non-state organisations. The use of the policy network theory for Article 5 is significant due to the pluralistic nature of Ghana's policy implementation of the SDGs, which entails the engagement of state organisations (such as the the District Sports Units) and non-state organisations (such as disabled sport associations). Through an examination of government policies such as the Sports Act 934 of 2016, Local Governance Act 936 of 2016, and Persons with Disability Act 715 of 2006, I identified provisions for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sport. Furthermore, the Ministry of Youth and Sport Medium-Term Expenditure Framework delineates ongoing collaboration with disabled sport associations. On the contrary, my observation of local news outlets and online searches revealed the challenges faced by disabled sport associations in Ghana. These challenges included issues of exclusion and inadequate support. Although various studies have addressed the social exclusion and discrimination experienced by individuals with disabilities in Ghana (Avoke 2002; Naami and Hayashi 2012; Naami 2015; Agyei-Okyere et al. 2019), none have specifically focused on sport. Thus, policy network

theory emerged as a relevant analytical tool for Article 5 in analysing the tendencies of ableism, inclusive and exclusionary practices, integration efforts, resource allocation and power dynamics at the local community level.

Put together, the macro theoretical framework (for Articles 1 and 2) and the three specific theories (for Articles 3, 4, and 5) formed the basis for my research. Together, the theories helped to unpack and discuss complex sport policy implementation issues in Ghana – specifically, to empirically understand how the policy context (politics and socio-cultural factors), social structures or processes and the unfolding actions and interactions of multiple stakeholders influence the sport policy implementation of healthy living, gender and disability.

Critical realism has been an inspiration for the philosophical underpinning of the thesis from the start. During the research process, it became clearer to me that critical realism also justifies and encompasses my emphasis on the processes, macro-meso-micro interaction, and social mechanisms, all based on an in-depth study of cases comprising state and non-state organisations within the sport policy subsystem of Ghana.

1.3. Rationale for health, girls' and women's empowerment, and disability

In the wake of UN's MDGs and the 2016 SDGs, sport in Ghana has moved beyond competition and has been an integral part of nation building. Ghana has gone through various reforms to meet modern trends of development through sport, such as redefining sport to meet social objectives. The UN's asseveration that sport is "an important enabler of sustainable development" (UNGA, 2015, p. 10) was integral to the inclusion of sport's contributions in Ghana's Medium-Term Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy documents (2003–2017) and the 40-year Long-Term Development Plans (2018–2057). This, among other developments, culminated in the 2016 passage of the long-awaited Sports Act 934 in Ghana. Since 2016, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has aligned its policy goals with the SDGs, primarily focusing on community health and well-being, girls' and women's empowerment, and disability. The importance of addressing these three social concerns in Ghana cannot be overstated.

First of all, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are a major health concern among Ghanaian youth in various communities. Several STIs are prevalent in Ghana, but studies have shown HIV/AIDS to be one of the most prevalent (Koray et al., 2022). Unfortunately, self-reported STI cases among youth are low (Seidu et al., 2018). A second health issue is the

coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which affected every aspect of Ghana's economy. The Ghanaian government has implemented various policy measures like the National HIV/AIDS and STI Policy for Ghana and the Ghana Imposition of Restrictions (COVID-19) Act, 2020, which included the Ministry of Youth and Sports, among others, in the implementation process.

Second, women in contemporary Ghanaian society are "overwhelmingly" subjected to objectification and regarded as marital or sexual commodities (Anyidoho et al., 2016, p. 37). Additionally, due to the traditional patriarchal structure of the state and deeply embedded gender stereotypes, Ghanaian women are often left with limited access to resources and opportunities for social, economic, and political advancement. Research has revealed a low level of participation by girls and women in Ghana's community sports activities compared to boys (Nkrumah & Domfeh, 2015). Women are also underrepresented in sports leadership positions (Adam, 2014).

Third, regarding the situation about persons with disabilities, there is evidence of inclusive policy provisions in Ghana's Local Governance Act 936 of 2016, the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Act 715 of 2006, and the Sports Act 934 of 2016. However, persons with disabilities continue to face stigma, social exclusion, and discrimination (Agyei-Okyere et al., 2019). Disabled sport associations have continually lamented the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources compared to abled sport organisations. Consequently, persons with disabilities are unable to fully participate in sporting activities because they feel excluded from the sports industry.

Cognisant of the above three social concerns, the Ministry reported in its Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (2016–2021) to have implemented various initiatives at the community level. The Ministry's community health and well-being initiatives include community infrastructure development, COVID-19 sensitisation, and reproductive talk. Additionally, core initiatives of the Ministry include providing financial support for female sport and empowerment, as well as ensuring inclusive sport, where disability sport associations are involved in local events and their officials are trained. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Youth and Sports: Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) did not provide extensive details about how the implementation is carried out in practice. Also, no research has addressed health, gender, and disability sport policies in Ghanaian communities.

Government and state institutions and agencies involved in sport policy formation and implementation include the Ministry of Youth and Sports; the National Sport Authority;

National Sport College, Winneba; regional sports offices; and District Sports Units. Non-state organisations include National Sport Federations and SDP organisations (such as NGOs that use sport for social and community development). Overall, despite the passion for sport and the growing interest in sport as a tool for sustainable development in the country, the sport policy agenda of state and non-state organisations in Ghana largely remain fragmented and under-researched. As a result, Ghana provides a suitable context for this study. This research is significant because sport policy coherence vis-à-vis the implementation of the SDGs through sport, both in Ghana and elsewhere, is largely under-researched and undocumented.

1.4. Dissertation format in chronological order

The subsequent chapters give depth to the study. Chapter 2 begins with discussing sport and the SDGs in Ghana. Chapter 3 details the profile of Ghana, highlighting the geographical location, socio-cultural background, health, disability, economy, and politics of Ghana. Chapter 4 provides a theoretical review of policy processes, discussing theories including macro-level theories of the state and meso-level theories of policy implementation. Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, respectively, provide the research methods and methodology, the findings, the discussion of the results, and the conclusion.

2.0 Sport and Sustainable Development Goals

2.1. Introduction

Sport has long been used for development purposes. Several local, national, and international organisations have used sport as a tool for development and peace before its worldwide promotion by the UN from the early millennium onwards. For this reason, Bruce Kidd (in Lindsey et al., 2017, p. 17) described the SDP initiative as "old wine in new bottles". Various terminologies associated with sport as a tool for development and peace appear in many literature sources, reports, and journals. Some of the terminologies noted include, but are not limited to, "sport for development and peace", "development through sport", "sport in development", and "sport-for-development". Two main terms stand out: "sport-for-development" (SfD) and "sport for development and peace" (SDP). According to Darnell et al. (2019, p. 8) SfD "refers to in general terms: the processes, theories and/ or ideologies to attain 'positive' social outcomes". Meanwhile, SDP "describes the global sector of organisations and stakeholders that now champion, organise and implement" programmes related to positive social, economic, environmental, and peace outcomes (Darnell et al., 2019, p. 8). Comparatively, the term SDP is more "contemporary and illustrative" (Darnell et al., 2019, p. 8). It is important to note that many researchers use these two terms interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, I utilise the term "SDP" for its contemporary and illustrative nature, widely adopted by governments (including Ghana), intergovernmental organisations (such as UN and The Commonwealth), NGOs (many of which operate in Ghana and Africa), international NGOs (e.g. Fédération Internationale de Football Association [FIFA], International Olympic Committee [IOC], Right To Dream, and Right To Play), and the private sector (such as the Adidas Group, Coca-Cola, GIZ, and Nike Inc.). Another rationale is that the term "SDP" is more prevalent in academia, with numerous universities teaching and conducting research on SDP-related issues and programmes (Whitley et al., 2019; Welty-Peachey & Schulenkorf, 2022). Most significantly, the term SDP pinpoints the global sector of organisations and stakeholders, thereby making it more relevant to my dissertation.

SDP gained prominence following the 2001 appointment of Adolf Ogi (former President of Switzerland) as the UN's first Special Adviser on SDP. Additionally, prominent proponents of SDP like Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the UN, and Nelson Mandela, former President of the Republic of South Africa, were integral to SDP's global image. Furthermore, the 2002 establishment of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on SDP, the first and second Magglingen Conferences on SDP held in Switzerland in 2003 and 2005, the establishment of

the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP-IWG), and the UN proclamation of 2005 as the International Year for Sport and Physical Education are important milestones. As part of its concerted efforts, the UN brought together governments, international sport organisations, the private sector, NGOs, and academic institutions and researchers as core members of SDP-IWG. Consequently, the SDP-IWG, as an inter-governmental policy initiative, developed the book *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations to Governments*. This book represents the culmination of a 4-year initiative undertaken by the SDP-IWG to deliver comprehensive policy recommendations to national governments. A number of SDP-IWG conferences, including the 2007 Accra Call for Action in Ghana, provided a platform for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and SDP policy implementation. When the MDGs were replaced by the SDGs in 2016, the role of sport in sustainable development was not just recognised but categorically stated as "an important enabler of sustainable development" (UNGA, 2015, p. 10). Seen as a more elaborated version of the erstwhile and narrowly focused MDGs (Lindsey & Darby, 2018), the 17 SDGs, with the corresponding 169 targets, provide guidelines for national and international developmental policies.

With the advent of the MDGs and SDGs, SDP policies and programmes have grown exponentially across the globe (Sherry et al., 2019; Burnett, 2021). Governments, NGOs, and the private sector have used SDP in diverse ways to address economic, social, and environmental issues. As an example, SDP has been recognised by all 193 UN member states that endorse the MDGs and SDGs. In addition, following the establishment of the International Platform on Sport and Development (sportanddev) in 2003 at the first conference in Magglingen, Switzerland, the number of NGOs using SDP increased to 166 in 2008 and to 258 in 2011 (Lindsey et al., 2017) – and, as I observed, to 569 in 2022. International sport federations like FIFA and IOC (to mention a few) have also implemented SDP-related programmes and encouraged their members to follow suit. These programmes include FIFA's "Football for Hope" and the IOC's "Sport for Protection Toolkit". In addition to the increasing use of SDP internationally, close partnerships have been observed at the international, national, and local community levels. For instance, the Commonwealth Secretariat has also worked with all its members, through the Commonwealth Advisory Body on Sport (CABOS), to support their work with The Commonwealth governments in order "to strengthen sport policy, particularly with respect to SDP" (The Commonwealth, 2012, p. 1). In areas of South America, Africa, the West Balkans, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) continues to partner with both

governments and local communities to administer SDP programmes (GIZ, n.d.). In addition, international NGOs, such as Right to Play, have partnered with several governments and international sport organisations. Right to Play currently runs its SDP programmes and activities in 15 countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and North America. Recent studies indicate that many countries have made strong public commitments to the role of sport in sustainable development (Lindsey & Darby, 2019; Sherry et al., 2019; Dai & Menhas, 2020; Moustakas & Işık, 2020; Campillo-Sánchez et al., 2021). As part of the 5th Ordinary Session of the Conference of AU Ministers of Sport in July 2013, the African Union Ministers of Sport committed to the use of sport as a tool to contribute to the broader government development agenda (African Union, 2013). Furthermore, in September 2015, the African Union's *Agenda 2063*, themed "The Africa We Want", endorsed by all member states, will include sport as a tool for sustainable development. In Section 2.2, I describe how sport has been incorporated into Ghana's development agenda as a tool for sustainable development.

Notwithstanding the global impetus for SDP, its role in development has come under scrutiny. When the promotion of SDP began in the early 2000s, researchers and SDP stakeholders called for evidence to convince policy makers and the private sector to support and validate claims for SDP (SDP-IWG, 2006; Levermore, 2008). To date, many researchers have observed that SDP initiatives and policies are still shaped by anecdotal and unquestioned beliefs (Coakley, 2011; Darnell, 2012) and claims without evidence (Cornelissen, 2011). The efficacy of SDP has been mooted over the last two decades and scrutinised based on theories and methodologies that are crucial for evaluating or proving its effectiveness. Interventionist theories from mainstream development studies and programme management studies that attempted to bring closure to SDP (Lindsey et al., 2017) have often been countered by critical theories that offer cautions to neo-colonialism, cultural hegemony, power imbalance, and resource dependency theories (Darnel et al., 2019). For instance, sport-based interventionist theories from Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) and Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011) provide models for analysing SDP at international, national, and community levels. Likewise, the programme-based SDP theories from Schulenkorf (2012, p. 9) make a significant claim for "a suitable guide for the strategic management and evaluation of (inter)community development projects". Although these studies offer a significant departure point to analyse and evaluate SDP programmes, Darnell (2012, p. 96), from a critical standpoint, cautioned that there is a "misalignment between northern notions of the preferred or requisite tools for successful development versus local demands regarding what constitutes

the appropriate skills, resources or opportunities for success".

In reviewing the SDP field of research, Lindsey et al. (2017) noted that many studies attempting evidence-based research and analysis of SDP were conducted by Western researchers and in Western communities. Addressing this issue, Lindsey et al. (2017, p. 41) stated that "the cultural appropriateness of much of this evidence […] remains open to question". Also, according to Coalter (2013, p. 174), a "large body of research evidence about personal and social development" in other parts of the world is ignored. When these concerns are not addressed, the gap between SDP as a policy and its implementation widens. As this research demonstrates in the case of sport as a tool for development in Ghana, it is essential to include local voices and context-specific research when conducting SDP research to provide solutions or insights relevant to local conditions.

2.2. Linking sport to Ghana's development plan

Ghana participated in the United Nations General Assembly that adopted Resolution 70/1 Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [SDG] in September 2015. Like the MDGs in the early 2000s, the SDGs have become a mantra in Ghanaian political discourse, as well as being salient in government business and development policies. It is therefore not surprising that Ghana recognises the role that sport can play in the 40-year Long-Term National Development Plan (LNDP) of Ghana (2018–2057). The process through which the SDGs became part of the policy goal of Ghana's Ministry of Youth and Sports is described in Articles 1, 2, and 3. The SDGs became indispensable guidelines for Ghana's 40-year LNDP. Below are snippets of how sport has been integrated in both the medium-term development plans and the LNDP of Ghana since the beginning of the millennium:

Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRPS), 2003–2005: Agenda for Growth and Prosperity

Here, sport was not penned as a policy area but was mentioned three times and referenced under "Skills and Entrepreneurial Development Programme" (NDPC, 2003, p. 104), "Youth Employment" (NDPC, 2003, p. 194), and "HIV/AIDS Education" (NDPC, 2003, p. 195). All three areas were categorised under the Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment (MMDE).

Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRPS), 2006–2009

This marked the first time that sport was added as a key policy area of focus under "Education, Skills, Manpower and Sports Development for Accelerated Growth" (NDPC,

2005, p. 45). The key policy objectives were (1) to build coalitions and partnerships in sports development, (2) to promote national integration and unity, and (3) to promote international friendship, solidarity, and cooperation (NDPC, 2005, pp. 121–122).

Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework: Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), 2010–2013

Sport was placed under the "Human Development, Productivity and Employment" section of the GSGDA policy agenda (NDPC, 2010, pp. 84–85). The agenda recognised sport's contribution to health, social, moral, personal, and professional objectives but focused on developing a comprehensive sports policy that will promote and fund juvenile and school sports along with improving infrastructural development (NDPC, 2010, p. 188).

Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework: Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), 2014–2017

Once again under 'Human Development, Productivity and Employment', the key focal areas for sport were: (1) to provide adequate and disability-friendly infrastructure for sports in communities and schools, (2) to strengthen national capacity for sport management, and (3) to support the development of lesser-known sports (NDPC, 2014, pp. 125–126).

Long-Term National Development Plan of Ghana (2018–2057)

In considering the key elements for the 40-year LNDP, which eventually culminated in Ghana's 2018 National Development Policy agenda, sport and recreation was placed under "Sectorial Issues in Social Development"; this is broadly part of Goal Two of the LNDP, that is, to "Create an Equitable, Healthy and Prosperous Society" (NDPC, 2017).

2.3. Implementing SDGs through sport: Health, gender, and disability

According to a study conducted by the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2017 involving 71 countries, "sports policies are identified as development objectives" linked to specific SDGs (Sherry et al., 2019, p. 13). The 2016 Ghana Sports Act 934 contains many policies and covers a wide range of objectives, making it difficult to determine which specific SDGs it addresses. Nevertheless, I identified the focal areas of the SDGs that sport addresses in Ghana's local communities through the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Specifically, the Ministry of Finance developed the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework to ensure that all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies'

budgetary allocations and expenditures reflect the implementation of the SDGs. A thorough review of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework since 2016 (when the SDGs were implemented) reveals that the Ministry has consistently addressed social issues such as community health and well-being, girls' and women's empowerment, and disability. Therefore, Articles 3, 4, and 5 of the dissertation were respectively based on an empirical analysis of community health and well-being, girls' and women's empowerment, and disability.

3.0. Profile of Ghana

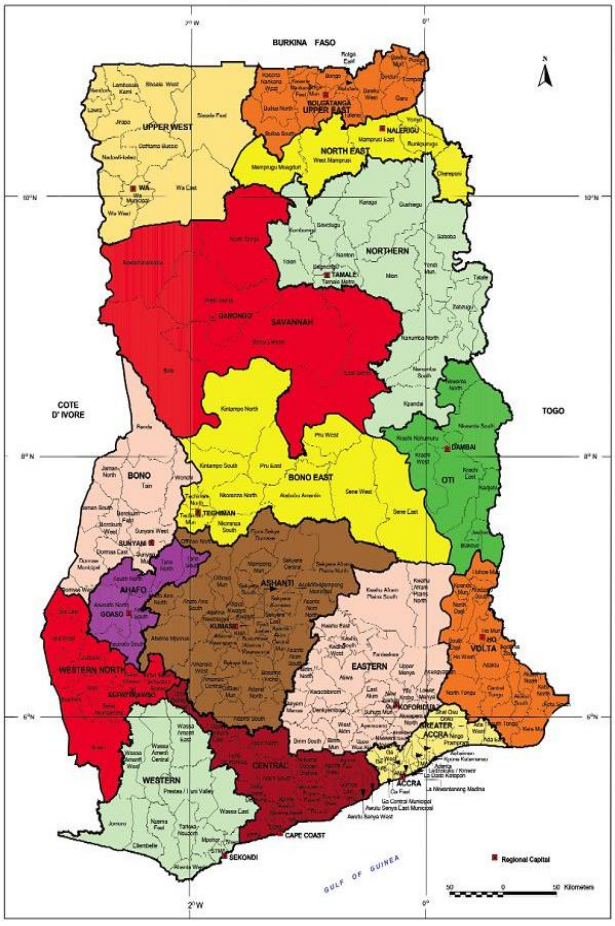
3.1. Introduction

This chapter gives a general overview of Ghana and provides relevant context for this study. Some of the topics discussed in this chapter (such as gender, disability, socio-politics, and sports in Ghana) have been covered in Article 1. Furthermore, this chapter provides a more thorough background to the research by discussing Ghana's geographical location, socio-cultural dynamics, economy, and politics.

3.2. Geographical location

Ghana is in the western part of Africa, along the Gulf of Guinea. The country is bordered by three francophone countries: Ivory Coast to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, and Togo to the east. To the south of Ghana lies the Atlantic Ocean coastline, which stretches 560 km along the Gulf of Guinea from east to west.

Figure 1: Map of Ghana



Source: Ghana Statistical Service, Geography Information Service (GIS) section

Ghana is officially referred to as the "Republic of Ghana" under the 1992 Constitution that serves as the supreme law of the nation. Prior to independence in 1957, Ghana was called the Gold Coast. Ghana practices a unilateral democracy and is governed by the rule of law. The capital city of Ghana is Accra. Like many countries, the government branches of Ghana consist of the executive, legislature, and judiciary, and the press is often referred to as the "fourth estate". Additionally, cabinet ministers are appointed by the president of the state to head various ministries. Ghana has 16 administrative regions (see Figure 2), each headed by a designated minister who reports to the

executive branch of the country. Until 2019, Ghana had 10 regions. The 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) showed that the total population of Ghana is 30,832,019, of which 15,631,579 were females and 15,200,440 were males, thus accounting for 51% and 49% of the population respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The 2021 PHC also showed that Ghana has a youthful population, with 58% between 15 and 35 years, thus indicating a broad-base population pyramid. A further breakdown of the 2021 PHC shows that 37% of the population is under 15 years, 60% is of working age (15–64 years), and 3% is the aging group of 65 years and above. Therefore, there is a dependent population[1] of 40% (i.e., 37% plus 3%). The above map gives the geographical location and demographical overview of Ghana since the last PHC. The next subsection provides a detailed account of the socio-cultural dynamics of Ghana.

3.3. Socio-cultural dynamics

To have a deeper insight of the role of sport in a society, it is crucial to know the broader historical, social, and cultural context in which customs, values, semiotics, livelihood, people, institutions, and relationships exist. This section explains the socio-cultural factors of ethnicity, language, gender, and sport as integral and contextual parts of this research.

Ethnicity: Beyond the 16 administrative regions of Ghana, Ghana is culturally demarcated according to ethnic groups. In the 2021 PHC, the population of Ghana was classified into eight major ethnic groups in accordance with the official Bureau of Ghana Languages results. The eight ethnic groups were Akan (largest ethnic group), Ga-Adangbe, Grusi, Guans, Gurma, Ewe, Mande, and Mole-dogbane, among several others (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021, p. 36). In Ghana, ethnic groups are further divided into several pockets of tribes with shared attributes such as descent, heritage, history, language, and origin. Currently, there are over 100 tribes in Ghana. Tribes in Ghana are headed and ruled by kings. The king plays the role of paramount chief, who is assisted by sub-chiefs in various communities within the tribe to maintain customs, preserve traditions, settle disputes, and collaborate with the government for socio-economic development. Notable tribes in Ghana are the Ashanti (under Akan), Anlo (under Ewe), Ga (under Ga-Adangbe), and Dagomba (under Mole-Dagbon) tribes. Religion to some extent can also be associated with cultural demarcation. For instance, the southern part of Ghana is predominantly Christian, whereas the northern part is predominantly Islamic; traditional religions are sparsely located across Ghana. According to

[1] A dependent population refers to an economically inactive population. It consists of the sum of the youth (under 15) and the elderly (over 65) populations.

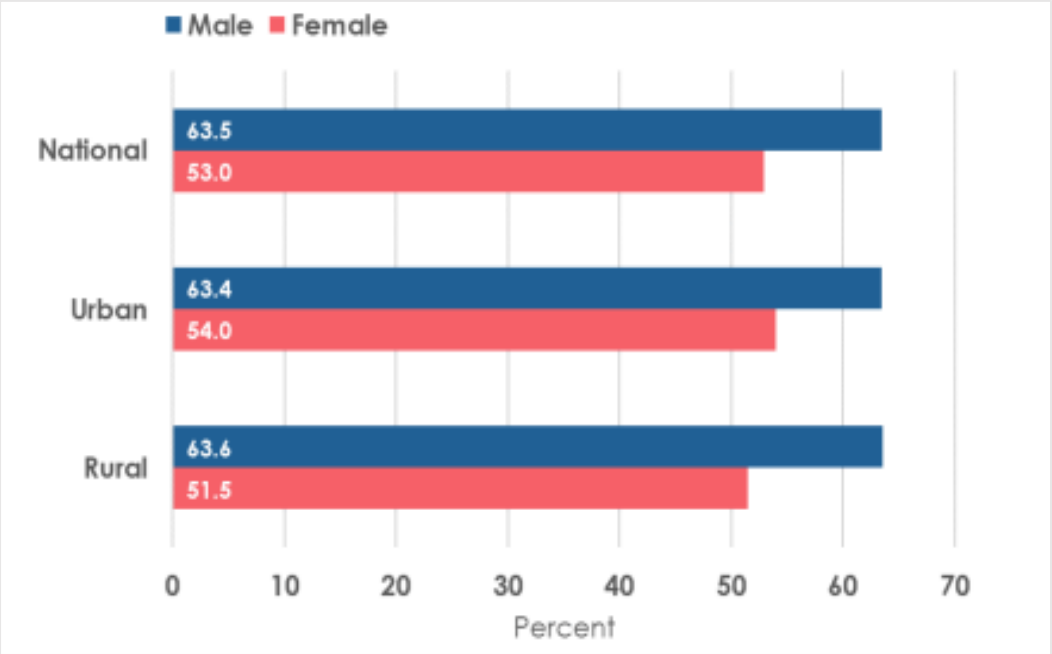
the 2021 PHC, Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal/Charismatic, and other Christian), Islam, and Traditional religions respectively account for 71%, 20%, and 3% of the population.

Language: Given the number of tribes in Ghana, there are over 100 languages spoken in different parts of Ghana. It is for this reason that Laitin (1994) described Ghana's linguistic landscape as "The Tower of Babel as a Coordination Game". Although many have referred to Ghana as multilingual (Bodomo et al., 2009; Ansah, 2014), English is the official language, used in schools, businesses, and formal settings. However, 10 local languages are also recognised by the government and taught in schools alongside English. The 10 local languages are compulsory subjects (chosen one at a time) at the basic and junior high school levels and optional subjects at the senior high school and tertiary levels.

Gender: Despite the population consisting of more women than men, women still lag in various aspects of the Ghanaian economy and society. The issue of patriarchy (and women as subordinates) is linked to the traditions and cultural practices of most tribes in Ghana (Asare, 1982). McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah (1994, p. 99) stated that "women in premodern Ghanaian society were seen as bearers of children, retailers of fish, and farmers". It is a situation that still lingers in most Ghanaian cultures and societies, even though the government has made careful strides through education, policy, and social reforms to empower and promote the rights of girls and women. The Ministry of Gender, Women and Children Affairs (MGWCA) established in 2000, the Domestic Violence Act of 2007 (Act 732), and the Women and Juvenile Units (WAJUs) are some efforts to protect and address the rights of and discrimination against women. Nevertheless, the trends of women participating in social and economic activity have not changed much. As of 2021, the World Bank's World Development Indicators database[2] shows that Ghana's female labour force (as a percentage of the total labour force) stands at 48%, whereas its male labour force stands at 72%. According to the 2021 PHC labour force report, the unemployment rate among females is 16% higher than the unemployment rate among males (12%). Furthermore, the economic activity of persons 15 years and older is higher among males than females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). See Figure 3.

[2] The World Bank's World Development Indicators database is a digital data set that maps country-specific labour force trends based on the United Nations Population Division and the ILO's Modelled Estimates and Projections database.

Figure 2: Proportions of economically active persons 15 years and older



Sport: Sport is a unique aspect of Ghanaian culture; in recent times, football, for instance, has become an emblem of Ghanaian culture. The socio-cultural demarcations of Ghana, as discussed above, are very complex and diverse, but sport plays a unique role in unifying all Ghanaians irrespective of gender, language, location, religion, and tribe. Sport in any form, be it traditional indigenous games (e.g. Ampe, Chaskele, Ludu, and Oware) or colonial heritage sport (e.g. athletics, boxing, football, and field hockey) are integral to the cultural, social, and political processes of Ghana. Sport unites Ghana in various ways; irrespective of the cultural variations and tribal conflicts, Ghanaians rally under one umbrella to coexist in this sense. The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) is enforced by the Civil Service Law Act 327 of 1993; its mandate includes functions to formulate youth and sport policies, monitor and evaluate policy implementation, achieve national integration and international recognition through sport, promote youth empowerment and self-development, and provide an environment to enable sport development, organisation, and promotion. The MOYS has three state agencies with specific functions: the National Sports Authority (NSA); National Sports College, Winneba; and the National Youth Authority. Of the three agencies, the NSA serves as the sport implementation and development arm of the sport ministry. The NSA has Regional Sport Offices headed by regional sport directors who work closely with District Sports Units to ensure the implementation of the sport ministry's policy goals and programmes in communities throughout the country. A more detailed overview of the Ghanaian sporting structure and the implementation of sport policy is presented in Article 1

(Charway & Houlihan, 2020). Of all the sports played in Ghana, football has been given extensive attention since Ghana attained independence. It is one of the reasons why Ghana's national football team has won more accolades under successive governments. The popularity of football is often used by various Ghanaian politicians and celebrities to improve their public ratings and carry out other agendas. It is not surprising that many researchers and academics have often adduced Ghana as one of the citadels of football academies in Africa when discussing various sport-related issues (Bale, 2004; Darby & Solberg, 2010; Darby, 2012; Esson, 2013; Van der Meij & Darby, 2017).

Health: The Ministry of Health is instrumental in administering health services, but the Ministries of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports have played an important role in ensuring physically active youth in Ghanaian communities. Ghana's health indices have steadily improved over the past two decades, with the replacement of the "cash and carry system" with the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). With the introduction of the NHIS, Ghanaians who enrol in the scheme are entitled to free medical care. Furthermore, the District Assembly Common Fund allocation to all district assemblies includes a health service component that supports various communities, especially those in rural areas. Between 2000 and 2019, the life expectancy at birth (in years) for both sexes increased from 59 to 66. This indicates that life expectancy for females grew from 61 to 69 and from 58 to 64 for males (World Health Organisation, n.d.). Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, life expectancy fell to 64 in 2022, thus indicating 66 for females and 62 for males (World Health Organisation, n.d.; Population Reference Bureau, 2022). As reported by the World Health Organisation (2020) global health estimates and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of Ghana (n.d.), a combination of communicable and non-communicable diseases accounted for most deaths in Ghana since 2000. According to the CDC, the top 10 leading causes of death in Ghana include malaria, stroke, lower respiratory infections, neonatal disorders, ischemic heart disease, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, diarrheal diseases, diabetes, and cirrhosis of the liver. Since 2019, HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 have dominated Ghana's health issues and causes of death. Although the government has paid considerable attention to HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, the percentage of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) that contributes to deaths in Ghana has increased from 29% in 2000 to 45% in 2019 (World Health Organisation, 2019). Reducing NCDs is essential to improving global health and extending life expectancy. Research has shown that regular physical activity reduces the risk of NCDs, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Barr et al., 2007). In addition, it improves quality of life, mental health, and social interaction (Bize et al., 2007; Anokye et

al., 2012). Investing in sport and physical activity can benefit public health and economic growth. Unfortunately, no data illustrate a clear relationship between physical inactivity and NCDs in Ghana (Nyawornota, 2021). An overview of the contribution that the sport ministry makes to health and well-being in communities is provided in Article 3 of this dissertation.

Disability: Ghana became the 119th country in the world and the 32nd country in Africa to ratify the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) on 12 March 2012. Ghana's 2010 population census indicated that persons with disabilities comprise 3% of the population. Persons with disabilities issues in Ghana have shifted from human rights to developmental concerns. Persons with disabilities with disabilities policies such as the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) Act 715 of 2006 in Ghana emphasise social development objectives such as education, health care, employment, transportation, housing, medical rehabilitation services, and sport, to name a few (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Government institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development have special education schools, and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development and District Assemblies address persons with disabilities issues across Ghana. The District Assembly Common Fund included a component for persons with disabilities welfare, though it was inadequate. Persons with disabilities still face stigma, social exclusion, discrimination, and unspoken African norms and myths (Naami, 2015; Agyei-Okyere et al., 2019). A recent example, widely covered by global media, is the murder of disabled Ghanaian children by family members who believe they possess evil spirits (Acton, 2012). Another example of this phenomenon is the neglect of persons with disabilities from participating in community sport, which is examined in Article 5 of this dissertation. The government has partnered with several NGOs to address the needs of persons with disabilities, and the Ghana Federation of the Disabled (GFD) has played a crucial role in advocating for disability rights and roles in sustainable development.

3.4. Economy

With its 2018 Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.592, Ghana is ranked 140th (out of 189 countries) in the world, 14th in Africa, and first in the West Africa sub-region (HDI, 2018). From 1990 to 2017, Ghana has shown a gradual improvement in life expectancy rate at birth, expected year of schooling, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, which form the core HDI component indices (see Table 1). The 2018 Human Development Report (HDR) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) shows that Ghana's life expectancy

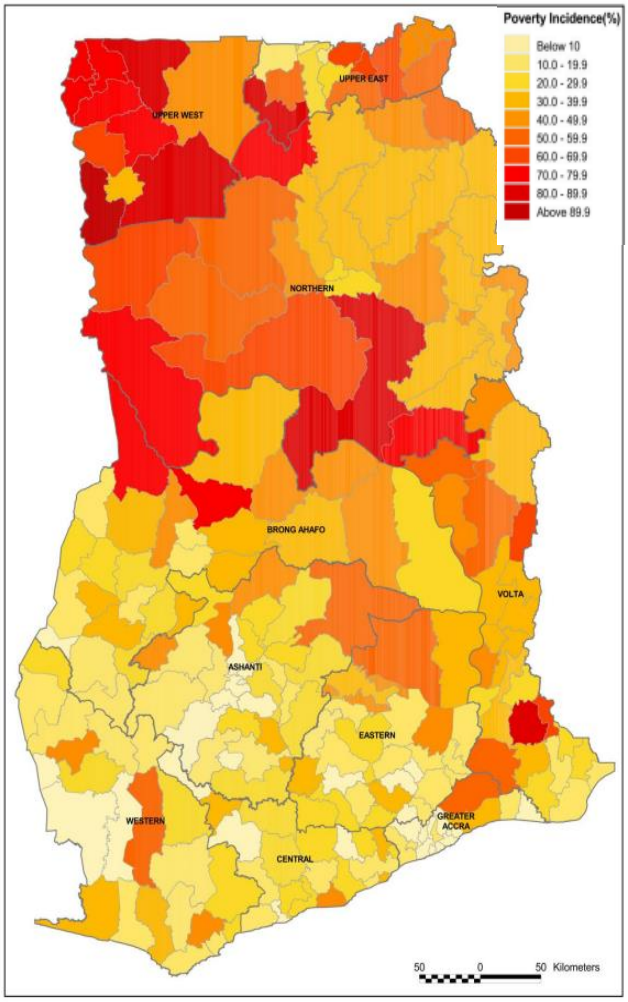
at birth is 63 years (64.1 years for females and 62 years for males). According to the 2019 International Monetary Fund (IMF) Data Mapper, Ghana had a single-digit inflation rate of 7.1%, which indicates a leap from the 1980s, when Ghana's inflation was above 100% (IMF, 2023). In the past few decades, Ghana has recovered from a struggling economy marred by famine, high inflation, and corruption in the early 1980s to establish a relatively stable political system that ranks eighth out of 53 African countries (TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2020). The IMF (Agou et al., 2019) and the World Bank (Geiger et al., 2019) also consider Ghana to be a fast-growing economy, with a per capita GDP that is slightly below average. In 2010, Ghana became a low middle-income economy with real GDP growth of 7.9%; this was attributed to the recalculation of its GDP by rebasing its national accounts from 1993 to 2006. Also, the impact of commercial oil production, which Ghana began in 2011, contributed 5.4%, thereby making the 2011 real GDP growth shoot up to 14.1% (World Bank, n.d.).

Despite the buoyant and seemingly vibrant economy, the true reflection of the Ghanaian economy has triggered discussions among economic experts and academics alike (Aryeetey & Fosu, 2002). Ghana's promising economy does not reflect people's actual living standards in terms of employment, inequality, and general living standard (Ayelazuno, 2014). Currently, Ghana is 133rd on the HDI world ranking, with a life expectancy 64 years and GNI per capita of 5,820 (UNDP, 2022). Critics noted that the neoliberal reforms (e.g. the Economic Recovery Programme and the Structural Adjustment Programme) from 1984, which led Ghana to unprecedented GDP growth, resulted in rates lagging far behind countries like the Republic of South Korea (HDI rank 19, life expectancy of 83 years, and GNI per capita 47,770) and Malaysia (HDI rank 62, life expectancy of 76 years, and GNI per capita 28,150) (UNDP, 2022). These comparisons are quite remarkable because these countries had similar GDP rates and political circumstances to Ghana in the 1960s. The ailing livelihood of Ghanaians has been attributed to neoliberal policy failures that robbed Ghana of state ownership and stalled standards of living (Ayelazuno, 2014). Thus, its situation is different from Korea and Malaysia, where state-led principles are held in high esteem.

Alagidede et al. (2013) noted that the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) introduced in the mid-1980s and the current austerity measures in Ghana are emblems of liberal economic policies that have resulted in large inflows of aid and foreign direct investment. For instance, the influx of private universities has resulted in more business graduates (with limited technical skills) than science and technology graduates in Ghana. Alagidede et al. (2013) also noted that the open market system, which supports capitalist enterprises, has

shifted the focus of Ghana's economy from agriculture and manufacturing sectors to service and industry sectors. This is evident in the 2018 World Bank national data, which show the service (42.3%) and industry (30.8%) sectors ahead of agriculture (19.7%) and manufacturing (10.9%) in their 2017 contribution to the GDP of Ghana.

Figure 3: Incidence of poverty



Leading Ghanaian economists like Fosu and Aryeetey (2008, p. 67) stated that "structural adjustment and liberalization are not complete in Ghana and government policy continues to have an adverse effect on the output of firms in the exportable sector, in particular". Additionally, there is evidence of regional inequalities in Ghana. The Ghana Statistical Service reported a 92% poverty rate in some communities in Northern Ghana in its last poverty mapping, conducted in 2015. The full incidence of poverty in Ghana can be seen in Figure 4.

As noted above, the economy of Ghana provides a mixed reaction to Ghana's economic buoyancy and low middle-income feat. It will be very important to find out the extent to which the economy of Ghana impacts sport policy implementation between the state and civil societies in relation to development.

3.5. Politics

Ghana is currently revelling in multi-party democracy, experiencing a stable economy, and governed by rule of law. Additionally, there is ample evidence to show that the consolidation of democracy and political liberalisation with free and fair elections, a vibrant civil society, and free press over the past decade makes Ghana a success story among African states (Ninsin, 1998; Gyimah-Boadi, 2008; Whitfield & Jones, 2008). Nevertheless, because the present is the culmination of past experiences, it is important to chart the political journey

of Ghana to gain an in-depth understanding of how political ideologies and policies have shaped Ghana in various ways. The first article of this study therefore provides a vivid and elaborate account of the historical antecedents of political trends with corresponding sport policies and strategies that were adopted in the process.

4.0. Theoretical Review

4.1. Introduction

This section provides the blueprint on which the research is built and strategised. It underpins the analytical perspectives of this research (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987; Grant & Osanloo, 2014). This part examines relevant theories that provide analytical insights into the processes by which the SDGs were translated into national sport policy guidelines and implemented at the local level. It discusses macro-level theories of the state related to RQ1 and meso-level theories of policy implementation related to RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. In general, both macro-level theories of the state and meso-level theories of policy implementation offer significant insights into the policy process, particularly about policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy outcomes. Furthermore, the theories provide both descriptive and analytical insights into the generation, analysis, and interpretation of data in all five articles of this study.

The first step is to analyse macro-level theories of the state in order to gain a better understanding of how the SDGs were translated into national sport policy guidelines (RQ1). Hence, the next section discusses theories of the state relevant to this research, such as power, neo-pluralism, and neo-institutionalism. The subsection following that discusses the meso-level theory of implementation integral to the policy process as the main conceptual framework for RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Here, different theoretical approaches are discussed to analyse the implementation of the SDGs of community health and well-being, girls' and women's empowerment, and disability.

4.2. Macro-level theories of the state

There are many macro-level theories of the state. However, state power, neo-pluralism, and neo-institutionalism offer significant macro-level insights into the policy implementation of the SDGs, in general and through sport in Ghana. These macro-level theories of the state underpin RQ1, which asks the following: What were the processes by which the SDGs were translated into national sport policy guidelines? Although the macro-level theories mentioned above are not explicitly mentioned in the published articles of this research, they provide insights into how power is distributed between state actors and non-actors, as well as in exchange relationships between sport and other actors in Ghana. Houlihan (2013, p. 12) mentioned that theories of state "provide an overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world". I begin this section with a discussion of state power, neo-pluralism, and

an analysis of state structures from an institutional perspective. I conclude by examining the state-led policy implementation of the SDGs through sport and discussing why there have been difficulties to deliver at the community level.

Hobbes set the foundation for causal thinking by viewing the state as a political community with power dominance over others (Sadan, 1997). In a similar manner to Hobbes, though from an organisational bureaucracy perspective, Weber also discussed power-sharing between groups in any given social structure; however, he noted that it is the political leaders who exercise power (Warner, 1991). In this regard, Ghana has driven the MDGs/SDGs agenda nationwide since the beginning of the millennium, not only ensuring that state institutions (ministries, departments, and agencies) are required to implement them but also encouraging collaboration with private and non-profit organisations. A one-dimensional approach to policy making may appeal at the national level, but it does not address the acquiescence of actual interests or needs and the power relationships of key policy actors at the sub-national, district, or community level. In light of this, Articles 3, 4, and 5 of this dissertation discuss the specifics of how these factors play out at the district level.

The process by which the SDGs were translated into national (sport) policy guidelines, as illustrated in Article 2, is a government-led initiative. In this instance, the government adopted a multi-sectoral approach, involving civil society organisations, the private sector, faith-based organisations, traditional authorities, and academics, among others. It is imperative to mention that this extends beyond classical pluralism that deemphasises state significance/control and emphasises multiple, autonomous organisations in a balanced power relationship (Dahl, 1961). In a policy system based on neo-pluralism, Ghana's institutional arrangements for implementing the SDGs demonstrate the importance of the state, multipartyism, collective action, and interest groups (National Development Planning Commission, 2019). It does not, however, imply a balance in power relations or a "fair and representative" policy implementation process (McFarland, 2007). In addition, a degree of influence or inequality among some actors is inevitable due to the enormous resources available for wielding power (Hudson & Lowe, 2004; Held, 2006). For instance, as illustrated in Articles 3 and 5, District Assembly leaders (who have the power and resources) neglect District Sports Units and NGOs in the implementation of sport-inclusive and health policies at the district level.

To shape policy, it is essential to institutionalise the SDGs to include both the state (the sport ministry, regional and district sports offices, etc.) and the non-state (NSFs and SDP

organisations) and to consider the context or environment in which the organisations operate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This goes beyond old institutionalism, which focuses on how formal government institutions, as in the case of Ghana, influence behaviour and collective actions. To gain a deeper understanding of institutionalism, I draw on insights from neo-institutionalism (DiMaggio, 1998) to analyse the constraining and enabling effects of history, politics, and socio-cultural mechanisms on organisational and individual behaviour (Farrell, 2018). Using historical institutionalism, I analyse "the unique patterns of historical development and the constraints they impose on future choices" (Howlett & Ramesh, 1995, p. 27) as well as the path dependency that affects institutions over time (Voeten, 2019). Articles 1 and 2 highlight the relevance of historical institutionalism by demonstrating how government-led sport policies, sport implementation, and sport structures have evolved over time. In particular, they (Articles 1 and 2) examine how external forces such as the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the 1980s, the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, and the SDGs in 2016 influenced domestic sport policies in Ghana post-independence (Charway & Houlihan, 2020; Charway et al., 2024). Furthermore, the analysis of politics and socio-cultural mechanisms is significant. Neo-institutionalism provides vital insights into how local organisations apply and translate signals from above. Hence, I discuss the effect of socio-cultural factors (norms, traditions, and values) and organisational structures on policy implementation at the local level (Houlihan, 2005). This is especially illustrated in Article 4, where I examine the cultural and structural factors that contribute to the low participation of girls and women in Ghanaian community sports.

4.3. Meso-level theories of policy implementation

In the social sciences, meso-level analysis focuses on how groups' experiences and interactions benefit the society in which they exist or operate (Blackstone, 2019). The meso-level analysis of sport policy entailing "national sport organisations" such as the state sport agencies, national sport federations, and sport for development organisations are of particular relevance to this research (Houlihan, 2005, p. 165). A meso-level analysis of policy processes is essential for analysing the relationship between the problem defining, agenda setting, decision making, and implementation processes (Parson, 1995), representing the liminal link between policy objectives (made at the state/macro-level) and policy outcomes (impacts on society/at the micro-level). The policy process, according to Heclo (in Parson, 1995, p. 85), is seen as "collective puzzlement on society's behalf; it entails both deciding and knowing".

Thus, understanding emerging problems, policy agenda-setting, and implementation entails requisite analytical frameworks or theories for evaluation.

With a focus on policy implementation, I employ different approaches relevant to RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 of this study. These approaches involve understanding the policy-implementation process (RQ2 – community health and well-being), hindrances to the policy process (RQ3 – girls' and women's participation in community sport), and inclusion in the policy process (RQ4 – disabled sport associations in communities). In general, these approaches provide an analytical framework and principles for explaining how policy objectives and implementations of meso-level sport organisations are related to Ghana's national sport policy agenda. This section begins with a discussion of public policy and then examines different paradigms of policy implementation, including top-down, bottom-up, and hybrid approaches. In the final part of this section, I present three selected theoretical frameworks that underpin policy implementation involving different actors in a collaborative relationship.

4.3.1. Public policy

Until the late 19th century, public interest in Britain, for instance, relied on market forces and less on the state to satisfy individual/societal needs (Habermas, 1989). The state, however, created an enabling environment for the activities of the market to meet the public interest in areas such as education, agriculture, transport, health, and general welfare. In the late 19th century, concerns of private actions surfaced, which led to the advent of "public policy". This led to the ascent of the state to regulate (Heidenheimer et al., 1990) and reconcile (Weber, 1991) areas of both public and private interests. "Public", according to Weber, seeks to serve the national interest.

Public policy seeking to serve the national interest is rather difficult to define (Smith & Larimer, 2009; Colebatch, 1998). Nevertheless, there have been various explanations and clarifications offered as to what public policy is (Cairney, 2012; Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). Some common characteristics suggest that public policy indicates government actions and intentions (Dye in Birkland, 2005, p. 18); it is a goal-oriented term resulting from formal decisions of the state or outcomes of what governments seek to do or may not do (Richards & Smith, 2002, p. 1); it is collectively made and influenced by different actors (Colebatch, 1998, 2006, p. 1); and it is a product of joint interactions (Rose, 1987, pp. 261–268). Lowi (1972) shows that the nature of public policy cannot be exhausted and fairly explained without considering the myriad of actors in the policy context. Given the dynamic nature of

public policy, questions such as "what informs public policy?" and "where should attention be focused in the public policy process?" are important analytical questions discussed below.

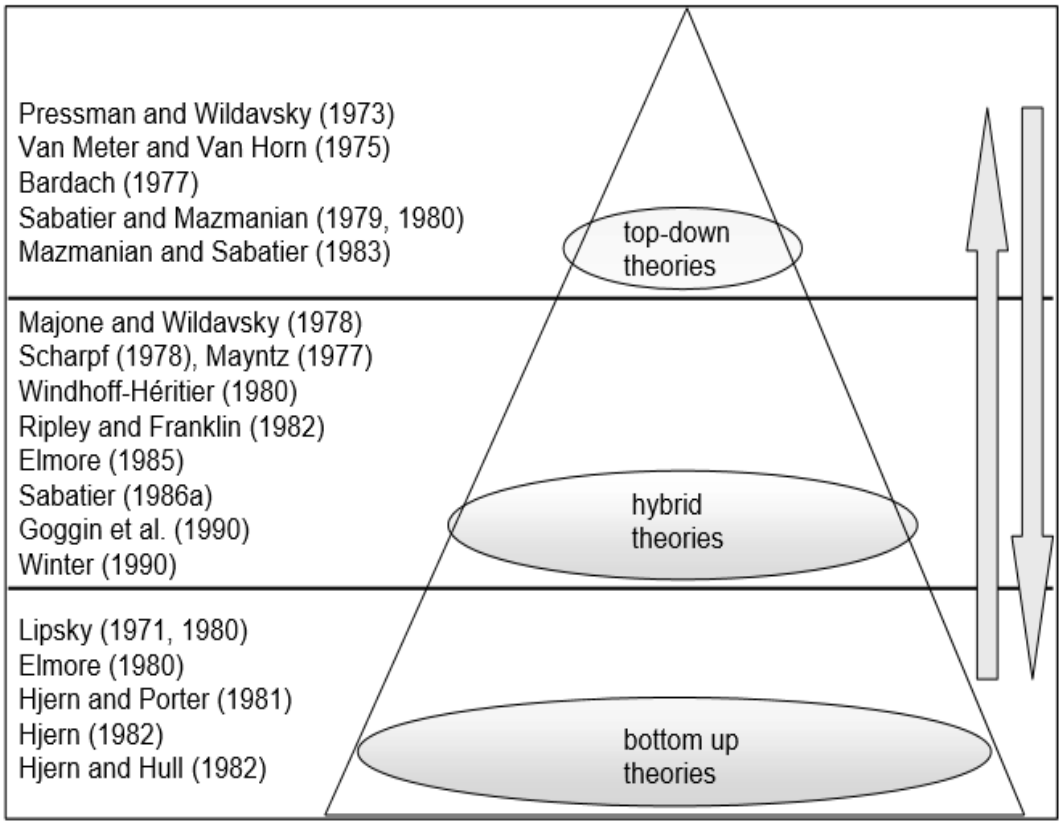
4.3.2. Policy implementation

Policy implementation has been the product of different academic fields (sociology, political science, public administration, and organisational management) with various approaches and theoretical frameworks set forth to position, problematise, or analyse implementation in the public policy process discourse. Prior to the 1970s, policy processes were analysed through the sole lens of the state that has sovereignty over agenda setting (policy), which is subsequently enforced through public officials (implementers/administrators) (Hill & Hupe, 2014). In response to this prescriptive or normative approach with low emphasis on implementation (Hill & Hupe, 2015), Wilson (1987) distinguished the relevance of public officials/implementers in shaping policy in the policy process. The policy process debate about emphasis on the policy and implementation nexus deepened after World War II, when the global body polity was undergoing restructuring. Thus, with "translating policy into action" (Barrett, 2004, p. 251), policy representation of social problems (Houlihan, 2005, p. 165), and "interrelations between private and public organisations" (Hjern, 1982, p. 302), implementation became salient in the policy process. Subsequently, implementation was not seen as a distinct part but something that pervades "throughout the policy process", that is, from policy making to policy execution (Hupe & Hill, 2016, p. 107). Policy implementation theory therefore emerged as a body of literature and stimulated the interests of many academic researchers in the 1970s following the frequently referenced publication of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973). Dubbed the "missing link" (Hargroove, 1975) in the public policy process, many reviews offered various paradigms to policy implementation (see Figure 5); the top-down, bottom-up, and hybrid paradigms of policy implementation analysis dominated most reviews.

Theorists of the top-down paradigm (top-downers) assert that the onus of policy implementation begins with the central government/authority (Pressman & Wildavsky,1973; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Hogwood & Gunn,1984). Primacy is placed on how policy goals prescribed by the central authority determine policy outcomes while discounting local implementing actors as credible determinants of policy outcomes. As Matland (1995, p. 146) pointed out, top-downers "see implementation as concern with the degree to which the actions of implementing officials and target groups coincided with the goals embodied in an authoritative decision". The top-down paradigm has

a hierarchical oversight that requires high "goal consensus and compliance" from actors (Meter & Van Horn, in Hill & Hupe, 2014, p. 48), and ensures that bureaucratic systems are amply resourced and clarified.

Figure 4: Key contributors of top-down, bottom-up, and hybrid paradigms



Source: Pülzl and Treib (2006)

Proponents of the bottom-up paradigm (bottom-uppers), on the other hand, emerged to rebuff top-downer claims by questioning the direct causal link between policy objectives and policy outcomes. Notable bottom-uppers include Lipsky (1971, 1980), Elmore (1980), and Hjern (1982). They view policy implementation as an intricate endeavour, given that policy goals serving the social interest are delivered in varied ways by networks of local level organisations/agencies with direct links to people in the society or policy context. Bottom-uppers view and analyse policy implementation from the local-level organisations (also referred to as service deliverers or street-level bureaucrats) who oftentimes exercise discretion to make decisions that can affect policy making, goals, and outcomes. Thus, top-downers may prescribe policy goals, but bottom-uppers provide empirical descriptions and explanations that detail why policy outcomes could not be reached or how they can be improved (Matland, 1995; Pülzl & Treib, 2006).

In cognisance of the differences between top-downers and bottom-uppers, the hybrid paradigm, as the name denotes, emerged to combine the two paradigms, overcome their weaknesses, and add balance to the policy implementation debate (Matland, 1995; Pülzl & Treib, 2006). It is referred in some literature as the "third generation" (Goggin et al., 1990) or middle range approach (Scharpf, 1978). The hybrid paradigm not only couples the perspectives of top-downers and bottom-uppers but also blends other theoretical perspectives to create models and frameworks relevant for policy implementation analysis.

The conceptual view of the hybrid paradigm was of particular importance to this research. The theoretical frameworks of the Ambiguity-conflict model (Matland, 1995), the Socio-structural perspective (Cooky & Messner, 2018), and the Policy network theory (Rhodes & Marsh, 2006) were respectively used for Articles 3, 4, and 5 of this research. Using different theoretical frameworks is not only relevant to this study but also contributes to the theoretical triangulation regarding sport policy implementation involving multiple actors in a collaborative relationship. The following subsections detail these conceptual frameworks.

4.3.2.1. Matland's ambiguity-conflict model – Article 3

Matland's (1995) model served as the framework for the analysis of issues of policy clarity and comprehensibility tied to low or high ambiguity, as well as congruence and relevance tied to low or high conflicts. Matland (1995) specified the appropriateness of the different policy approaches (top-down, bottom-up, or combined) in a matrix of four implementation categories to explain their combined impact on how the interplay of ambiguity and conflict affects policy implementation. Ambiguity refers to the vagueness or uncertainty of policy goals or policy means. Conflict occurs among two or more organisations when policies or resources for implementation are seen as being more beneficial to some organisations than to others. The model has four policy implementation categories: administrative, political, experimental, and symbolic (see Table 1). Article 2 of this research uses this framework to "analyse how, and with what success, the government's commitment to the SDGs was translated into programme delivery at the local level (regional and district) in relation to health, one of the central SDGs" and to "examine how sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) have been involved and resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy".

Table 1: Matland's ambiguity-conflict matrix of policy implementation

Levels		**C o n f l i c t**	
		Low level conflict	**High level conflict**
A m b i g u i t y	**Low level ambiguity**	Administrative Implementation *Key determinant: Resources* • Policy goals are well-defined • Information flow is hierarchical • Rational choice decisions are consistent with policies • Not amenable to external/environmental influence • Coercion and compliance are ensured • Applicable to top-down approaches	Political Implementation *Key determinant: Power* • Policy goals are clarified • Compliance is contested by opposing actors • Policies are negotiable with authorities • Some implementing actors are favoured • Applicable to top-down approaches
	High level ambiguity	Experimental Implementation *Key determinant: External conditions* • Policy ambiguity is essential • Depends on individual actor interpretation • Depends on resources of implementing actors • Learning is derived from successful implementation • Applicable to bottom-up approaches	Symbolic Implementation *Key determinant: Coalition strength* • Policies are vague and ill-defined • Little information about policy • Coalition of local implementing actors with ample resources influences policy • Applicable neither to the top-down nor bottom-up approach

4.3.2.2. Socio-structural perspective – Article 4

In Ghana, the commitment to gender equality through sport has not gone unnoticed. The importance of promoting, empowering, and enhancing the participation of girls and women in community sport is expressed in several policy documents. Although community sport focuses on sport for all related programmes and activities (e.g. games), implementing actors at the community level have faced numerous obstacles and barriers due to assumptions that sport is not suitable for women due to biological differences. Thus, I drew on Messner's (2018) socio-structural insights to analyse the experiences, encounters, and barriers that community sport partners face when implementing girls' and women's participation in their programmes. This follows Cooky and Messner's (2018) suggestion of analysing changes in girls' and women's access to sport at three levels. With an emphasis on what Cooky and Messner (2018) referred to as 'the unevenness of social change', it is imperative to point out

that despite the connection between the three levels, changes at one level do not necessarily follow changes at another. Hence, the levels can be analysed separately.

The first level is the personal and interpersonal level. This relates to individual behaviours and everyday practices related to community sport participation. As an example, motives, lack of interest, and enthusiasm for sports fall under the first level. The second level is the cultural context. This is about social norms or cultural values that define gendered roles and indicate how women and girls fit into society. Among the examples are gender stereotypes, religious beliefs, family/parental orientations, and perceptions of girls and women in sports. The third level is the structural one and concerns the institutional context. This level considers organisations and how their structures and policies facilitate or limit access for girls and women.

The socio-structural perspective is of significant importance because previous studies have underscored the low participation of females in community sport activities in Ghana (Ofei-Aboagye, 2004; Nkrumah & Domfeh, 2015; Adam, 2014; Yussif, 2021). Notably, these prior studies in Ghana have primarily concentrated on personal and interpersonal levels. By adopting the socio-structural perspective, I was able to analyse the cultural and structural factors that contribute to the low participation of girls and women in community sports. It is important to mention that the interviews with officials from District Sports Units, Regional Sport Offices, and NGOs hold particular relevance in providing insights into these cultural and structural dimensions.

4.3.2.3. Policy network theory – Article 5

Article 5 is a meso-level analysis of the extent to which implementation of inclusive sport policies by District Sports Units exclude or include national disabled sport associations in Ghana. Using Rhodes and Marsh's (1992) policy network framework, I analysed the implementation of sport inclusive policies at DSUs with relevant persons with disabilities stakeholders who complement public service in communities, thus making the policy network theory imperative. In this regard, I focus on the policy network in the context of inclusive governance and ableism.

Policy network theory examines the "sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between government and other actors […] with interests" in policy implementation (Rhodes, 2006). Hickey (2015, p. 1) described inclusive governance as "a normative sensibility that stands in favour of inclusion as the benchmark against which institutions can be judged and

also promoted". Put together, the policy network as inclusive governance refers to the implementation of policies that incorporate inclusive practices while excluding elements of ableism that undermine inclusive development outcomes. Policy network theory emerged from the Global North, where the advent of pluralism, the shift from government to governance, and the proliferation of the private sector/NGOs allowed frequent interaction between state and non-state organisations.

Specifically, I used Rhodes and Marsh's (1992) typology of policy networks, which suggests a continuum between policy communities and the issues network. Characteristically, the two types of policy network differ in the degree of membership, integration, partnerships, resource distribution, and power. In doing so, I examine the extent to which DSUs exclude or include disabled sport associations in Ghana in their implementation of inclusive sport policies.

5.0. Research Methods and Methodology

5.1. Introduction

In this section, I present the methodological approach used in this study. This comprises the philosophical assumptions, the research design and methods for data collection, reflexivity and ethical considerations, quality assurance, and data analysis. Specifically, this section provides a detailed explanation of my ontological and epistemological positions that underpin this research.

5.2. Philosophical underpinning

The philosophical underpinning of this research is critical realism (CR) which has been integral to this research from the outset. Here, I will describe how CR has influenced the research process. Furthermore, in light of CR, I will discuss the significance of the link between micro-macro relationships, social mechanisms, and case studies as integral to my study.

CR is attributed to Roy Bhaskar's (1975) earlier writings on, "the realist theory of science". It emphasises the importance of understanding the underlying structures or complex sets of interacting factors that shape the world. CR is considered to occupy a midway position by avoiding the perceived limitations of positivism and radical interpretivism (Wiltshire, 2018). The middle ground represented by CR consists of a form of social constructivism - in the sense that the production of knowledge is dependent on theoretical assumptions and is shifting and never absolute. CR distinguishes between natural phenomena (that are more lasting) and social phenomena (often more floating), and the sciences are themselves part of this floating social world. Furthermore, CR emphasises the dynamic interplay between empirical analysis, theoretical interpretation, and contextual situatedness, underlining that the production and interpretation of scientific knowledge are shaped by social dynamics and structures (Bhaskar, 1978).

A premise in CR is that structures enables and restricts people, and that the same structures are reproduced or changed through people's actions – inviting researchers to address micro-macro relationships and to include a general structural level in the analyses. In my case, I observed how sport organisations in Ghana depend on national institutions, and individuals on organisational and socio-cultural norms. Hence, basing my analysis and understanding on theories that link the micro-macro relationships provided more nuanced explanations of the complexities of how sport and the SDGs are implemented in practice. The general macro-

level theories of the state (such as theories of state power, neo-pluralism, and neo-institutionalism) helped me understand how the SDGs were translated into national sport policy guidelines and some insight, although with limited details, into their implementation at the micro-level or in local communities.

The concept of social mechanisms is central to CR. CR acknowledges the existence of "social mechanisms" within the social world. These social mechanisms are underlying processes linking one event to another (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998; Hollis & Smith, 1990; Bryman, 2012). Some examples of social mechanisms drawn from this dissertation's articles include personal interests and football bias enshrouded in politics leading to skewed allocation of financial resource for football activities as well as religious beliefs, gender perceptions, and attitudes towards persons with disabilities entrenched in socio-cultural norms that contravene policy implementation in communities.

CR positions are further linked to scientific practices. The emphasis in CR on understanding social phenomenon (e.g. implementation of the SDGs) in their actual context makes case studies a relevant methodology. Case studies mostly focus "narrowly" on one or a few units while simultaneously including specific contextual knowledge. Next, when endeavouring to interpret findings, we assert that we possess grounds for believing something more than others because we have systematically studied them in their real context taking several factors into account.

For this dissertation, case studies are useful to fulfil the ambitions of CR. Unlike quantitative methods, case studies qualitatively offer the opportunity for an in-depth analysis of one or more cases, provide flexibility in collecting data from multiple sources, and enable the unravelling and clarification of an intricate array of factors and relationships (Yin, 2009).

The case study methodology is particularly relevant to my project for the following reasons: I aim to understand the meanings that local actors attach to the implementation of sport policies and the SDGs; to comprehend the spectrum of meanings related to SDGs (health, gender and disability) and how these are grounded in praxis; and to grasp the procedural nature of the process through which the SDGs are translated into national sport policy guidelines. The case study design enabled me to identify social mechanisms related to the dissertation's research question: (1) how SDGs were translated into national sport policy guidelines, (2) how sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) have been involved and resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and

well-being policy (3) what are the cultural and structural barriers to girls and women participating in community sport and (4) how the implementation of sport inclusion policies excluded or included disabled sport associations.

Notwithstanding the usefulness of case studies, it is also essential to acknowledge their perceived limitations, such as being overly descriptive and challenging to generalise (Gomm et al., 2000; Bennett & Elman, 2006). While these criticisms are often valid, the theoretical framework and the context specificity of my study helped to mitigate these concerns.

Firstly, to address the critique of case studies being overly descriptive, the use of macro-level theories of the state provided me with nuanced perspectives on the sport policy landscape of Ghana. The macro-level theories of the state were supplemented by specific theories that delve more deeply into how sport and the SDGs are implemented at the local level. The complementary theories provided the lens to interpret and make sense of the empirical data, offering more profound insights into underlying social mechanisms. Hence, this involves moving beyond mere description towards a more nuanced understanding of the policy implementation of sport and the SDGs in Ghana.

Secondly, case studies are criticised for producing specific knowledge that can be difficult to generalise. This study is grounded in the context of Ghana, considering factors such as economic, historical, political, and socio-cultural influences on how sport and the SDGs are implemented in local communities. This contextual understanding not only enhances the depth of analysis but also helps to identify the unique features and complexities in the cases of my study. The generalisability of findings from case studies may be limited due to the focus on individual cases rather than broader populations. However, case studies are not meant to be representative in this way. Case studies generate detailed and contextually grounded knowledge, providing valuable insights into processes and mechanisms that can contribute to theory-building and inspire future research to consider the relevance of these processes in their cases. In this way, specific lessons drawn from my study's findings may be relevant in other contexts interested in or seeking to implement sport and the SDGs. For example, specific lessons drawn from my findings (regarding the overreliance on football, the dearth of women in sport leadership roles, the inclusive policy making process, socio-cultural barriers to girls' participation in sport and the limited legitimacy of SDP organisations) may be pertinent to countries or organisations interested in them.

In conclusion, it is important to note that CR is not referred explicitly to in the articles comprising this dissertation. This is attributed to the genre of the articles and the constraints arising from the limited word count imposed by the peer-reviewed journals in which I have published. Nonetheless, the combination of CR and case studies has been instrumental in advancing my understanding of the micro-macro relationship, the concept of social mechanisms, and the broader implications of these phenomena.

5.3. Research design and method

The research used a case studies design to collect and analyse qualitative data from multiple stakeholder organisations within the sport policy subsystem of Ghana. The case studies design comprises an "embedded multiple-case" approach where state and non-state sport organisations serve as the cases in the policy implementation of the SDGs (health, gender, and disability) in Ghana (Yin, 2009, p. 46). The embedded units of analysis for state sport organisations include the sport ministry, state agencies, regional sport offices, and District Sports Units, whereas the embedded units for non-state sport organisations include national sport associations and SDP organisations. Using multiple case studies, I collected data from different sites and analysed the socio-cultural factors, organisational conditions, and collaborative relationships between organisations that influence sport policy implementation and the SDGs (Halkias et al., 2022).

The dissertation articles focus primarily on Ghana, but Article 2 utilises a comparative case study approach (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) to analyse the implementation of sport policies in both Ghana and Zambia. Ghana and Zambia, two African nations, share similar historical ties and developmental trajectories that hold significance for comparative analysis. Therefore, utilising a comparative case study approach facilitates the analysis of implementation strategies, exchange relationships among sport stakeholders, and the allocation of government resources among these stakeholders. In essence, the comparative study affords a particular context for scrutinising sport and development, including the SDGs, enabling a juxtaposition of the experiences of the two countries and subsequent exploration of the implications for the broader African continent.

Yin (2009, p. 18) stated that the case study, in relation to data collection and analysis, "copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest […], relies on multiple sources of evidence […], benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis". Aligned with the research

objective of this dissertation, the case study design emerges as the most suitable approach for data collection and analysis.

5.4. Access and sampling strategy

After gaining approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), initial and formal contacts were made with participants from the aforementioned organisations at the two levels (see Appendix 2). Each participant was also issued with an informed consent (see Appendix 3) form ahead of the interview. The contact was done through gatekeepers/mediators from the network that I have known in my past 10-year experience as both a sport administrator and researcher in Ghana. With regard to the policy making authorities, the research used purposive sampling of senior government officials and policy makers given their expert knowledge of the SDG policy implementation process in Ghana. Furthermore, policy documents and reports were accessed online or requested from the policy making authorities (see Table 1). With regard to the actors primarily concerned with implementation, purposive sampling was again used to gain access to directors and senior officials from the National Sports Authority (NSA), Regional Sport Offices (RSOs), National Sport Federations (NSFs), and Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) organisations. However, two NSFs and two SDP organisations declined the requests for interviews without citing any specific reasons. Snowball sampling was used to access the coordinators from the District Sport Units (DSUs). It is worth mentioning that until 2019, Ghana had 10 regions. Currently, there are 16 regions, but the additional six regions have limited structures. Therefore Articles 2, 3, and 5 used state sports organisations from the previous 10 regions, specifically taken from the northern, middle, and southern parts of Ghana. This selection of regions was designed to ensure a balance of data sources in terms of urbanisation, wealth, population density, and culture. Meanwhile, the research for Article 4, which focuses on girls' and women's participation in community sport, included two additional regions. This expansion was prompted by the appointment of female officials to state regional and district offices in 2021. Table 3 presents the full list of interviewees.

5.5. Data collection

The data collection was part of an ongoing research project that began in 2019. The research involved multi-method data collection through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). This allowed for triangulation in order to make a strong case for the research outcome (Bowen, 2009). As an example of triangulation, data from document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups were

complementary and provided a comprehensive understanding of how the sport ministry's SDG policy goals are implemented at the community level. The details of the methods of enquiry are as follows.

Document analysis: Insights were drawn from policy implementation documents to analyse how sport has been captured and reported. They comprised both government and private documents (see Table 2 for full details). Some of the documents were accessed online, whereas others were requested from participants after interviews. In doing so, biased selectivity was checked by, for instance, ensuring that requested or provided documents served the study's purpose rather than merely suiting research participants (Yin, 2009). Except for the documents I requested during or after the interviews, I downloaded and thoroughly read the documents already available online before the interviews in Ghana. Following this approach, I became well-informed and prepared for the semi-structured interviews and FGDs with government sport officials (at the national, regional, and district levels) and NGO sport officials. Additionally, the documents, especially those from the sport ministry, made up for the lack of adequate interviews at the national level in many ways.

Table 2: Sourced documents

Documents	**Publishing source (year)**
Voluntary National Review Report on the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development	National Development Planning Commission (2019) United Nations (2019)
SDGs Advisory Unit Annual Report	Office of the President of Ghana (2019)
Ministry of Youth and Sports: Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)	Ministry of Finance (2016–2021)
Formula for Sharing the District Assemblies Common Fund – Allocation statement	Parliament of Ghana Library Repository (2016–2021)
Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	United Nations (2015)
Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II)	National Development Planning Commission (2003–2009)
Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDI-II)	National Development Planning Commission (2010–2017)
Ghana Millennium Development Goals Report	National Development Planning Commission (2006, 2008, 2010, and 2015)
Sport Act 934 of 2016	National Sport Authority/ Ministry of Youth and Sports
Local Governance Act 936 of 2016	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Persons With Disability Act 715 of 2006	Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection
Reports, minutes, and publications	DSUs, Disabled Sport Associations and Women's Sport Association of Ghana

Table 3: Participants for semi-structured interviews and Focus group discussions (FGD)

Empirical categories	Semi-structured interviews	FGD	Participants	Description of participants
Policy making authorities	4 (all digital) *	-	4	Directors and senior government officials from the office of the executive/president of Ghana and State Agencies
Implementing actors	6	-	6	Directors from regional sport offices
	4	15	19	Officials from District Sports Units
	7	12	19	Senior Officials from National Sport Federations - including sport associations for the disabled and women
	4	-	4	Representatives from Sport for Development and Peace organisations
Total	**25**	**27**	**52**	

**Conducted via Zoom*

Semi-structured interviews: The rationale for this type of interview was to understand the implementation process from the perspective of key government officials. Unlike FGDs, semi-structured interviews allowed participants to speak more in-depth and confidently share personal information and experiences that may not have been possible to discuss in a group setting (Frisina, 2018). Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, participants' preferences for the interview mode were considered. Consequently, one-on-one interviews were conducted digitally via Zoom and face-to-face (see Table 2 for the full details). For the face-to-face interviews, I adhered to the COVID-19 health and safety protocols in Ghana, which included wearing a mask and maintaining the minimum social distance of one meter (Government of Ghana, 2020; Kenu et al., 2020). Interviewed participants were from policy making authorities and implementing organisations (see Table 2). The interview guide for the policy making authorities (see Appendix 4) covered areas about the measures put in place to ensure implementation nationwide, the engagement of implementing actors in the policy process, and sport's role of in advancing the SDGs in Ghana. Interview questions to the regional sport directors (see Appendix 5) and senior managers from the DSUs, NSFs, and SDP organisations concerned their engagement with the sport ministry, collaborations, access to government resources, and their contribution to the social objectives of the SDGs. The overall interaction during the interviews was significantly positive, as participants were willing to share more detailed information about their experiences. It was evident, however, that some regional directors were cautious in their response to questions about the actual

support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in communities. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

Focus group discussion (FGD): The FGD stimulated open discussions among the participants, allowing them to freely share their experiences from the various districts. As a result, I was able to collect and analyse a variety of narratives and perspectives simultaneously (Krueger, 2014; Frisina, 2018). The discussions involved four to six DSU coordinators and NSF representatives (see Table 3) who provided insights into the communities where they work (Bryman, 2012). Given the political nature and hierarchical order of the district assemblies within which DSUs are located, a neutral location for each of the FGDs was selected to allow participants to speak more freely (Elwood & Martin, 2000). An interview guide provided help in the FGDs (see Appendix 6) with similar objectives as the semi-structured interviews but with deeper frontline insights. The FGD took the form of face-to-face discussion; due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we followed COVID-19 health and safety protocols in Ghana, which included wearing a mask and maintaining a minimum social distance of one meter (Government of Ghana, 2020; Kenu et al., 2020). The participants were very enthusiastic and willing to "tell all" or express their concerns about implementing sport policies in their communities. Due to the participants' eagerness to speak, sometimes they spoke over one another, which required me to moderate the responses. Although Ghana has a hierarchical culture of respect for elders, the participants respected me as a researcher even though most of them were older than me. The FGDs lasted from 70 to 90 minutes.

5.6. Data organisation, processing, and analysis

I (with my co-authors) began by organising and designing my interview guide in accordance with the research questions. The collected data were manually and digitally analysed. Data analysis was undertaken both inductively and theoretically. First, documents from relevant government policies and reports obtained prior to, throughout, and following the interviews were analysed. Our analysis of the documents was based on Scott's (1990) four quality control principles of data authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaningfulness. Data were gathered from the original source or from the relevant organisations and participants for each article. By using the inductive approach, we engaged in data immersion and explanation, to generate common themes from the data (Yin, 2009). The data from the document analysis were inductively analysed to ascertain sport's contribution to national development (for Articles 1 and 2) as well as to health, gender, and disability provisions, as

they are presented in the sport policies of state and non-state organisations for this research.

The semi-structured interview and focus group discussion (audio-recorded) data processing began with transcribing them manually and analysing them digitally with MAXQDA Plus 2020 (for Article 3) and MAXQDA 2022 (for Articles 4 and 5). We familiarised ourselves with the data by thoroughly reading it, making notes and forming ideas about coding. An open coding method supported by this study's theoretical framework was used to generate the initial codes, which were then arranged into categories. Using the theoretical lens for each study, common themes were identified. Based on these themes, each article's findings and discussions were developed. Because the themes generated from the audio-recorded data relate more to implementation at the community level, they were constantly compared with the document analysis to enhance the findings and discussions. To emphasise, we continually discussed and adjusted the final themes as necessary until each article was published.

5.7. Quality assurance of data

Before beginning the data collection phase, I completed all the methodology courses sanctioned by the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (NIH), which allowed me to prepare for the data collection and know the possible challenges related to data collection and the different ways of data analysis. Furthermore, by attending and presenting my PhD project at relevant academic conferences, I garnered critical feedback and perspectives that enhanced the quality of this study. I developed the interview guide in close collaboration with my supervisors, who provided valuable methodological insight throughout the research process. We discussed the calibre of individuals to be interviewed and their relevance to the study's goals. Overall, the intent was to ensure the validity, reliability, and transferability of the research data and findings.

Data validity indicates data's trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2009). This involves using relevant theories, data collection sources, key informants, and data audits. First, this study's use of different theoretical approaches to enhance implementation as a part of the policy process results in theory triangulation (explained in the theory section) and thus enhances data validity. Second, validity is enhanced by using multiple data sources that were complementary and allowed for data comparisons. Third, key informants were selected to provide valuable data insights related to the study's objectives. Several key informants from government policy-making institutions with expertise in sport and SDGs were interviewed. Several local implementing actors with extensive experience in Ghanaian district and regional sport offices were also interviewed. The fourth step involved transcribing recorded

data, reading it carefully, and analysing it digitally using MAXQDA. This was done to generate appropriate themes for the findings. Also, the data analysis underwent a scrupulous audit during discussions with my doctoral supervisors and co-authors.

To ensure data reliability, I verified all research participants before interviewing them. Towards this end, I conducted an online search of their profiles. I also spoke with credible mediators within the Ghanaian sports sector with whom I am familiar. Through this process, I was able to determine the research participants' suitability and credibility. For example, I was attentive and meticulous during interviews with regional directors, whose responses might be influenced by their political affiliation or appointment. Furthermore, all interview responses or claims were categorised and fact-checked against specific documents when necessary to ensure reliability. For instance, I consistently checked the sports ministry's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework against claims of district-level implementation of the SDGs through sport.

Finally, my supervisors, co-authors, and I discussed the research articles' outcomes to ensure transferability as a first step. We discussed and analysed the relevance of the research findings for each article to the context of Ghana and to the broader literature. Also, the measures I took to ensure my data's validity and reliability led to transferability (Maxwell, 2021). The burgeoning use of sport and SDGs and the academic interest in these topics in many countries, as described in Articles 2 and 3, indicate that this research may be applicable to other countries. Specifically, transferability refers to sharing not only the research findings but also the research participants' lived experiences and the Ghana experience as it relates to the implementation of sport and the SDGs (Levitt, 2021).

5.8. Reflexivity and ethical issues

Collecting and analysing data from a familiar context requires critical reflection and introspection regarding the researcher's position. Additionally, it involves an ongoing process of self-disclosure and explanation (Dowling, 2008). I commence by reflecting from the standpoint of an "insider" and subsequently recounting my interpretive journey.

First and foremost, being a Ghanaian who speaks multiple Ghanaian languages and with previous work experience in Ghana, I had an "easier entrée, a head start in knowing about the topic and understanding nuanced reactions of participants" (Berge, 2015, p. 223). However, the researcher's position as an insider can hinder data collection and analysis if the research is not conducted with the necessary scrupulous attention to ethical dilemmas. Furthermore,

beyond the general ethical guidelines from institutions such as the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), Floyd and Arthur (2012, p. 172) stated that there is often "deeper level ethical and moral dilemmas that insider researchers have to deal with once 'in the field''. I therefore focused on the deeper ethical dilemmas in the data collection in Ghana regarding issues such as gaining trust, emphatic neutrality, and projection bias.

To gain trust, participants were given informed consent prior to the interview and were told that their personal details would be anonymised throughout and after the study (Jacobsson & Åkerström, 2012). To ensure emphatic neutrality, I considered the risk that my personal knowledge of the state of sport in Ghana might result in leading questions. There was also the risk that participants may want to discuss personal matters or other unrelated issues (Patton, 2014; Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020). Additionally, the risk of projection bias by both the researcher and participant(s) was taken into consideration. By considering projection bias, I avoided assuming that the participants were fully aware of the details of the SDGs as either a sport policy goal or cross-sectorial policy in Ghana. I also paid critical attention to implied statements, incomplete sentences, and the use of non-verbal cues (such as facial expressions and symbolic gestures) to signify certain meanings (Berge, 2015). Here, I ensured that the interview questions were understood clearly while also probing participants to fully grasp their responses. Due to the participants' fear of job loss (particularly from the District Sports Units) and the culturally sensitive nature of this study, I assigned pseudonyms to the participants (Chambers, 2022). Moreover, the sites for data collection were negotiated to be away from the workplaces of DSU participants (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Being an insider could also lead me to "go native", this means to take for granted some views and practices in the field. Overall, the insider perspective was complemented by the diverse cultural/academic backgrounds of the co-authors, who provided outsider perspectives and theoretical insights. The collaboration and discussions with my co-authors made me aware of some of my taken-for-granted assumptions about sport in Ghana. These include the symbolic yet pervasive football culture, gendered practices within sport organisations and the exclusion of disabled sport associations from community sports initiatives.

My interpretive journey involves comprehending and deriving meaning from the policy implementation of sports and the SDGs in Ghana and beyond. In other words, it delineates the progression from understanding sport policy implementation to conducting research and finally to identifying social mechanisms pertinent to Ghana. During the initial phases of research development, a comprehensive review of how past sport policies have been implemented in Ghana played a crucial role. This review served to contextualise the research

within the broader framework of Ghana's sporting landscape. Here, I engaged in a thorough literature review to gain a more profound comprehension of the Ghanaian culture, economy, history, politics, and the influential dynamics embedded within sporting structures. My literature review outcomes varied from simple to complex tasks. The simple task entailed the identification of cases, encompassing both state and non-state organisations/structures, and an exploration of institutional framework within each case. For example, a review of sports policy documents from the Ministry of Youth and Sports elucidated the hierarchical levels of the sporting structure, ranging from the state to the district level. The sport ministry's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) elucidated the funding of sport whereas the NDPC outlined the institutional framework for implementing the SDGs in Ghana. This is depicted in Figure 1 in Article 3. The complex task encompasses three main facets: (1) interpreting the policy implementation of sport and the SDGs, (2) understanding the relationship between state and non-state organisations, and (3) addressing challenges associated with resistance arising from existing cultural norms.

First, interpreting policy and implementation poses a challenge in public policy analysis (Wash, 2020). Divergent perspectives exist, with proponents advocating positivist approaches based on factual or statistical merits. In contrast, others endorse interpretivist approaches for their emphasis on representation, lived experiences, and meanings. In the Ghanaian context, the statistical portrayal of sport and SDGs implementation, particularly in the domains of health, gender, and disability, has been reported in the sport ministry's MTEF spanning the years 2016 to 2021. However, the absence of information detailing the unfolding of these implementations at the local level is noteworthy. My research interpretation extends beyond governmental documents, including the MTEF and other pertinent publications, encompassing data analysed and generated through a collaborative process with research participants, comprising both state and non-state officials. This collaborative approach or co-production of data ensures a comprehensive understanding of the local implementation dynamics of sport and SDGs in Ghana.

Second, the relationship between state and non-state organisations initially appeared unclear and undocumented despite the recognised centrality of collaborative partnerships in implementing the SDGs in Ghana. Consequently, an in-depth exploration of partnerships and strategic collaborations became imperative during the data collection phase, involving participants from both state and non-state entities.

Third and last, a notable challenge pertains to resistance stemming from entrenched cultural norms, particularly as it relates to Articles 3, 4, and 5. Being an insider with substantial knowledge of Ghana, I was aware that the socio-cultural dynamics within the country vary considerably. Therefore, before data collection, I requested a comprehensive list of all research participants through intermediaries to understand their diverse cultural backgrounds. The list contained information about their names, places of employment and work positions/titles. In Ghana, religious names (used as first names), traditional names (often used as middle names), and family names (used as surnames) are closely linked to one's tribe and socio-cultural heritage. And so, as a Ghanaian, I can tell my research interviewees' socio-cultural backgrounds by looking at or knowing their names. Also, a preparatory talk or an icebreaker session during data collection afforded me valuable insights to discern responses to sensitive socio-cultural and religious issues, particularly those related to girls' and women's involvement in sport or leadership positions and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in sport.

In summary, my insider position and the considerations for my interpretive journey facilitated the collection and analysis of research data. They helped me identify and address the key social mechanisms undermining the policy implementation of sport and the SDGs in Ghana.

6.0. Findings

The findings are intricately linked to the study's conceptual framework, encompassing the development of theories and the interpretive journey. Thus, this chapter summarises the findings derived from this study's five published articles. The first two articles focus on understanding how the SDGs were translated into national sport policy guidelines (RQ1), and the remaining articles focus on empirically analysing the implementation of healthy living (RQ2), girls' and women's participation in community sport (RQ3), and disability (RQ4) at the district level. I present the findings in order, starting with Article 1 and ending with Article 5. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings in greater detail.

6.1. Article 1

Charway, D., & Houlihan, B. (2020). Country profile of Ghana: Sport, politics and nation-building. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 12*(3), 497–512. https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2020.1775677

The first article presents the historical origins and institutionalisation of sport in Ghana from pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial traditions. Considering that there are limited studies on sport and development in Ghana, this study was especially significant for us to understand not only sport's contribution to the SDGs in the present but also the institutional and implementation past of sport and development in Ghana. To accomplish this, I examined the changing trends of sport policies adopted in Ghana; the current structure of sport; funding patterns and trends; the dominance of football; and contemporary issues such as gender equality and disability.

During the pre-colonial period, sport development was amorphous, but it was akin to and practiced as part of the culture and lore of the existing tribes in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana). The institutionalisation of sport began in the 1950s, during the late colonial era. The article illustrates Ghana's history of yielding to external forces such as the British empire, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and some international sport federations that have influenced sport policies in various ways. In a similar manner, Ghana's development policies are influenced by the United Nations' SDGs (supported by the World Bank and the IMF). It is imperative to emphasise that the government's role in welcoming external influences cannot be ignored. To this effect, a key concern is the implication/implementation of government-led externally influenced policies in local communities, which is analysed in greater detail in Articles 3, 4, and 5.

The analyses in the article show how past political upheavals, especially in the four republics of post-colonial Ghana, made it difficult to have stable sport development strategies. Despite the political struggle in the first, second, and third republics, football became a political tool due to its popularity with Ghanaians and was therefore heavily funded and controlled by the state. To date, football is heavily funded, appears in political manifestos, and is extensively used for canvassing during election years. This has led many to describe the national sport policy as being a football policy, which places emphasis on the "Black Stars Image" (senior male football national team) as the centrepiece of sport excellence in Ghana (Ocansey, 2013). Additionally, the article reveals that before 1994, girls and women, as well as persons with disabilities, were not prioritised in Ghana's sport development policies. In 1994, the Ministry of Youth and Sports would go on to create the Women's Sport Association of Ghana (WOSPAG) and the Association of Sports for the Disabled (ASD). The WOSPAG and the ASD are presently considered non-state national sport associations/organisations working closely with the National Sports Authority. The WOSPAG is recognised by all national sport federations for its role in promoting and empowering female athletes. Additionally, they have representatives serving on the boards of some national sport organisations, such as the Ghana Football Association, the Ghana Olympic Committee, the Ghana Swimming Association, and the National Paralympic Committee of Ghana. The ASD has been promoting disabled sport in Ghana, but they have faced opposition from the National Paralympic Committee of Ghana, which has been supported by the sport ministry and recognised as the leading body for disabled sports in Ghana. The ASD has recently taken steps to bring together all disabled sport associations in Ghana, regardless of their affiliation with Paralympic sport to coordinate and consolidate their efforts to influence disabled sport policy implementation in Ghana.

A final point to note is that the article also shows how Ghana has acceded to the UN SDGs, which have become an integral part of Ghana's development policies, such as the 40-year Long-Term National Development Plan (LTNDP) from 2018 to 2057. The SDGs have become a guide for state ministries, departments, and agencies in implementing and achieving them. Furthermore, sport was included in the list of key elements for "Sectoral Issues in Social Development" in the 40-year LTNDP (NDPC 2017, p. 3). This article provides the necessary background to analyse SDGs through sport in relation to health, gender, and disability.

6.2. Article 2

Charway, D., Banda, D., Bitugu, B. B., & Lindsey, I. (2024). A multi-stakeholder approach to sport as tool for development in Africa: Comparing Ghana and Zambia. In B. Graeff, S. Šafaříková, & L. C. Sambili- Gicheha (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of the Global South in Sport for Development and Peace.* Routledge.

The second paper presents a comparative analysis of distinctive features of government-led policy implementation using sport as a tool for development in Ghana and Zambia. Countries from the Global South are regarded as quintessential sites for development following the United Nations' global emphasis on developmental goals since the beginning of the millennium. The UN has consistently advocated for governmental engagement in multi-stakeholder collaboration, and many African countries have, over time, engaged with these global agendas and made significant steps to include sport in their development policy agendas. In the article, we analyse government implementation strategies, the exchange relationships between sport and other actors in each country, and how government resources are distributed among the actors. Using the comparative case study approach, we conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives from national sport agencies; state sub-national structures such as regional and district sport offices; and SDP organisations. As a result, more insights were gained into the policy implementation process. In this article, we identified three themes: (a) sport policy through the National Development Plans (NDPs), (b) governance structure and resource commitment, and (c) multi-sector engagement and collaboration.

First, both countries have adopted sport policies influenced by the UN development goals. Since the dawn of the millennium, there has been a policy shift in both countries from "sport for sport's sake" to sport as a tool for development initiatives, such as Sport for Development and Peace (SDP). Whereas Ghana's NDP emphasised sport as a means of achieving "Sectoral Issues in Social Development", Zambia's NDP emphasised sport as a tool for human and economic development. In the case of Ghana, there is an "SDGs Budgeting and Tracking System", which is an integrated software system called Hyperion, which monitors budgetary allocations and expenditures by state ministries (including the sport ministry). This software system is overseen by the Ministry of Finance and is available online to inform state ministries about the implementation of their policies at the national and local levels. For example, all the Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks of the Ministry of Youth and Sports can be found in the "SDGs Budgeting and Tracking System".

Second, the governance structure of both countries are similar and clearly defined. Through regional offices and district offices, sport ministries govern and administer sport. It is nevertheless clear from interviews with some state officials that a lack of qualified sport leaders and excessive funding are detrimental to the development and implementation of grassroots sports. Third, a multi-stakeholder approach to mainstreaming sport as a tool for development encompasses both state and non-state actors. Here, NGOs (mainly SDP organisations) are recognised as key strategic partners vital to achieving social development goals in local communities. Although the findings revealed more collaboration between the state and non-state organisations in Zambia than in Ghana, interviews with SDP NGOs indicate that there is a weak relationship between SDP aspirations and grassroots implementation in the two countries. A particular concern of the SDP NGOs in Ghana was their non-involvement by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in mainstreaming SDP policies.

6.3. Article 3

Charway, D., Antwi, B. B., Seippel, Ø., & Houlihan, B. (2022). Sport and sustainable social development in Ghana: Analysing the policy-implementation gap. *Sport in Society*, *26*(8), 1319–1339. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2022.2130051

This article outlines how, in line with SDG 3, the sport ministry has sought to educate Ghanaian youths about reproductive health issues, such as HIV/AIDS and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). As a result, the sport ministry showed its commitment by establishing Youth and Sports Resource Centres of Excellence (YSRCEs) in 2016 to provide Ghanaian youths access to recent sport ministry programmes in 2020, such as "Reprotalk" and "Community Information Dissemination for COVID-19". According to the "Policy Outcome Indicators and Targets" in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework from 2016 to 2021, 8,355,609 Ghanaian youths are involved in community health and well-being programmes. The purpose of the article is to analyse how, and with what success, the sport ministry's commitment is translated into programme delivery at the local level (regional and district). In addition, the article examines how sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) have been involved and resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy. This study is based on Matland's (1995) ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation, which is used as the framework for analysing empirical data from government policy documents and from interviews with government officials and key actors within non-state sport organisations. The findings show a symbolic-political implementation – a term from Matland's implementation theory that implies that

implementation is primarily symbolic and political with high conflicts over the means of implementation. Implementation is symbolic because the policies are often vague, abstract, and ill defined, and it is political because implementation is determined by the implementing actor(s) who are favoured as policy makers or have sufficient resources to influence policy. For instance, the resources available for the actual implementation are unevenly distributed and often politicised by leading government actors at the sport ministry and the district assemblies. The symbolic-political implementation can be divided into two parts: (a) symbolic implementation associated with regional sports offices and SDP organisations and (a) political implementation associated with DSUs and NSFs.

Symbolic implementation with regional offices revealed policy ambiguity and conflict over means, thus rendering the sport ministry's community health policy goals abstract or a "referential goal" that may be construed differently. Symbolic implementation with SDP organisations showed an ill-defined strategic partnership with SDP organisations that have been instrumental in the use of sport to address health outcomes in the local community. According to the SDP representatives interviewed, with their combined strength in the local communities, they can achieve much more than what the government can achieve through state district sport organisations, and it is regrettable that the sport ministry does not partner with them or give them the recognition they deserve.

Political implementation at the DSUs revealed an implementation deficit, where frontline implementers who regularly translate policy into action are either disregarded or neglected. Although policies are well-defined at the district level, they operate in a context of high conflict due to over-reliance on football activities, inadequate or no funding, and non-involvement in actual implementation. DSU interviewees indicated that support for football in particular at district assemblies was not surprising, because district assembly directors are often elected and use football as a canvassing tool. In the interviews with representatives of the NSFs, we found overwhelming support for football-related activities and the national football association at the expense of all other associations, resulting in political implementation. They believe that this casts a shadow over their community development activities and undermines the government's collaborative efforts to achieve the SDGs through sport in local communities.

6.4. Article 4

Charway, D., & Strandbu, Å. (2023). Participation of girls and women in community sport in Ghana: Cultural and structural barriers and dilemmas. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902231214955.

The promotion and empowerment of girls' and women's participation in community sport appears consistently in the yearly policy goals and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. From 2016 to 2021, the MTEF illustrated the yearly support of the sport ministry's policy goal regarding SDG 5, gender equality. Furthermore, Local Governance Act 936 of 2016 requires district assemblies where DSUs are located to support girls' and women's empowerment and participation in community sport. However, several of the studies examined in this article showed that participation at the community level is higher among boys and men than among girls and women in Ghana. It is important to note that most studies are descriptive in nature and primarily focus on the individual (e.g., boys, girls, men, and women) as the centre of analysis, with little consideration of cultural and structural factors. Therefore, we address this gap by examining the cultural and structural factors that contribute to girls' and women's low participation in community sports. To do this, we draw theoretical insights from Cooky and Messner's (2018) socio-structural perspectives. We collected research data through document analysis, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews. The interviewees were male and female officials of state-funded regional and district sport organisations in Ghana. We collected initial data in 2020, primarily from male participants from three regions. We conducted a second round of data collection in 2022, following the appointment of some female officials to regional and district offices in 2021. The second round of data collection was timely and made possible due to the national reorganisation and creation of six additional regions (in addition to the 10 that already existed) in 2021.

The findings show that cultural barriers are embedded in entrenched socio-cultural norms as well as structural barriers, which undermine gender-instituted policies and contribute to the girls' and women's low participation in community sport. In terms of cultural barriers, we identified themes such as house chores, gender stereotypes, religion, and early child marriage. Although the interviewees from the District Sports Units generally mentioned these cultural barriers, religious barriers and girl-child marriages evidently vary depending on the region or district. In Ghana, for example, the number of child marriages is higher than in the northern and rural areas (de Groot, 2018), whereas Christianity and Islam are predominant in the

southern and northern regions, respectively. We grouped institutional barriers and organisational practices as structural barriers. Lack of funds, implementation strategies, and gender-based recruitment policies are institutional barriers. The underrepresentation of women in leadership, gendered practices, and partnerships with community-based NGOs primarily concerned with gender are considered organisational practices. Furthermore, interviews with male regional directors who have influence over staffing at the regional and district sport offices revealed how cultural factors influence or interact with organisational practices or policy implementation, resulting in gendered practices and fewer women in leadership positions.

6.5. Article 5

Charway, D., Asare, F., & Grønkjær, A. B. (re-submitted). Leave no one behind? Analysing the implementation of sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities in Ghana's District Sports Units. *Social Inclusion.*

The UN SDG slogans "No one will be left behind" and "The furthest behind must be reached first" have played a central role in Ghana's development programme as well as the implementation of its sports policy (NDPC, 2019). The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework of the Ministry of Youth and Sports has consistently (2016–2021) includes provisions and the implementation of sports inclusion policies for persons with disabilities at the community level. The MTEF, however, provides little to no information about how implementation is carried out at the community level. We were especially interested in the role that District Sports Units (DSUs) in Ghana play in implementing inclusion sport policies for persons with disabilities and associated groups. In the article we analyse the implementation of sport inclusion policies and the extent to which they exclude or include disabled sport associations in Ghana. As an analytical framework, we used Rhodes and Marsh's policy network theory with insights from ableism to examine the degree of membership, integration, resource distribution, and power balance in DSUs related to the implementation of sport inclusion policies. We conducted a textual analysis of sport policies along with interviews with representatives of 15 DSUs, three national sport associations, and three regional sport associations. Overall, the findings indicate that a policy community exists, but it is one that excludes disability sport. In particular, the findings show that, despite evidence of inclusive policies for persons with disabilities, there are challenges related to the membership, the planning and integration of disability programmes, the distribution of funds and sharing of resources, and conflicts among network actors.

We noted that DSUs lacked representation from disabled sport associations and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (DSWCD) despite their presence in various regions and districts. Regarding the planning and integration of disability programmes, the DSU interviewees mentioned that they "deliberately ignore them from our programmes" due to financial constraints. They further explained that they do this to prioritise "abled" sport programmes that they think are popular in the community, thus creating an environment conducive to ableist tendencies and behaviours (Campbell, 2019). We also found that district assembly authorities exercise delegated discretionary authority to make decisions resulting in unfair distributions of funds and resource sharing, as well as conflicts among network actors. A disproportionate distribution of funds and a lack of resource sharing show how district assembly authorities bypass DSUs to organise and support amputee football activities at the expense of sport for other persons with disabilities (under several district sport associations). As a result, two conflicts that arise are conflicts of interest and conflicts with disabled sport associations. Generally, a conflict of interest occurs due to district assembly authorities exploiting the popularity of (amputee) football for political purposes and canvassing candidates, as outlined in Articles 2 and 3. Sadly, this results in conflicts with disabled sport associations, in which DSUs become the target of attacks and misconceptions by district sports associations that feel they have been neglected. In light of this, disabled sport association interviewees asserted that officials at both the district and national levels only use them for political advantages and are only pretending to care.

7.0. Discussion

The above findings show the complexity of the policy implementation nexus frequently addressed in the public policy literature. Based on the four research questions, the discussion covers translating the SDGs into national sport policy guidelines, involving and supporting sport partners in implementing community health and well-being policies, the socio-structural factors accounting for the girls' and women's low participation in community sport, and implementing sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities and disabled sport associations at the district level. The concluding part of the discussion encapsulates the research findings' implications for policy implementation of the SDGs in Ghana.

7.1. Translating the Sustainable Development Goals into national sport policy guidelines

In this section, I will primarily discuss our findings from Articles 1 and 2. The discussion is based on RQ1: How were the SDGs translated into national sport policy guidelines? Article 1 deals exclusively with Ghana, and Article 2 compares Ghana with Zambia. Both articles illustrate how the state adopted the SDGs as national development policies, which ultimately included sport. Both articles were aided by insights derived from theories of state power, neo-pluralism, and neo-institutionalism.

Article 2 describes how Ghana and Zambia institutionalised the SDGs through a multiparty approach. The findings show considerable similarities between the countries regarding the challenges that actors in SDP organisations (state and non-state) face and the opportunities they can provide in the paradigm of government-led policy implementation in the two countries. Also, both countries lack implementation guides, adequate human resources, and financial support. In Zambia, a collaborative effort to mainstream SDP initiatives failed due to a lack of funding for the implementation phase. Ghana has not made any specific efforts to initiate a mainstreaming process.

Focusing on Ghana in particular, Article 1 shows that there have been numerous sport policies in Ghana over the years. However, it was only through the UN development initiatives from 2000 onwards that sport was recognised as a tool for development. As shown in Articles 1 and 2, the government, specifically the presidency of Ghana has been the instrumental link between the UN goals and Ghana's domestic (sport) policies. The government's active involvement in the institutionalisation of the SDGs in the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies is another indicator of government commitment to these goals. In addition, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has consistently mentioned the significance of the

SDGs through sport as a policy goal in its MTEF. Unfortunately, as indicated in Article 2 (and in Articles 3, 4, and 5), government-led policy implementation and commitment are insufficient if they do not consider local needs and involve key stakeholders in the policy process. Key stakeholders, specifically frontline practitioners at the community level, are not mere implementers or public service providers; they can significantly affect public policy in the long run (Lipsky, 1980). There have been two successive governments in Ghana across the political divide that have served as co-chairs for promoting the UN SDGs. To this end, they have also shown a strong commitment to implementing the SDGs in Ghana. Although this seems like the normal thing to do, it is imperative to note that the government's commitment to the SDGs may also be a political strategy for Ghana's image or to ensure continued funding from the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT), which provides concessions to low and middle-income countries (LMICs) that implement the SDGs. Despite the government commitment to and global relevance of the SDGs, the unattended challenges of state and non-state actors at the community level revealed in this study indicate that foreign streams may not directly align with local needs or challenges.

7.2. Involving and resourcing sport partners in community health and well-being policy implementation

RQ2 asked, How have sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) been involved and resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy? One of the key findings under Article 3 using Matland's typology is the symbolic-political implementation at both the policy making and local implementation levels. Symbolic-political implementation is characterised by high conflict over the means of implementation, with symbolically ill-defined policies and politically favoured implementing actor(s). At the policy-making level, the Ministry of Youth and Sports began the process of establishing community sport facilities and Youth and Sports Resource Centres of Excellence (YSRCEs) to support the implementation of the health policies. It is important to note that the Ministry of Youth and Sports initiated and implemented all of these community projects without the involvement of regional and district sport offices or SDP organisations. Besides the regional and district offices's non-involvement, they also lack detailed implementation guides from the sport ministry to help them fulfil civic duties in local communities. As a result, symbolic implementation is evident, particularly when policies are not clearly defined and are left to the discretion of the implementers. An unsurprising political move is that most of the community sport facilities built to date are football stadia, despite frequent references to multipurpose sports facilities in the sport ministry's Medium-Term

Expenditure Framework (2016–2021). Similarly, district assembly directors (often politically appointed) neglect District Sports Units and divert funds for sport-for-all activities to football-related activities. Consequently, the contributions of National Sport Federations and SDP organisations that could complement DSUs' community activities are also overlooked.

The symbolic-political implementation issues discussed also undermine the social significance of sport and hence the sustainability of health outcomes. According to Lindsey's (2008) concept of sustainability, the government, through its institutions, must ensure frequent and equitable distribution of resources to implementing actors, avoid the clientelistic tendencies that cause disparities among implementing actors, legitimise and recognise SDP organisations as strategic partners in order to 'strengthen community capacity' (p. 282), and ultimately work with local implementing actors to make a well-defined implementation guide tailored to the needs of communities. In the conclusion, we emphasise the SDP sector's importance and recommend further research to explore how SDP actors organise themselves and mobilise resources to contribute to sustainable development despite being excluded from government-led policy implementation. In general, Matland's ambiguity-conflict matrix of policy implementation was a useful analytical tool to understand how sport partners have been involved and resourced in implementing the government's community health and well-being policy. The matrix also incorporates elements of both top-down and bottom-up implementation, rather than viewing them as alternative approaches. Nonetheless, the article shows that the matrix would benefit from being used in combination with other theories of the policy process (such as the advocacy coalition framework or the multiple streams framework) to better explain how policy actors exercise power.

7.3. Factors accounting for the low participation of girls and women in community sport

The discussion centres on RQ3, What are the cultural and structural barriers to girls and women participating in community sport in Ghana? Based on our findings and analysis, cultural and structural barriers evidently contribute to the girls' and women's low participation rate in community sport. Concerning cultural barriers, we noted the role played by social actors such as parents, religious sects, and community members. Our analyses show that negotiating and challenging these beliefs is difficult without a conscious and pragmatic effort to engage the aforementioned social actors in gender education programmes. In such engagements, the District Sports Units can, for example, benefit from related SDP organisations or NGOs, community dialogue, and mentorship programmes (especially about the negative consequences of child marriage), which Ethiopia's Berhane Hewan project has

successfully implement (under the Ministry of Youth and Sports). Also, we discussed the need for the implementation of a specific community sport programme that considers cultural and ethnic differences (Brady & Arjmand, 2002; Spaaij, 2013). Furthermore, our findings identified structural challenges that present obstacles to the sport ministry's gender equality goal (SDG 5). Despite the policy statements contained in the Sports Act 934 of 2016 and the sport ministry's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (2016–2021) that promote girls' empowerment and participation in community sport, structural challenges such as gendered practices within state sport organisations, under-representation of women in leadership, and lack of partnership with relevant SDP NGOs undermine these policies. This is an indication that well-intended/instituted policies without a real commitment to implementation may result in poor community development outcomes.

From the beginning of the study in 2020, it was evident that the majority of interviewees from the regional and district sport offices were male. It was not until 2021 that a few women were employed. Interviews conducted with male regional sport directors in particular revealed that cultural factors influence or interact with organisational practices and policies, resulting in gendered practices and fewer women in leadership roles. They asserted that women's absence from leadership in Ghanaian sports may be due to a variety of factors, such as preference, childbirth, women not being accountable, and the rough terrain - hence exemplifying both hard and soft essentialist views and reflecting the patriarchal Ghanaian culture and traditions (Schein, 2004). We discuss that there is evidence that deliberate and concerted efforts to establish, enforce and implement gender policies (structural changes) can result in positive gender equality outcomes over time (cultural changes) (Skirstad, 2009; Ollier-Malaterre and Foucreault, 2017). As a result, we recommend the implementation of quota schemes and collective responsibility.

As a limitation, the study did not address in detail specific safe sport issues that affect girls' and women's participation in community sport, interviewees from the DSUs and NGOs raised them. These safe sport issues could also be addressed in greater detail at the personal or individual level. The safe sport issues related to gender-based violence and harassment have been researched in other African countries (Erulkar & Muthengi, 2009; Shehu, 2010; Fasting et al., 2014; Solstad & Rhind, 2018; Solstad & Strandbu, 2017) and may restrict some girls' and women's participation in community sport.

7.4. Implementing inclusive sport policies for persons with disabilities and disabled sport associations at the district level

This discussion addresses RQ4, How has the implementation of sport inclusion policies excluded or included disabled sport associations in Ghana? In general, the findings indicate that a policy community concerned with persons with disabilities exists, but it is one that excludes persons with disabilities and disabled sport associations from DSU programmes. The decision making at the district level seems to exhibit many of the characteristics of Rhodes and Marsh's (1992) definition of the policy community, including "limited members with some groups consciously excluded' and the 'shar[ing of] basic values and [with] continuity over time" (p. 187). Our main findings regarding the barriers to the implementation of sport policies for persons with disabilities include the lack of funding, conflicts among network actors, deliberate disregard, membership gaps, and the absence of an integrated programme for disabled sport associations. If these challenges are not addressed, the already established inclusive policy provision will be reduced to a mere policy aspiration. Therefore, the discussion focuses on the importance of a collaborative alliance to influence policy outcomes, institutional ableism, and the need for local autonomy.

Through collaborative alliances, network members from DSUs, disabled sport associations, DSWCDs, district assemblies, and regional sport offices can recognise and appreciate their varied interests. Also, building the "capacity to repair or maintain collaborative relationships" is essential to ensure the sustainability (Huxham, 1996, p. 88) of sport-inclusive community programmes. Among the benefits of a collaborative alliance are building lasting social capital and influencing legislation governing the distribution of sport funds to DSUs (Vail, 2007; Misener, 2013; Peachey et al., 2018). Furthermore, the findings indicate that disabled sport associations have been neglected, disenfranchised, and left behind. However, the DSU representatives interviewed are willing to make amends and influence policy decisions that affect disabled sport associations. As DSU activities are largely controlled by district assembly directors, having local autonomy would allow DSUs to carry out their operations without interference from district assembly leaders. Potential conflicts can be avoided through local autonomy, inclusive disability programmes, and a willingness to collaborate with disabled sport associations. In summary, institutional ableism comes as a surprise due to the neglect of disabled sport associations in the process of implementing policy at the local level. Participants in disabled sports describe the sense of deliberate neglect and marginalisation as a feeling of being exploited or used for political purposes (Wolbring, 2008). Consequently, this undermines the national development agenda of "no one will be

left Behind" in Ghanaian communities. Even though the Policy network theory provided valuable theoretical insights into the challenges of the implementation process and the interdependencies among key stakeholders, it provided limited insights into how the challenges may prompt policy change (Sabatier, 1993). We therefore suggest that combining policy network theory with theories such as advocacy coalitions may offer a deeper understanding of how power or dominance (of district assembly authorities) and negotiations among DSUs and between them and disabled sport associations affect policy outcomes.

7.5. Implication for policy implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

This section contains discussions of this dissertation's main findings about the social barriers and mechanisms that undermine the policy implementation of sport and the SDGs in Ghana.

Firstly, in line with Best's (2001) discourse entitled "Social Progress and Social Problems," it is imperative to recognise the nuanced role of social scientists in fostering social development. Best (2001) stated that "pronouncing social progress as trivial and social policies as ineffective may not be the best way to encourage commitment to new policies and further progress" (p. 10). In line with this dissertation, it is undeniable that the institutionalisation of the SDGs in Ghana and Zambia signifies noteworthy social progress. This research demonstrates the institutionalisation of the SDGs in Ghana and Zambia, echoing trends observed in other nations, with policy provisions aimed at integrating sport with the SDGs and ongoing implementation efforts. Both countries' efforts in institutionalisation, emphasising the plurality of actors, and ongoing implementation of sport and the SDGs are captured in their respective annual Voluntary National Reports (MNDP, 2020; NDPC, 2019).

However, these Voluntary National Reports provide minimal insight into the implementation process, obscuring the indispensable role of local sport organisations, whether state or non-state, at the local community level. This gap exposes shortcomings in government-led policy implementation, as explained in Articles 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this study. Government fail to consider the inevitable challenges inherent in a multi-sectoral approach, such as political leaders who exercise their authority or power (Warner, 1991) and inequality among implementing stakeholders or interest groups (Held, 2006; Hudson & Lowe, 2004), as well as the need to ensure a fair and representative policy making process (McFarland, 2007). Such failure has engendered various social factors (discussed in the next paragraph) that widen the gap between policy and the implementation of sport and the SDGs in local communities. Thus, while the institutionalisation of the SDGs and the consideration of sport in

national development plans are commendable, the attendant implementation challenges cannot be overlooked.

Secondly, the findings in this dissertation, across the five articles, uncover deep-rooted barriers and social mechanisms that impede policy implementation of sport and the SDGs in Ghana. These social mechanisms are entrenched within politics, socio-cultural dynamics, organisational conditions, and institutional frameworks. Here, I delve into the social mechanisms, discussing their implications and offering recommendations for successful sport policy implementation.

Politics: Social mechanisms entrenched within politics include the skewed allocation of sport funds by both the Ministry of Youth and Sports and district assembly directors towards football primarily for campaigning and canvassing purposes. This allocation disregards the contribution and relevance of key stakeholders such as DSUs, other NSFs, and SDP organisations, as consistently highlighted across all five articles. Politicians such as the president, the Sports Ministers, and the district assembly directors favour football due to its popularity and historical significance in Ghana's nation-building and development. This preference is evident in all five articles, particularly in Article 2, in which the President of Ghana announced a budget of 25 million US dollars (approximately 156.8 million Ghana cedis [GHC]) to support various national football teams. Notably, this allocation surpasses the total budgetary allocations approved in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for the sports sector from 2018 to 2021, amounting to 154.3 million GHC. Furthermore, this preference is compounded by the district assembly directors, who utilise the sport component of the District Assembly Common Fund for football-related programmes. Another example is illustrated in Article 3, where the construction of various community sports facilities and Youth and Sports Resource Centres of Excellence (YSRCEs) by the sports ministry mainly comprised football stadiums.

To mitigate the problematic processes entrenched within politics, the government must undertake a deliberate effort to ensure the equitable allocation of resources to all key stakeholders pertinent to the implementation of sports initiatives and the SDGs. Ensuring that resources are distributed fairly among stakeholders, rather than favouring one group over others, will serve to enhance the implementation of policies and the outcomes thereof. Additionally, the use of the sport component of the District Assembly Common Fund by district assembly directors can be avoided if the sport component is supported by a legal instrument (LI) that mandates their utilisation by the District Sports Units for their intended

purposes. Such measures may help mitigate political interference that undermines sport and the SDGs implementation in Ghanaian communities.

Socio-cultural dynamics: The socio-cultural dynamics highlighted in this research, include the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society, religious beliefs, and entrenched perceptions of gender roles discussed in Article 4, attitudes towards persons with disabilities outlined in Article 5 and the pervasive football culture detailed in all five articles. All these socio-cultural dynamics significantly undermine policy outcomes and contravene effective implementation. For instance, representatives of the District Sports Units lamented the difficulties they encounter due to religious beliefs (particularly from certain Islamic sects and Jehovah's Witnesses) and household chores, which contribute to girls' low participation in community sports. Another challenge that exacerbates the low participation of girls in community sports is the prevalence of early child marriages in certain cultures, particularly in the northern and eastern regions of Ghana. Compounding these challenges is the pervasive football culture, which both District Sports Unit representatives and regional sports directors tend to support under the assumption that it aligns with community interests. Additionally, the District Sports Unit representatives admitted to intentionally neglecting disabled sports associations in favour of supporting activities such as football that are more popular in the communities.

To improve sport and the SDGs implementation, it is essential to engage the community to gain insights into local customs and traditions. Engaging with community and religious leaders in the policy making process through consultation and dialogues can help identify cultural sensitivities in various parts of Ghana. Again, given the varying culture in different parts of Ghana, such engagements can ensure that policies are culturally appropriate or contextually driven. For instance, contextually driven policies will consider communities where child marriages are prevalent, persons with disabilities are kept from sport and religion prohibits girls and women from sport. Furthermore, training to District Sports Unit implementers on socio-cultural and diversity competencies can enhance their ability to comprehend and navigate cultural complexities proficiently during policy implementation within communities. By incorporating these measures, policies can profoundly address socio-cultural barriers and be implemented in a culturally sensitive way. Additionally, tensions between religious leaders and be implementers at the district level, as captured in Article 3, can be avoided.

Organisational conditions: Barriers and social mechanisms entrenched in organisational conditions include a lack of sufficient funds discussed in all five articles, a scarcity of qualified sports leaders addressed in Articles 2 and 3, and a noticeable dearth of women in leadership roles outlined in Article 4. The insufficiency of funds, attributed to disproportionate allocations favouring football activities, presents a significant challenge to implementation at the local level. For example, it grants regional sport directors and District Sports Units the discretion to determine what is and is not to be implemented, thus determining or influencing policy outcomes. In addition, the absence of qualified leaders possessing sport competencies within the National Sport Authority and district assemblies exacerbates the organisation and implementation of sport initiatives aligned with the SDGs. Regional sport directors in Article 2 referred to this as a "leadership crisis". This issue is further compounded by the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, which all interviewees (both male and females) from regional sport offices and District Sports Units believe contributes to girls' low participation in community sport. Another debilitating factor, as demonstrated in Article 2, is that the male regional sport directors, who wield influence over staffing decisions at regional sport offices and District Sports Units, perpetuate gendered practices that reinforce "traditional notions of masculinity" (Anderson, 2009, p. 4). For instance, some regional sport directors believe women have the choice to pursue leadership roles in sport, while others contend that women may struggle to navigate the demanding terrain of sports in Ghana.

Because organisations play a crucial role in translating policies into actions at the local level, the government (through the Ministry of Youth and Sports) must ensure the equitable provision of adequate resources. This encompasses the allocation of sufficient funds and the employment of competent staff to support implementation efforts locally. Additionally, providing training and development opportunities, as well as enhancing knowledge about inclusivity and gender equality for staff members at the regional sport offices and District Sports Units, will strengthen their efforts in the implementation process.

Institutional frameworks: The barriers and social mechanisms outlined here include the absence of clear policy guidelines for the local-level implementation of sport and the SDGs, lack of inclusive policy making process, and limited legitimacy of SDP organisations, as detailed in Articles 2, 3, 4, and 5. In these articles, regional sport directors and District Sports Unit representatives expressed their non-involvement in the policy making process by the National Sport Authority and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Additionally, with no clear policy guidelines for the local-level implementation of sport, interviewees, especially

regional directors, mentioned (in Article 2) that they were working within their strengths, indicating a clear deficit in implementation. Furthermore, although the institutional framework of the SDGs in Ghana emphasises the centrality of state and non-state actors, the specific roles of SDP organisations are not outlined in the Ministry of Youth and Sports policies. It is not surprising that interviewees from Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) organisations expressed dissatisfaction with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, given their unsuccessful attempts to establish partnerships and legitimise SDP organisations in Ghanaian communities. This lack of partnership extends to the local level, where SDP organisations have a significant presence and could have complemented the Ministry of Youth and Sports' efforts in implementing healthy living, participation of girls and women in sport, and enhancing disability sport programmes.

Contemplating the notion that government-led policies, as exemplified in the Ghanaian and Zambia contexts may potentially yield adherence at the local level presents a challenge. Simon (in Buse et al., 2012) argues that "decision makers are deliberately rational but are subject to real-world constraints, which limit their ability to make perfectly rational choices" (p. 41) Hence, to ensure a profound institutionalisation of sport and the SDGs, an emphasis on participatory processes in policy development is crucial. This involves including all the relevant stakeholders such as SDP organisations and NSFs. Such participatory processes foster inclusivity, transparency and legitimacy, whilst providing avenues for diverse stakeholders to contribute their insights and perspectives.

In conclusion public policies encompass a set of guiding principles, objectives and directives aimed at addressing societal challenges or achieving specific goals related to a particular context (Richards & Smith, 2002). Policies are formulated through collective input and influence from diverse actors, resulting from collaborative interactions (Colebatch, 1998; Rose, 1987). Central to understanding policies is an exploration of the processes through which they are developed. This entails an examination of diverse approaches to policy formulation, ranging from the "messy garbage can model", characterised by its fluid and non-linear nature, to more structured and rational models (Hill & Hupe, 2014). While the former may reveal inherent ambiguities and inefficiencies, the latter emphasises openness, rationality and knowledge-based decision-making. The transition from policy formulation to implementation requires a nuanced understanding of the complex network of actors involved. This includes governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations and community groups, each wielding influence and agency in shaping policy outcomes. Recognising these actors' diverse roles and interests is vital as it enables policy makers to navigate

implementation challenges and foster collaboration. By engaging in rigorous analysis and discourse, policy makers for sport and the SDGs in Ghana and Zambia can enhance decision-making and promote the effectiveness of policy interventions in addressing societal needs.

8.0. Conclusion

The alignment of the Ghana's national (sport) development agenda with the UN's development goals (such as the MDGs and the SDGs) since the beginning of the millennium has been successful at the policy level. However, as this research has shown, there are several implementation concerns at the local level. Therefore, the importance of linking sport to national development goals and recognising it as a tool for sustainable social development is crucial and cannot be overstated. In light of the findings of this research, I see opportunities for agenda setting and policy learning on topics such as sport's contribution to community health and well-being, girls' empowerment and participation in community sport, and the inclusion of persons with disabilities and disabled sport association in community sport. The findings may serve as feedback loops, informing and potentially altering the intersection of socio-cultural demands and organisational practices that undermine implementation at the community level. In general, this study contributes to the literature on SDP and sport policy implementation, which is lacking. Furthermore, it contributes to the call for more local voices and perspectives from the Global South (Darnell, 2012; Coalter, 2013; Lindsey et al., 2017).

This study has some methodological challenges and benefits. For instance, my familiarity with Ghanaian society and sports culture is advantageous, yet it could also lead to overstatements and biased interpretations. My co-authors diverse cultural backgrounds contributed to addressing such limitations (overstatements and biased interpretations) through our continuous discussions and analyses. A further limitation is the lack of sufficient policy making authority respondents from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, even after the Ghana Right to Information Act 989 was enacted on 21 May 2019. To mitigate the situation, I examined significant documents such as the sport ministry's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), the Sports Act 934 of 2016, and the Formula for Sharing the District Assemblies Common Fund, which became available online just before this research began on 1 March 2019. Many of these documents were published online in retrospect, especially from the early mid-2000s onwards. The MTEF, in particular, captures the implementation of sport policy nationwide and is a valuable source at the policy making level.

Overall, I analysed the policy goals and implementations of state and non-state sport organisations in Ghana and the extent to which these influence the collective capacity of sport to contribute to national development. The analysis was conducted with regard to the SDGs and thus the national development goals that emphasise health, gender (girls and women), and disability. The dissertation findings reveal four significant concerns encompassing

politics, socio-cultural dynamics, organisational conditions and institutional frameworks, all of which significantly undermine policy outcomes and hinder the effective implementation of sport and SDGs in Ghana. Entrenched within the four are notable social mechanisms comprising: *politics* - skewed allocation of sport funds towards football; *socio-cultural dynamics* - patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society, religious beliefs and entrenched perceptions of gender roles, attitudes towards persons with disabilities and pervasive football culture; *organisation conditions* - lack of sufficient funds, qualified sports leaders and women in leadership roles; *institutional frameworks* - absence of clear policy implementation guidelines, non-inclusive policy making process. and limited legitimacy of SDP organisations. Given that the dissertation was primarily concerned with policy implementation at the community level, it may also be valuable to explore these issues from a policy-making perspective to gain a better understanding of why and how policy decisions are made.

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Articles

Article 1

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Article 4

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Article 5

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COUNTRY PROFILE

Country profile of Ghana: sport, politics and nation-building

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ABSTRACT

The profile gives an overview of the changing trends of sport policies adopted in Ghana and highlights how past political upheavals made it difficult to have stable sport development strategies. Currently, the emergence of different actors within the sport policy sub-system of Ghana is apparent however the reliance on government for the development of sport makes it difficult to decouple party politics from sport development strategy. The profile begins with a detailed account of the emergence of sport from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial traditions in the history of Ghana. This is followed by an analysis of the current structure of sport and funding patterns and trends. The dominance of football and contemporary issues such as migration, gender equality and disability are also discussed in terms of their impact on policy. The final part highlights the nascent 'sport for development' sector in relation to the United Nation's MDGs and SDGs and how they have influenced sport policy and develop- ment in Ghana.

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Historical context

Precolonial era

Dating back to antiquity, sport in the form of physical activity has been linked to recreation, security, survival and other cultural practices (Cozens and Stumpf 1947, Dunlap 1951, Kyle 2007). Ghana is no exception and this profile provides an insight into sport (in a form of physical activity, games and play) prior to the advent of the European influence in the 15th century (Ocansey *et al*. 2013). The Ghanaian physical culture in the bygone ages was part of the socialisation process and core to the traditions of the tribes located in various parts of present-day Ghana (Busia 1964). Geographical location (coastal, arable and pastoral areas), security and occupation to some extent determined the kind of physical activity of the tribes (Asare 1982). For instance, young men were trained to defend and secure their tribal territories. Also, young people whose parents were fishermen were taught swimming, canoeing and diving; hunters were taught hunting; and farmers were taught farming. Various games, dependent on one's tribe, including wrestling, foot racing, bow and arrow and spear throwing (target games), canoeing and swimming, were keenly contested among men during off-seasons and period of low business activity. Cultural activities such as drumming, dancing and singing during special occasions such as festivals and warriors contest (like wrestling) were also indicative of the physical culture of the indigenous people. According to Asare (1982, p. 55) such '. . . activities had not only social and cultural value, but also influenced the moral and political stability of the society at the time'. A sense of tribalistic ideals (nationalism) was enforced so that the young boys

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were taught to be proud tribesmen, physically strong and familiar with native lore (Watkins 1943). Women and girls during these periods (from most tribes) were not considered for the rigorous physical culture traditions but were active in certain traditional and recreational games that require less-physical demands such as 'ampe', 'kantata', 'oware', 'pempenaa', 'pilolo', 'sabala', 'sansankroma' and 'tumatu' (mostly among southern tribes) to mention a few (Asare 1982). Of these games, 'ampe' and 'oware' remains popular till date in most tribes in Ghana and neighbouring West African countries. 'Ampe' is a female game, requires no equipment and can be an individual or team game depending on the number of people present. 'Ampe' involves facing your opponent(s), jumping while clapping rhythmically and then scoring a point with feet extended (after each jump) in the opposite or same direction of the opponent. 'Oware' extends beyond the borders of Africa to the Caribbean due to the transatlantic slave trade from the 16th to 19th century (Stoffle and Baro 2016). It is a board game, played by both sexes/opposing pairs and it uses strategies meant to hone critical thinking. While there were no written/formal strategies or policies to guide the activities of the indigenous people, the informal traditional education (passed orally) of men and women valorises family and community interests above self-interest (Busia 1964). This sense of community ensured that the physical culture was tailored to the core tribal values which were security, economy and health.

Colonial era

European influence on Ghana (then called Gold Coast) extended from 1471 to 1957. During this period, the Portuguese (1471–1642), Dutch (1580–1872), Swedes (1640–1663), Danes (1674 to 1850), Brandenburgers of then Prussia (1682–1721) and British (1631–1957) engaged native tribes in various trade transactions and missionary activities which altered their way of life and traditions. Like many 'anglophone' African countries (Ndee 2000), aspects of the British culture particularly had permeated the traditional culture of the indigenous people of Ghana by the mid-19th century. Thus, in pursuit of colonial trade in the 18th century which demanded educated natives for interpretation purposes (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh 1975) and missionary work for the propagation of Christianity (Graham 1976), sport and recreational games became an offshoot according to Scanlon (1964) which attracted indigenous people into colonial school and Christian settings. By the 19th century, the British public-school system and physical culture of athleticism, health, muscular Christianity, self-discipline, patriotism, sport, physical and moral education, which characterised the Victorian and Edwardian eras (Watson *et al*. 2005, Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2006) became prominent in the Ghanaian physical culture. The export of the British physical culture has been said to be part of the British imperial strategy to maintain a strong political front, protecting its interests and territories around the world (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2006). However, Asare (1982) argues that such a system of toughening, disciplining, athleticism, competition and moral education resonates with the physical cultural motifs of the Ghanaian tribes in the precolonial times. Gradually organised sport and physical education by the mid-20th century had become an integral component of the education/school, military training and political systems of the then Gold Coast. Ex-military and enthusiasts with no education in sport and physical education were often used as teachers or trainers in schools (Ocansey *et al*. 2013). It is important to mention that, though games such as athletics, boxing, cricket and volleyball were played and taught albeit with limited facilities (Apter 1955), football was given the most attention.

Sport strategy adopted during colonial era: Sports Council Ordinance No. 14 of 1952

By the beginning of the 20th century Ghanaians (then people of Gold Coast) had fully embraced organised sport which led to the formation of the first sport association called the Gold Coast Football Association (GCFA, now Ghana Football Association) in 1920. This was followed by the formation of Gold Coast Amateur Athletics Association (GCAA, now Ghana Athletic Association) in 1944 and Gold Coast Olympics Committee (GCOC, now Ghana Olympic Committee) in 1951. Ghana

as Gold Coast (combined with British Togoland [comprising current Togo and Volta region of Ghana]) participated in its first-ever Olympic Games in1952 held in Helsinki, Finland. Participation in the Olympic Games led to the enactment of Sports Council Ordinance No. 14 of 1952 by the British Colonial rule to administer, develop and control sport in the Gold Coast (Ocansey *et al*. 2013, p. 19). This became the first legal framework and main precursor for sport development in Ghana during colonial era. Under the Ordinance Ghana debuted as an independent country at the 1958 Commonwealth Games held in Cardiff, Wales, presenting 16 athletes (10 in athletics and 6 in boxing) and winning 1 bronze medal (Commonwealth Sport n.d.). The Ordinance also established the Gold Coast Amateur Sports Council (GCASC) to managesport associations, organise and promote amateur sport and sport-for-all under the umbrella of the central government. This objective was however hampered by inadequate sport facilities and lack of qualified/trained persons to advance the Ordinance's objectives across the entire country. Nevertheless, elements of the Sports Council Ordinance No. 14 of 1952 remained relevant beyond Ghana's independence in 1957 as it ensured that prominent European football coaches were brought to coach the national football teams of Ghana. George Ainsley (1958 to 1959), Andreas Sjolberg (1959 to 1962) and Joseph Ember (1963) from England, Sweden and Hungary, respectively, coached the national football teams until the first Ghanaian president, fuelled by his pan-African ideas, ended the importation of European coaches.

Postcolonial era

The transition from colonialism to independence was characterised by a sense of pride and nationalism (Morrison 2004) having been colonised by multiple European countries from the early 15th to mid-20th century (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995, p. 8). One of the main catalysts for independence was the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, who led the Convention People's Party. He found fame with the people of the then Gold Coast with the slogan, 'self-government now', a demand that resonated deeply with the people and thus, opened the door for partial independence in 1957 and full independence in 1960. Nkrumah became the substantive president of the first republic of Ghana on 1 July 1960. The political landscape of Ghana since independence has been subject to many upheavals. The postcolonial period in Ghana has been marred by radical and disruptive political ideologies, corruption, coup d'états and militarism. This section examines recent Ghanaian political history and demarcates significant periods in the history of Ghana.

First Republic (1960 to 1966) and military rule (1966 to 1969)

Shortly after the first democratic presidential election, and according to the new constitution for the Republic, power was consolidated in the hands of the president and his cabinet of ministers. Despite the acknowledged intellectual capacity of the president, Kwame Nkrumah (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995), the political priority he gave to 'Africa Must Unite' and the Pan-African Movement came at the expense of domestic affairs and development which led to discontent. As Nkrumah once stated, 'The independence of Africa would be meaningless unless it is tied to the total liberation of Africa'. This paved way to courting a new relationship with the Soviet Union where both countries concluded cultural and academic exchange agreements (that included sport) between 1960 and 1966 (Kulkova and Sanusi 2016). Influenced by socialist ideologies (Gyimah-Boadi 2008) Nkrumah sought for unity and a better standard of living for all African workers who in his view have been exploited by capitalist enterprises in Africa. Consequently, Ghana's economic and natural resources were used extensively for the pursuit of external objectives (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995, Gyimah-Boadi 2008). This strategy culminated in a serious economic crisis (particularly rapid inflation and rising taxes) and civil protests in Ghana. Nkrumah's time in power was short-lived and he was overthrown in 1966 by a coup d'état led by military and police officers who thence, formed the National Liberation Council (NLC) and held on to power until 1969 before ushering Ghana into multiparty parliamentary democracy.

Key sport strategies adopted by the First Republic and NLC

Central Organisation of Sports (COS), 1960. The COS was a de-facto state-led organisation created in the First Republic by Nkrumah's presidency to replace the erstwhile Gold Coast Amateur Sports Council (GCASC). The president expunged the imperial elements in the GCASC with a renewed mandate of using local sport experts to focus on amateur and professional sport development throughout Ghana. Subsequently, a director and deputy director of sport, regional sport developers and several other staff were employed within COS as part of the president's accelerated programme to satisfy the overwhelming wave of nationalism and pride among Ghanaians while pursuing his Pan-African agenda. Capitalising on sport as means to foster national pride, the President envisioned that '. . . *In the field of Sports, it is the concern of my government that an independent Gold Coast [now Ghana] shall stand to none, and it is our intention to encourage national competitions which will produce sportsmen and athletes for national and international contests. These competitions must run through the entire educational system in order to provide us with continuous supplies of distinguished sportsmen'* (Nkrumah 1961, p. 58). Based on directives from the president, the Schools and Colleges Sports Federation (SCSF) was created through the then Ministry of Education. A move which deemphasised the relevance of physical education and games in schools (Ocansey *et al*. 2013) in favour of organised competitive team sport.

A significant influence at this time was the relationship between Ghana and the Soviet Union which resulted in the Soviet Union boosting sport development in Ghana through various sport exchanges and training programmes as well as providing facilities, financial and technical support (Ocansey *et al*. 2013, Kulkova and Sanusi 2016). Furthermore, Nkrumah instructed COS to set up the Real Republikans Sporting Club to focus on athletics, boxing, football, hockey and table tennis. The investment in the Real Republikans Sporting Club resulted in Ghana's participation in the summer Olympics at 1960 Rome Olympics (won 1 Silver medal in Boxing) and 1964 Tokyo Games (won 1 Bronze medal in Boxing). Ghana also participated and performed well at the Perth 1962 (won 3 Gold, 5 Silver and 1 bronze medals) and Kingston 1966 (won 5 Gold, 2 Silver and bronze medals) Commonwealth Games. The enormous support and particular focus on football by the President led the senior national football team of Ghana to win the African Cup of Nations in 1963 (hosted by Ghana) and in 1965 (in Tunisia).

According to Asare (1982) Nkrumah's support for sport was a reflection of his personal political and social values. Baba (2010) mentioned that the preference for competitive inter-school sport meant that trained physical education teachers were faced with the daunting task of preparing students for competitive sport at the expense of physical education. Adum-Kyeremeh (2019) also detailed how the unchallenged power vested in the management team of COS resulted in mismanagement of funds, nepotism, favouritism and autocracy. This led to the reduction in the extensive powers and dismissal of the sport director of COS by the National Liberation Council (which was formed after the military coup that deposed Nkrumah in 1966).

Sports Council of Ghana. After the overthrow of Nkrumah, the National Liberation Council (NLC) military rule assembled a sport review committee (named Tibo Committee) and thence, promulgated Decree 224 to empower the Committee to review, decentralise and streamline the activities of the Central Organisation of Sports (COS). The review led to the creation of the Sports Council of Ghana (SCG) on 2 February 1968, with the responsibility of fulfiling an advisory role on policy for sport administration and development in Ghana. Furthermore, to enforce the mandate of the SCG, the National Liberation Council passed NLC Decree 330 on 17 February 1969, under which the SCG made recommendations (accepted in the Second Republic) for stringent financial measures to foster transparency and the need to dissolve and replace COS with the establishment of national, regional and district sport councils in Ghana. Despite the prevailing political tensions and military occupation, the senior national football team continued to be successful, finishing second in 1966 (in Ethiopia) and 1968 (in Sudan) African Cup of Nations.

Second Republic (1969 to 1972) and military rule (1972 to 1979)

Soon after the overthrow of Nkrumah as president, the 1969 Constitution of the Second Republic was enacted and Kofi Abrefa Busia was elected prime minister. The Constitution assigned real executive position to the primeminister while making the presidency a nominal executive position. After grappling with the woes of the economy for 27 months in office, the 1969 Constitution was suspended and Busia was ousted in 1972 by the second military coup d'état in the history of Ghana. Having gained popularity and support from the people by reversing Busia's unfavourable austerity measures, General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong together with other high ranked military officers decided to introduce full military rule in 1975 by forming the Supreme Military Council (SMC) characterised by military ideologies and principles. The Supreme Military Council, like the previous administration, was undermined by high inflation, high taxes, hunger, and protests across the country. Subsequently, a counter-coup d'état was staged by junior ranked army officers, led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings in 1979.

Key sport strategy adopted by the Second Republic and Supreme Military Council (SMC)

Sports Act SMC Decree 54 of 1976 (LI 1088). The Second Republic accepted many of the reforms introduced under National Liberation Council Decree 330 and subsequently accorded oversight responsibility for sport to the Ministry Education, Culture and Sport, marking the first time that sport was attached to a government ministry. However, this reform was short-lived. Following the formation of the Supreme Military Council, the Sports Act SMC Decree 54 of 1976 was enacted and became the first detailed sport legislation in Ghana. The Sports Act created the National Sports Council in 1976 with a responsibility to handle all matters of sport as well as to report directly to the then Head of State (the military leader at the time). The National Sports Council was mandated to organise, promote, develop and provide financial support to amateur and professional associations. Subsequently, a substantive Ministry of Sports headed by a 'Commissioner for Sports' was formed in 1978 and charged to have oversight of sports development in Ghana and also to report directly to the then Head of State. Eventually, the National Sports Council became a unit within the Ministry of Sports. From 1979 a minister was assigned to the Ministry of Sports and this has been the norm to date. It is, however, important to mention that Legal Instrument (LI) 1088 was passed to empower the Minister of Sport under Section 42 (sub-section 2a and 2b) of SMC Decree 54 of 1976 to regulate and oversee the political processes and programmes of National Sport Federations/Associations (herein referred to as NSFs) in Ghana. Though SMC era was fraught with a troubled and fragile economy, Ghana hosted and won the African Cup of Nations in 1978.

Third Republic (1979 to 1981) and military rule (1981 to 1993)

As promised by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the 1979 Constitution of the Third Republic was passed, executive presidency and multiparty democracy were restored, and thence Hilla Limann, a former diplomat became the president. However, his presidency was abruptly curtailed in 1981 by the members of the AFRC who felt the Limann administration was incapable of steering the affairs of government. To mark the end of the Third Republic, Rawlings assembled a new council called Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) and it was made up of both army officers and civilians with the aim of 'restore[ing] human dignity to Ghanaians [with] a chance for the people, farmers, workers, soldiers, the rich and the poor, to be part of the decision-making process.' (Naylor 2000, p. 22). Rawlings was hailed for the initiation of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which led to reduced inflation from 122.2% to 10% and a change in economic growth from −5% to 4.1% between 1983 and 1987 (IMF-DataMapper 2019). Rawlings further promised to return the country to constitutional rule. It is, however,

important to mention that Rawlings' tenure was characterised by the execution of alleged corrupt public officials, high unemployment, an abysmal exchange rate, media censorship, poor education and the 1981 to 1983 famine (Donkor 1997, Tan and Rockmore 2018).

Key sport strategy adopted by the Third Republic and Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)

National Sport College, Winneba. Holding on to the mandate of the Ministry of Sports and state-controlled SMC Decree 54 of 1976 (LI 1088), Ghana won the 1982 African Cup of Nations held in Libya and also won Bronze in football at the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics. The success in 1982 was short-lived due to the emigration of players and trainers from Ghana as a result of the volatile economy under the PNDC. Consequently, a number of famous and iconic football players like Karim Abdul Razak (to USA, UAE and Egypt), Abedi Ayew Pele (to Qatar, Switzerland, Benin and France), Anthony 'Tony' Yeboah (to Germany) and Nii Odartey Lamptey (to Belgium) signed with foreign football teams (Darby 2016). In response and through the Sport SMC Decree 54 of 1976, the National Sport College, Winneba (NSCW) was created in 1984 under the Provisional National Defence Council regime to specifically train, equip and foster retention of sport coaches, administrators and the youth in Ghana.

Fourth Republic (1993 to date)

Following enormous pressure from both internal and external organisations, Rawlings set up a 258-member committee of constitutional experts to draft the 1992 Constitution. The draft constitution was overwhelmingly approved through a national referendum by 92% majority of the 3,680,973 Ghanaian who voted (Ayee 1993). In this light, multiparty party democracy was once again restored, and Rawlings became the fourth elected president of the Fourth Republic of Ghana by representing the National Democratic Congress (NDC) which he founded as a replacement for Provisional National Defence Council. Though Rawlings stood for the election as a civilian, the major opposition party (National Patriotic Party [NPP]) feared the awakening of military tendencies given that Rawlings' cabinet comprised some former military members of the Provisional National Defence Council. Nevertheless, the Fourth Republic marked the beginning of an era that emphasised a free press, good governance, health, human rights, sport and various development objectives. Since then, Ghana has experienced seven peaceful elections and political power has alternated between NDC and NPP. In recent times, Ghana has been increasingly receptive to globalisation demands and neoliberal reforms, nevertheless, it is important to point out that the approach to governance between NDC and NPP has been characterised by alternating waves of social democracy and liberalism.

Key sport strategies adopted by the Fourth Republic

National Sport Policy (NSP) of 1994. In tune with the new civilian era characterised by multi-party democracy, active citizenry, freedom of expression and civil society participation in politics and policy discourse, the NSP of 1994 was formulated to provide clear guidelines and strategies for policy implementation in Ghana. The NSP became the first sport policy of Ghana and it was framed with an inclusive approach indicated by the inclusion of sections concerning women's sport and sport for persons with disabilities/para sport. The NSP of 1994, through the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Youth section added in 1994) spearheaded the creation of the Women's Sport Association of Ghana (WOSPAG) and Association of Sports for the Disabled (ASD). Furthermore, grassroot sport development and inter-ministerial collaboration (which included collaboration with Ministries responsible for local government, education and health) were also highlighted. Nevertheless, many described the NSP as a football policy which placed the 'Black Stars Image' (senior football national team) as the centrepiece of sport excellence and development in Ghana (Ocansey 2013). Activities of the Ghana Football Association dominated government business which, according to Ocansey, was due to the

overwhelming support given to the 'Black Stars' by politicians at the expense of other sport disciplines and associations.

Sports Act SMC Decree 54 of 1976 (LI 1988) In 2011, though qualified, Ghana was suspended by International Olympic Committee (IOC) ahead of the London 2012 for government interference in the operation of the Ghana Olympic Committee that undermined the principle of the autonomy of National Olympic Committees. The suspension by IOC caused a major policy-change in Ghana. There was an immediate reaction from both parliament and the executive to replace LI 1088 (which reduced the autonomy of NSFs including the GOC). Consequently, LI 1988 was agreed by the executive council of Ghana which resulted in NSFs becoming autonomous and the government limiting its involvement in their decision-making processes and management. In response, the IOC lifted the ban. The LI 1988 was, however, deemed a temporary measure at the time because there was a Sport Bill (now Sports Act, 2016) which had been on the floor of parliament since 2000.

Sports Act, 2016 (Act 934). The Sports Act, 2016 was passed to meet modern trends and global standards of sport development. The policy is meant to provide development through sport as well as promotion and management of amateur and professional sport. The Sports Act, 2016 was the result of extensive debate and advocacy from civil society groups including the NSFs, sport for development (SDP) organisations and individual experts. The NSFs believe that the enactment of the Sport Act 2016 will oblige the government to stay committed to their financial needs and holistic development of sport in Ghana. The SDP organisations, on the other hand, opined that the Sports Act, 2016 will legitimise their 'sport for all' activities and also recognise them as core actors of the SDGs which forms part of the MOYS policy agenda. Subsequently, the Sports Act, 2016 established and enforced the National Sport Authority (NSA, replacing the National Sports Council) as the corporate body with three broad objectives: (1) to promote, develop and organise mass participation, amateur and professional sports; (2) to encourage increased participation and improved performance in sport; and (3) to encourage the private sector to contribute to the funding, development and promotion of sport. To meet these objectives, the policy further enumerated 14 functions to include, but not be limited to, partnership and collaboration with stakeholders, promoting para sport as well as adopting policies regarding gender equity, equal opportunities and access to sport, child protection in sport and safe/drug-free sport. The sustained lobbying efforts and solidarity from various civil society organisations are indicative that the Sport Act, 2016 will take account of the different but interconnected roles that state and non-state sport organisations will bring to the development agenda of Ghana.

The Sports Act, 2016 (934) nonetheless, lacks depth with regards to detailed strategic plans and policy guidelines on how each of the three broad objectives of the NSA will be achieved in every region and district of Ghana. It therefore calls for a new and comprehensive national policy guideline. Furthermore, despite mirroring what Philippe Schmitter (1974, p. 103) referred to as 'societal corporatism' which is based on consensus and interest representation, the policy has deepened the imbalance of power relations among interest groups. Thus, confirming Cohen and Pavoncello's (1987) assertion that among interest groups there could be disparity in power relations because well-resourced interest groups will have more bargaining power (to access the state mechanisms) over relatively under-resourced groups. The Ghana Football Association in this regard has benefitted immensely at the expense of all the other interest groups at state and non-state levels.

Current structure of sport in Ghana

The Ministry of Youth and Sport (MOYS) has the responsibility to formulate youth and sport policies, monitor and evaluate policy implementation; achieve national integration and international recognition through sport; promote youth empowerment and self-development; and provide an enabling environment for sport development, organisation and promotion. MOYS oversees three distinct

state agencies, the National Sports Authority, National Sports College, Winneba and the National Youth Authority. The National Youth Authority does not have a direct link to sport development as it focuses on empowering youth civic engagements and partnering with the private sector and civil societies to provide employment opportunities for and invest in young people. The National Sports College, Winneba, on the other hand, is responsible for training coaches, sport managers and other people within sport. However, activities of the National Sports College have stalled due to recent developments where universities in Ghana are offering academic programmes in coaching and sport management while NSFs are also conducting training programme to suit their respective international sport federations. The National Sports Authority serves as the sport implementation and development arm of the MOYS. As already mentioned in the Sport Act, 2016 (934), the National Sports Authority is a 'corporate body' (adopting a corporatist approach) with a distinct sport governing structure with a mandate to oversee the development and encouragement of mass participation in sport. See Figure 1 for the organogram of sport in Ghana.

The National Sports Authority has regional and district structures with obligations to cascade the holistic development of sport and physical activities as well as to use sport to achieve various social outcomes in communities of Ghana. The National Sports Authority has Regional Sport Committees (RSCs) headed by a regional sport director in the current 16 regions (use to be 10 regions until 2019) of Ghana to ensure the implementation of the National Sports Authority's goals in the 260 districts in Ghana. To do this, RSCs liaise with District Sport Units (DSUs), headed by district sport directors who have direct links to communities and civil societies. Additionally, the National Sports Authority also implements its goals through collaboration with relevant stakeholders such as the Ghana Education Service, the Ghana Olympic Committee, the National Paralympic Committee of Ghana, NSFs, Sport for Development organisations and tertiary schools in various communities of Ghana.

Organising sport programmes and activities across different levels

Various sport programmes such as school sport (basic and tertiary), elite sport leagues and community development through sport programmes have been organised by multiple sport organisations

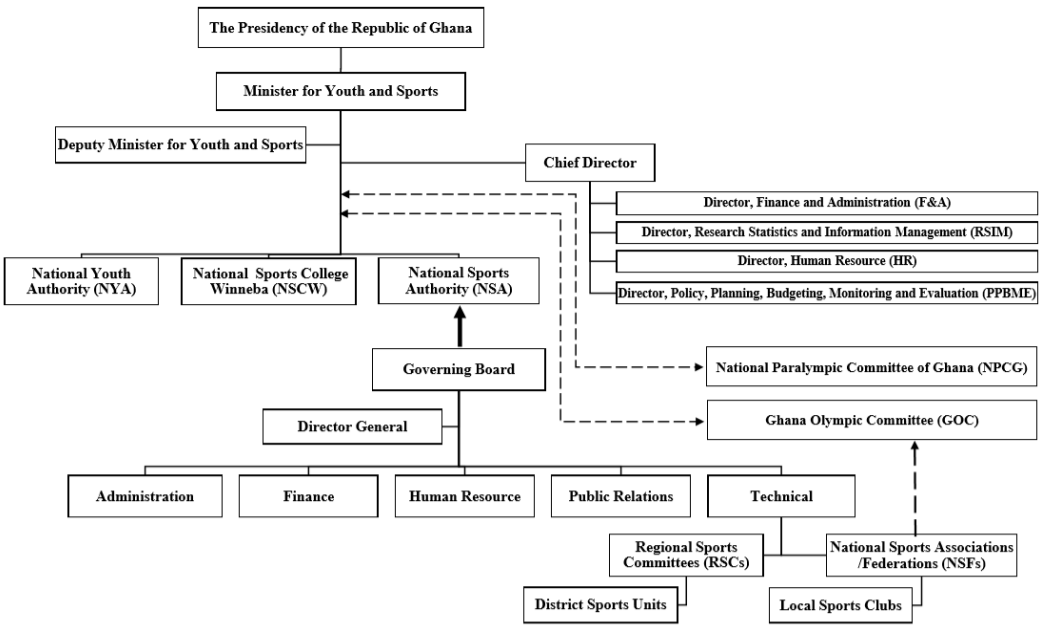

Figure 1. Organogram of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the National Sport Authority of Ghana. Source: Edited from the home page of both Moys and NSA.

without direct links to either MOYS or National Sports Authority. Organisation of sport, be it 'development of sport' or 'development through sport' in Ghana can be categorised under seven main organisations which comprise three state and four non-state organisations. Thus, while Ghana Education Services, National Council for Tertiary Education and National Sports Authority are state organisations, the Ghana Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee of Ghana, National Sport Federations and Sport for Development organisations (comprising NGOs that use sport for social and community development) are non-state organisations. Though these non-state organisations are somewhat autonomous, they are not mutually exclusive as their programmes tend to interdependent with each other while also complementing sporting activities of the state organisations.

Funding

The Ministry of Youth and Sport (MOYS) like all state ministries in Ghana follows the Programme-Based Budgeting pattern. This requires a stated goal, objectives and detailed programmes and activities for funds distribution. Since 2016 the MOYS policy goal for the funds allocation is:

> To contribute to the attainment of national integration, sustained macro-economic stability, peace, healthy population and SDGs through youth development and empowerment, and promotion of sports.

Policy objectives through which funds were disbursed (in relation to sporting objectives) are to (1) enhance sports and recreational infrastructure; (2) build capacity for sports and recreational development; and (3) ensure sustainable funding sources for the growth and development of sports. Funds to MOYS (as headquarters) since 2016 have been allocated specifically to administration; human resource; and development and policy, planning, monitoring and evaluation. While these allocations address the needs of MOYS it is important to mention that the MOYS reserves a supplementary budget (referred to as 'other budget' in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework [MTEF]) and through the National Sport Authority, funds are allocated to support activities of the NSFs, Ghana Olympic and Paralympic Committees. Though the supplementary budget is mentioned in the MTEF, full details of the budget allocation are unavailable. This lack of detail makes it difficult for policymakers to analyse and compare the funding trends and support given to NSFs, Olympic and Paralympic committees. Nevertheless, MOYS has consistently and specifically provided a relatively high level of support to the national football teams of the Ghana Football Association. This special support has been consistently noted in the major achievements of MOYS in each financial year. Most NSFs usually tagged 'lesser known sport' in Ghana, have expressed dissatisfaction over unfair treatment from MOYS since the financial support given to all other NSFs bears no comparison to the funding provided to the Ghana Football Association for international competitions.

Funds allocated for sport development are distributed between NSA and NSCW (see Table 1). Funds for the NSA are distributed to the Regional Sport Committees for district/grassroot-sport programmes and sport infrastructure development/management (see Table 2). This is basically to make sport accessible, available and to encourage mass participation through the regional and district programmes. As noted in Table 2, funds retained at the headquarters of the NSA are partly used for elite sport programmes such as talent identification/development (in partnership with NSFs). However, the MTEF budget-sub programme objectives and results of the NSA tend to focus more on elite sport programmes than mass participation or sport for all programmes which are integral to the MOYS policy of achieving the SDGs. Beside the NSA allocations community and elite sport programmes, funding details for adult, youth, women and disability sport programmes are absent. Again, this makes it difficult for policymakers, researchers and academics alike to have a full grasp of the sport development models and systems in Ghana.

The NSCW receives the least funding as shown in Table 1. The NSCW funds over the years have mainly been used for organising sport workshops/seminars/training programmes for staff, agencies

Table 1. Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) of MOYS in Ghana Cedis (GH₵).

					Sport Development	
Year	Allocation	% Change	Gen. Admin. Headquarters	Youth Service NYA	NSA	NSCW
*2012	54,244,178	-	-	-	-	-
*2013	53,872,871	−0.68	-	-	-	-
*2014	36,134,116	−32.9	-	-	-	-
*2015	36,186,217	0.14	-	-	-	-
2016	22,560,058	−39,65	5,574,038	7,472,131	7,430,943	2,082,947
2017	46,910,275	107,9	15,604,765	12,995,130	14,033,543	4,276,836
2018	32,799,500	−43,02	11,930,809	7,533,929	11,058,414	2,276,348
**2019	43,795,180	33.4	19,174,409	8,444,417	13,311,580	2,864,640

*Budget allocation details unavailable. Also denotes financial years before the introduction of the Programme-Based Budgeting.
**Denotes unaudited budget/current budget allocation year.Source:
edited from the Ghana Ministry of Finance.

Table 2. National Sport Authority funding for regional/communityand elite sport programmes, 2016 and 2017.

	Year	
Regional Allocation	2016	2017
Headquarters	6,728,646	9,314,471
*10 regions	702,297	4,719,072
Total	7,430,943	14,033,543

* Ghana had 10 regions until 2019.
Source: edited from the Ghana Ministry of Finance.

and some stakeholders of MOYS. The MTEF for 2019 also showed that the NSCW has specifically focused on football and tennis, accounting for a total 113 and 120 training and development programmes in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

As detailed above, the weight of responsibility for countrywide sport development and policy implementation lies with NSA and to extent NSCW. However, a careful analysis of Table 1 shows a steady rise in the percentage of the total allocation to MOYS (Gen. Admin. Headquarters) from 24.7% in 2016 to 43.8% in 2019, while that of NSA and NSCW, respectively, dropped from 32.9% to 30.4% and from 9.2% to 6.5% of the total allocation from 2016 to 2019.

Politics of Ghana sport

As recounted in both colonial and post-colonial eras, sport has always been part of Ghanaian politics. It is almost impossible to decouple sport from government business in Ghana partly because of the heterogeneity of the population with over 100 languages and tribes as well as different religious sects. Given this background, sport is used as an instrument to reinforce national identity and deemphasise differences. Also, coupled with the prominence of sport on the international scene, global capital market and social media platforms in recent times, the sport consumer base in Ghana (like many African countries) has attracted all kinds of people beyond athletes and coaches (Alegi 2010). Ghana lacks the statistical data on sport participation; however, colonial heritage games like athletics (track and field), boxing, field hockey and football are very popular. Of these games mentioned, football dominates the public's attention. Football was initially used by the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah to legitimise his position with Ghanaians as well as to spread his agenda of African Unity and Pan Africanism (Darby 2013). One of Nkrumah's most significant actions was the creation of a national football club, named Real Republikans, which comprised the best players from across Ghana (a strategy designed to appeal to Ghanaians irrespective of tribe) to participate in the local football league and also represent Ghana in some international competitions.

He also initiated the drafting of the most talented football players from schools to create what came to be known as the 'Academicals' who were meant to feed into the various national football teams of Ghana.

Football's popularity has not only been used by Ghanaian politicians to improve their public ratings or to launch their political career but has also been co-opted into party political manifestos to either score political points or make campaign promises. It is not uncommon to see political parties/leaders taking credit for the achievements of the senior national football team in international competitions like the African Cup of Nations and FIFA World Cup competitions. The current MOYS funding trends are a typical example of why football is extolled and held in high esteem. For instance, in 2005, the then Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (now MOYS) played a role in securing a three-million-dollar sponsorship from Gold Fields Ghana Limited for the GFA to support the Black Star's preparations for the 2006 World Cup (Darby 2013). Furthermore, the previous National Democratic Congress government manifesto in 2016 enumerated how their support led the Black Stars (senior men's national football team of Ghana) to achieve second position in the 2015 African Cup of Nations held in Equatorial Guinea, the Black Satellites to placed third in the Orange African U-20 Cup of Nations Tournament held in Senegal and how all the female football national teams (Black Queens, Princesses and Maidens) qualified for major FIFA tournaments. Furthermore, while the National Democratic Congress made promises in their 2008 manifesto to establish more sport academies (mostly football academies) in Ghana, the New Patriotic Party, on the other hand, promised to improve and regulate activities of the academies also in their 2008 manifesto. It is not surprising that many researchers and academics alike have often adduced Ghana as one of the citadels of football academies in Africa when discussing various sport-related issues (Bale 2004, Darby and Solberg 2010, Esson 2013, van der Meij and Darby 2017).

Contemporary issues

Gender equality

To mark the beginning of the Fourth Republic, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana categorically repudiated all forms of gender disparity and discrimination by according 'guaranteed equal rights' to women in economy, education, politics and nation-building as a whole. Nevertheless, recent reports from the Ghana Statistical Services (2018) showed that women are under-represented in a wide range of professions. These findings corroborate findings from UNDP's (2018) Gender Inequality Index (GII) which ranks Ghana 131 out of 161 nations.

Against this backdrop, it is significant to mention that women's recognition and representation in sport has garnered less governmental attention and has been largely marginalised in comparison with the men whose participation has dominated the government, media and public's attention. From 1952 to date, Ghana has actively participated in the African Games, The Commonwealth Games, Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. However, recent competition shows that women representation improved at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games (37 out of 70 athletes) but were underrepresented at Rio 2016 Summer Olympic Games (6 out of 13 athletes), 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympic Games (no representation of 3 athletes),and Rabat 2019 African Games (20 out of 96 athletes). Beside these differences, general success in terms of medals won shows a decreasing trend in relation to The Commonwealth Games, and the Olympic Games while increasing with the African Games (See Figure 2). There has not been any medal won in the Paralympic Games so far.

Thus, despite the emphasis on gender equality in the SDGs (key goal of the MOYS) the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (2016 to date) of the MOYS showed no specific allocation to activities and programmes that ensures equal participation and opportunities for women.

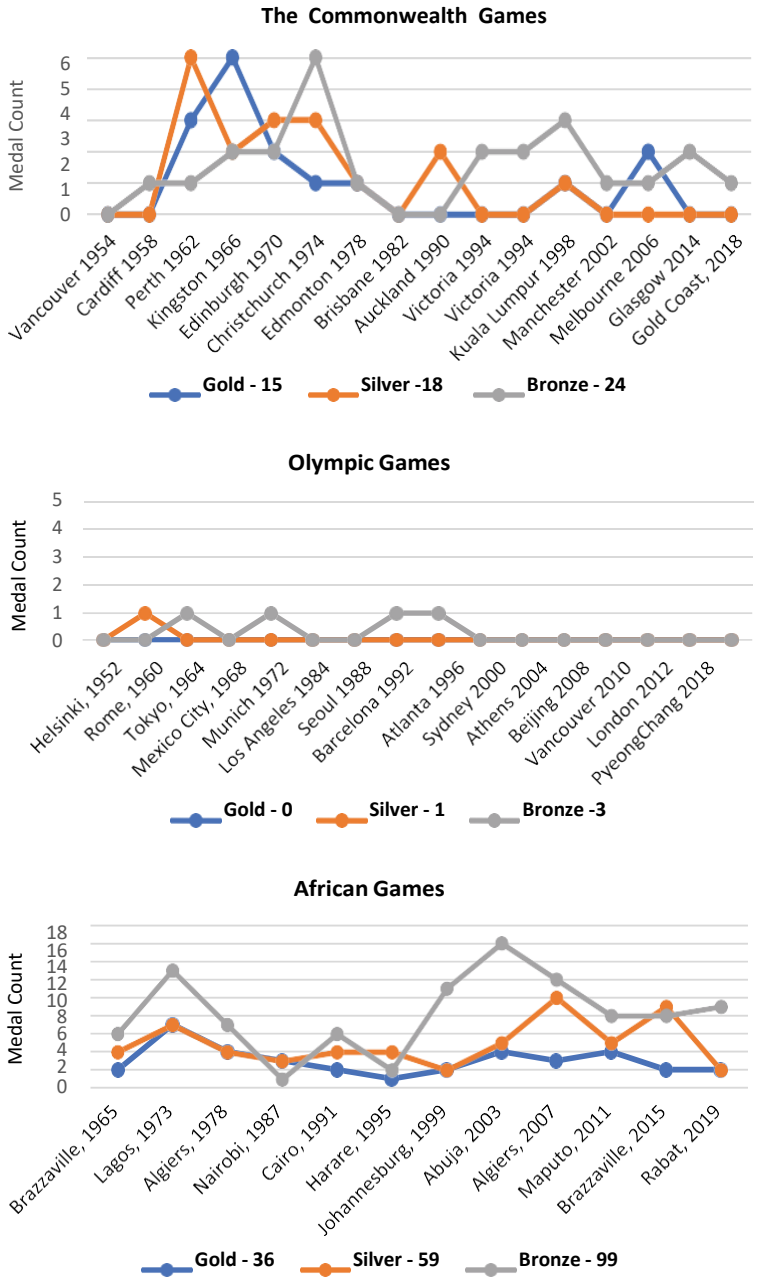

Figure 2. Performance at international sport competitions.

Para sport

The passage of Ghana's Persons With Disability (PWD) Act 715 in 2006, the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) in 2007 and the ratification of the UN-CRPD in 2012 were important milestones in Ghana's acknowledgement and legitimation of the rights of PWDs. It is worth mentioning that section 6 (article 38) of PWD Act 715, 2006 and section 30.5 of UN-CRPD made specific references to sport and the importance of enabling PWDs have equal access to sporting and recreational activities. Notwithstanding the strategic positioning

of sport, many advocates (led by the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations) have noted that Ghana's PWD Act 715, 2006 lacks significant provisions such as concrete policy guidelines for implementation and recognition of the rights of women, girls, and children with disabilities. Thus, falling short of the expectations of the UN-CRPD and not reflecting the real situation of PWDs in Ghana (Asante and Sasu 2015, Forber-Pratt 2015).

Also, despite creating the Association of Sports for the Disabled (ASD) in 1994 which laid the foundation for the establishment of the National Paralympic Committee of Ghana (NPCG) in 2003, activities of the ASD and para-sport, in general, have received far less attention and support than other major sport development organisations in Ghana. This resonates with Ocran's (2019) assertion that, notwithstanding the existence of several anti-discrimination laws (including the PWD Act 715, 2006) in Ghana, the social, economic and political rights of PWDs have not been fully protected. Similarly, although para-sport has a representation on the Governing Board of the National Sport Authority (see Figure 1), the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cognisance of the MTEF (from 2016 to 2019), has not prioritised and adequately financed the development of para-sport. Ghana's participation in major para-sport events such as the African Games (in 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019), Commonwealth Games (in 2010, 2014 and 2018) and IPC's Paralympic Games (in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016) has only been possible because of support from philanthropic individual and Ghanaian corporations. Part of the success of para sports in gaining funding has been due to the effective lobbying by para-athletes of domestic and especially international organisations. Support has been obtained not only from MOYS and the ASD but also from organisations like the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD), Right To Play, Alive & Kicking and Danish Sports Organisation for Disabled (DSOD, now Parasport Denmark) who have been keen advocates for para-sport, para-athlete rights and education against ableismin Ghana (Bourgeois 2011).

Migration

Migration through sport in post-colonial Ghana was potentially significant but was limited due to Kwame Nkrumah's socialist reforms and ambitions in the First Republic of Ghana. From 1960 to 1966 audit reports stated an amount of '£553,335 or N₵1,106,668' government subsidy spent on the activities of the Central Organisation of Sports (COS) meant to develop, retain and showcase the might of Ghana and Africa in the global political hemisphere (Ghana Office of the Auditor-General, 1967, p. v). Unfortunately, this period was brief given the subsequent frequent political upheavals following Nkrumah's overthrow. Since the 1980 s, Ghana has been cited in numerous studies of sport labour migration with particular attention given to football labour migration (Alegi 2010, Bale 2004, Darby 2010, Esson 2013, 2015). In more recent times there has been an increase in the emigration of Ghanaian track and field athletes mostly to USA and Canada. A combination of factors has accounted for the emigration of talented sport persons in Ghana. Generally, the rejection of socialism (ousting Nkrumah) and the promotion of neoliberalism (from the 1980 s with focus on individualism, liberating the deprived, the global market, a reduction in social welfare and internet and new media) in Ghana served as the backdrop that has stimulated emigration of Ghanaians (including sport labour). Esson (2013) also recounted that local football managers as well as undue family pressure (on young footballers to succeed financially due to the poor state of the Ghanaian economy) are factors that contribute to emigration. In 'track and field' the Ghana Athletic Association and some individuals have been instrumental in getting young Ghanaian athletes such as Ghanaian Youth Olympic 800 m Gold Medallist, Martha Bissah, to study in the USA.

Sport and sustainable development goals

Having acceded to the World Bank and IMF neoliberal reforms and returned to multi-party democracy and rule of law in 1992, the National Democratic Congress government (political party in power then) marshalled a long-term 25-year plan dubbed 'Vision 2020' in which Ghana

was expected to attain 'balance economy and middle-income country status' by 2020 with keen focus on socio-economic and human development, protecting the environment and supporting science and technology. Within this plan the role of sport in contributing to the Vision 2020 objectives was not emphasised instead strategies were outlined to improve sport infrastructure, training and participation in national and international events. The New Patriotic Party government won the 2000 elections and the 'Vision 2020' strategy was abrogated in order to align the country with the World Bank and IMF's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) having opted to join Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. A notable prerequisite for receiving IMF (2019) concessional support (from the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust [PRGT]) is for the country to function within the framework of UN's development goals (then MDGs and now SDGs). Since then, Ghana has gone through various reforms to meet UN development goals which include and recognise that 'sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development . . .' (UNGA, 2015, p. 10).

Under section 13 of PNDC Law 327 of 1993, the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MOYS) is charged to undertake the development agenda in consultation and partnership with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) which is also mandated by law to formulate, monitor and evaluate developmental policies in Ghana. In the wake of the UN's MDGs and the recent SDGs, sport in Ghana has moved beyond competition to become an integral part of development goals. The MDGs provided the basis for Ghana's medium-term national development plans (like the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Shared Growth Development Agenda) from 2000 to 2017. Following Ghana's involvement in both MDGs and SGDs, sport for development became a key policy area of focus under the 'Human Development, Productivity and Employment' section of the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda from 2010 to 2017 (NDPC 2010, p. 84–85, NDPC 2014, p. 125–126). Furthermore, sport was considered part of the key elements for 'Sectorial Issues in Social Development' of the 40-year Long-term National Development Plan of Ghana from 2018 to 2057 (NDPC 2017, p. 3).

Conclusion and future research

From an amorphous state, foregrounded in colonial periods and thence becoming part of public policy in postcolonial Ghana, sport development remains a puzzle to unpack. The ramifications of the political turmoil and fragile economy from the First to the Fourth Republics of Ghana have made the development of a stable sport strategy very difficult. In most cases and as recounted above the sport policies and strategies have been reactive, due to changes in government (with new political ideology) as well as yielding to external forces such as the World Bank, IMF and some international sport federations. Currently, Ghana may be enjoying multi-party democracy with relatively stable economy but it continues to grapple with defining the scope of sport policies and development. As the public interest in sport grows and sport becomes an integral part of the Ghanaian culture it is incumbent on the government not only to formulate consistent sport policies but also to consider the influence and interests of the network of stakeholders who operate within the policy area. This acknowledges the insight of Colebatch (2006, p. 1) and Rose (1987, p. 261–8) who assert that public policy is 'collectively made' and 'a product of joint interactions', respectively.

Finally,the commitment to the United Nations development goals (such as the then MDGs and now SDGs) since the year 2000 has given depth to and expanded the contributions of sports in the regions and districts of Ghana. Of importance is the growing concerns of both state and non-state organisations to use sport to address social issues in areas such as employment, education, health, disability, gender equality, poverty and tribal/ethnic conflicts. Besides the efforts of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and its agencies, notable non-state organisations such as Right To Play, Right To Dream, UNICEF and some NSFs have been active in this regards. Core to the SDGs implementation, as noted in the UN's '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', is the contributions of relevant multi-

stakeholders such as state and non-state organisations. Nevertheless, research into the collective contributions of the different actors within the sport policy sub-system of Ghana and how they draw resources to problematise specific issues is lacking.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Article 2

Charway, D., Banda, D., Bitugu, B. B., & Lindsey, I. (2024). A multi-stakeholder approach to sport as tool for development in Africa: Comparing Ghana and Zambia. In B. Graeff, S. Šafaříková, & L. C. Sambili- Gicheha (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Global South in Sport for Development and Peace*. Routledge.

A multi-stakeholder approach to sport as tool for development in Africa: Comparing Ghana and Zambia

This chapter presents a novel comparative analysis of distinctive features of government-led policy implementation using sport as a tool for development in Ghana and Zambia. Countries from the Global South are regarded as the quintessential sites for development following the United Nations (UN) global emphasis on developmental goals since the beginning of the millennium. Governmental engagement in multi-stakeholder collaboration has been consistently advocated by the UN, and many African countries have, over time, engaged with these global agendas and made significant steps to include sport in their development policy agendas. In this study, we sought to understand Southern perspectives on the approaches and structures developed to implement these policy agendas. Focusing on the cases of Ghana and Zambia, semi-structured interviews that elicit the perspectives of key indigenous stakeholders who are involved with local policy implementation are complemented by textual analysis of country-specific policy documents. In Ghana, sport is considered a significant tool for achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and a key element for 'sectorial issues in social development' in the country's 40-Year Long-Term National Development Plan (2018–2057). Similarly, sport has been used to tackle development outcomes in Zambia initially instigated by mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in both sports development and physical education programmes. Given this background, the chapter focuses on analysing and comparing networks of Ghanaian and Zambian actors within the sports policy subsystem of both countries. In doing so, the chapter offers a comparative analysis of policy implementation, distribution of resources, multi-stakeholder engagements and collaborations across the two countries.

Key Words – Ghana; Multi-stakeholder collaboration; Sport for Development and Peace; Sport policy implementation; UN development goals; Zambia

Introduction

Ghana and Zambia offer important country contexts to understand perspectives on the approaches and structures developed to implement sport as a tool for development. The two African countries share similar historical links and development experiences that are significant for comparative analysis. International policy initiatives such as the African Union's (AU's) Agenda 2063, the International Monetary Fund's Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainable development goals (SDGs) all acknowledge sport's contribution to development and are of relevance and significance for both countries. Since the beginning of the millennium, Zambia has used sport more specifically to tackle HIV/AIDS while Ghana has used sport as a key element for 'sectorial issues in social development'.

The governance and implementation of the SDGs have been institutionalised, mainstreamed and localised in both Ghana (NDPC [National Development Planning Commission], 2019) and Zambia (MNDP [Ministry of National Development Planning], 2020). Furthermore, both countries have adopted a multi-sectorial approach where the network of different actors from government, the private sector, philanthropic organisations, academia and non-governmental organisations is considered integral in the implementation plan.

The study presented in this chapter adopted a comparative case study approach to analyse Ghana and Zambia. The purpose was to analyse the government implementation strategies, exchange relationships between sport and other actors in each country and how government resources are distributed among the actors. Acknowledging that actors within the sports sectors of both countries are multifarious, we focused on the actors whose experiences and interactions represent the link between policy objectives and policy outcomes in local communities (Parsons, 1995).

To contextualise consideration of the case studies of Ghana and Zambia and the perspectives of stakeholders therein, it is important initially to recognise the broad contours of global sport and development policy.

Global sport and development policy

The early years of the 21st century saw the publication of a raft of global policy documents for sport for development and peace (SDP), which matched the rapid expansion of the field of SDP activity at the time. The global policy impetus for SDP in part reflected a shift from leading international development institutions to broaden their focus from narrow economic aims to more fully encompass issues of social and cultural development. This shift was encompassed in the global adoption of the MDGs at the turn of the century, which prompted an initial policy response from the sports sector with the Magglingen Declaration formally recognising sport as a contributor to the MDGs after the first International Conference on Sport and Development in 2003. This development presaged the development of a range of other global SDP policy documents from the United Nations (UN) and associated bodies, perhaps the most prominent of which were SDP: Towards Achieving the MDGs (United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2003) and the 2007 report, Harnessing the Power of SDP (SDPIWG [Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group], 2008). A subsequent analysis by Hayhurst (2009) identified

the importance of these and other global SDP policy documents on the development of the sector at the time.

While this initial burst of policy activity was seen after the mid-2000s, renewed impetus for global SDP policy development came with the advent of the UN's global SDGs in 2015. While sport was not represented in a specific SDG or mentioned in one of the 169 SDG targets, the accompanying policy text – Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – specifically referred to sport being 'an important enabler of sustainable development' and identified the 'growing contribution of sport' to a variety of development outcomes (UNGA [United Nations General Assembly], 2015, p. 10). Even before the final UN adoption of the SDGs, the IOC (International Olympic Committee) (2015) published a position statement which advocated the contribution of sport to specific SDGs. Subsequently, analysis and policy guidance on sport and the SDGs published by the Commonwealth Secretariat (Dudfield & Dingwall-Smith, 2016; Lindsey & Chapman, 2017) and the Kazan Action Plan (UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization], 2017) which was adopted at the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VI) represented prominent contributions shaping SDP policy towards the new global development framework provided by the SDGs.

Academic analysis of global SDP policies over time points to three overarching themes which are of relevance to this chapter. First, Hayhurst's (2009) interrogation of global SDP policy documents from 2003 and 2008 identified 'clear neoliberal ideology underpinning SDP policies, one that places the onus on individuals to be responsible for their welfare, "healthify" and help the state to cut expenses' (2009, p. 221). Further arguing that these neoliberal tendencies were antithetical to the needs of those within the Global South, Hayhurst's (2009) analysis instead identified the longstanding influence of institutions and countries of the Global North on SDP policy. Second, and perhaps contradictorily, global SDP policies have repeatedly included calls for greater engagement of national governments – often by implication meaning those of the Global South – in SDP (Lindsey & Bitugu, 2018). For example, the SDPIWG (Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group) (2006, p. 17) adopted a particularly strong position that 'the future of Sport for Development and Peace ultimately depends on national governments' (SDPIWG, 2006, 17). Alongside such calls for government has been a third theme which represents the importance of 'partnerships' between governments, private and civil society organisations in the implementation of SDP. Lindsey and Bitugu (2018) recognise the commonly imprecise and

nebulous language in such calls, leaving significant ambiguity as to how such partnerships may develop and be structured in particular country contexts.

Sport in Ghana

Sport and development in Ghana can be traced back to the pre-colonial era of modern Ghana where traditional games and physical activities demonstrated important ways of improving the physical, mental, affective, spiritual and social health of members of a society (Asare, 1982). Physical activity is therefore an integral part of the life of old and modern Ghana both as recreation and as a profession. After the British colonialists took over the administration of the then Gold Coast, sport was introduced into Ghanaian schools but modelled after the British public school system (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2006). The training at schools included sport and physical activity which followed the British 'Muscular Christianity' ideals of instilling discipline, patriotism and moral education (Watson et al., 2005). The colonial curriculum did not include sport, until the time of Governor Gordon Guggisberg (1919–1927) when it became a part of the first physical education (PE) teaching syllabus (Agbodeka, 1972). The Education Ordinance of 1925 formulated the 16 principles of education which included the requirement that games form part of school life (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975). Furthermore, sports development strategies to administer national sports associations and promote amateur sport and sport-for-all programmes were included in the Sports Council Ordinance of 1952. Between 1960 and 2000, various reforms saw the establishment of the National Sport Council (in 1976, now the National Sports Authority), Ministry of Sports (1978), National Sports College, Winneba (1984) and subnational structures like the regional and district sports councils. During this period sports development strategies (like the Sports Act SMCD 54 of 1976 and National Sports Policy of 1994) were made to fit the domestic development agenda.

The effect of globalisation and neoliberal reforms, as already recounted, contributed to the emphasis on the role of sport in development. The advent of the MDGs and the SDGs impacted African sports. These reflections are captured in the AU's Agenda 2063 which was launched in 2013. Here, recommendations were made to African countries to implement AU's 'policy framework for the sustainable development of sport in Africa' (African Union, 2015, p. 55). All these contributed to the inclusion of sport for development initiatives in Ghana's recent Sports Act (934) of 2016.

The MDGs had already been integrated into Ghana's medium-term national development plans (NDPs) such as the PRS papers (2003 to 2009) and Shared Growth Development Agenda (2010–2017). Although sport is acknowledged as a specific policy area in these documents, there is no mention of its contribution to local development in Ghana's MDGs progress reports from 2003 to 2015. A notable development of this time, however, was the emergence of sport for development organisations comprising both domestic and international NGOs that use sport to tackle diverse social issues within Ghanaian communities.

The SDGs, to a greater extent, focus on the social value of sport when it was included in the 40-Year Long-Term NDP of Ghana in 2017. Unlike the MDGs, the government institutionalised the SDGs and adopted a multi-sectoral approach to include all state actors and relevant non-state actors (NDPC, 2019). Government's commitment to the institutionalised SDGs framework underscored the importance of grassroots implementing actors, particularly non-state actors, as partners. Furthermore, two complementing monitoring and evaluation methods were designed to measure how respective state institutions like the Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs, herein referred to as district assemblies) are implementing the SDGs in local communities. The first is the SDGs budgeting and tracking system which is overseen by the Ministry of Finance to monitor budgetary allocations and expenditure. The second evaluates the statistical reach of the SDGs implementation in local communities, and it is overseen by the Ghana Statistical Service. The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) is not an exception as the evidence of its commitment to achieve the SDGs has not only been expressed as a policy goal but also implemented in Ghanaian communities from 2016 onwards (Charway & Houlihan, 2020).

Nevertheless, the involvement of NGOs in sport and development remains particularly important and is by far the most far reaching given the fact that sport and development have, as yet, not become institutionalised and part of the regular sport and development strategy component. By focusing on grassroots implementation, actors (governmental and non-governmental) within the sports policy subsystem of Ghana will be vital. In this light, government actors will include subnational organisations like the regional sports offices and the district sport units (DSUs) while the NGOs will comprise sport for development organisations working towards the SDGs.

Sport in Zambia

At the time of gaining political independence from the British, football exported by their colonisers was already the most popular sport in many colonies in Africa under the British Empire. In the 1960s Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia played, on 24th October 1964 in a final against Ghana in the *ufulu* Football tournament (Chipande & Banda, 2018). Ghana were the current African Cup of Nations champions having won their first title as host of the tournament in 1963. Zambia as hosts of the *ufulu* tournament lost the final match to the Ghanaians (Chipande, 2015). Alegi (2010, p. 55) asserts that construction of football stadiums in the capital cities of newly independent African nations were 'symbols of modernity and pride'. Sport, football in particular, had strong links with political activities related to expressions of political freedom. This strong connection between football and the state continues to be demonstrated in resource distribution and political interference by the state. The use of sport as a form of social control for the masses, dates back to imperialists' motives of using sport as a form of civilising and maintaining social order (Mangan, 1986).

After gaining political independence, though sport features briefly in NDPs, in national speeches by political party leaders and at times in parliamentary debates, sport was not a particular policy priority. Whenever sport was discussed or mentioned, elite sport participation was the focus of such discussions. However, it is important to highlight the use of sport as a form of social control for youth behaviours with particular emphasis on keeping the youths off the streets as an early acknowledgement of the use of sport by the government of Zambia as a social tool among youths (Banda, 2013; National Convention Report, 1984).

Other expressions of political freedom involved the restructuring of the governance structures, reflecting the incorporation of sport as a political tool for the new native government. A new sport group, namely, the National Sports Advisory Council (NSAC) was established. This was aligned with aspirations of Zambianisation that saw natives take up positions in leadership and middle and top management which were only occupied by colonisers. Another key aspect was addressing the shortage of a locally trained workforce. This related to elite sports coaches, PE teachers and community welfare coaches (Banda & Chipande, 2019). However, only schools and communities that had sports facilities to deliver PE or community sports delivered grassroots sports. Today, discrepancies relating to coaches, sports/PE equipment between rural and urban areas remain unresolved, and yet developments in the recognition and implementation of sport interventions as tools for social change continue to advance leaving behind those most deserving of such provisions.

While education settings have had three key education policy documents since 1964 (Educational Reforms of 1977; Focus on Learning 1992; Educating Our Future 1996) published and implemented, the sports policy area has only one policy document that has continued to undergo revisions. The current draft National Sports Policy of 2016 is based on previously amended or revised versions of 1994, 2009 and 2012. This new policy acknowledges both community sports and school sports as key to delivering podium success. Notable within the education policy space and the sports policy space is the influence of both the MDGs and SDGs shaping or influencing the Zambian policy formulation.

Methodology

The comparative case study approach (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017) with qualitative methods of data collection was adopted to analyse policy implementation of sport as a tool for development in both Ghana and Zambia. In this regard, we comparatively analysed the implementation strategies, exchange relationships between sports actors and how government resources are distributed among the actors. Our first step was to compare and contrast the experiences of the two countries and then explore the implications for the rest of the continent (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). The unit of analysis for both countries comprised state and non-state meso-level organisations whose experiences and interactions benefit the local communities (Parson, 1995). It is worth mentioning that the data for the research are part of research projects about Ghana (by the first author) and Zambia (by the second author).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from national sports agencies, state subnational structures like regional and district sports offices and SDP organisations. The interview data from Ghana were collected from 2019 to 2021 and Zambia from 2010 to 2014 and in 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and preferences of interviewees, the interviews were conducted via Zoom and face-to-face in Ghana. The interviews from Zambia were conducted via Skype and telephone calls. All the interviewees were issued with informed consent. Furthermore, textual analysis of national and global policy documents was conducted to understand how they influence local sports policies. The national documents comprise government reports, NDPs (since independence to date), national budgets and sports policies. Also, the IMF Poverty Reductional Schemes and the UN Resolutions on SDP, MDGs, SDGs formed a part of the selected global policy documents.

After familiarising ourselves with the data, we used MAXQDA Plus (2020) and verbatim as complementing data analytical methods. These two methods allowed us to compare themes and sub-themes generated. We identified three themes: (1) sports policy through the NDPs; (2) multi-sector engagement and collaborations; and (3) governance structure and resource commitment.

Findings

Sport policy through the National Development Plans (NDPs)

Ghana

Ghana has had 8 main NDPs[1] since gaining independence in 1957 (NDPC [National Development Planning Commission], 2020; Vordzorgbe & Caiquo, 2001). Except for the 3rd NDP (1964–19670) and 4th NDP (1976–1980) which had a key focus on local development and nation-building (Sackeyfio-Lenoch, 2016), the remaining NDPs were subject to foreign influences which impacted how sports strategies were formulated and implemented in Ghana. For instance, the 1st NDP (1957–1959) and 2nd NDP (1959–1964) were influenced by the British colonial system; 5th NDP (1996–2000) by the World Bank's Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) and IMF's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP); 6th NDP (2002–2009) and 7th NDP (2010–2017) by the IMF's Poverty Reduction Schemes and UN's MDGs; and the 8th NDP (2018–2057) by AU's Agenda 2063 and UN's SDGs. It is worth mentioning that sports strategies before the millennium were centralised, state-led and mainly focused on 'sport for sport's sake' strategies under the 1st to 5th NDPs. The enactment of the first sports law, the SMCD Act of 1976, which led to the creation of a substantive Ministry of Sports (in 1978), occurred under NDP 4 during the military occupation eras.

The recent acknowledgement of sport as a tool for development was introduced and stated under the 6th NDP. Since then, SDP initiatives (alongside 'sport for sport's sake') have appeared in Ghana's development policies, particularly, under the key policy area of 'human development, productivity and employment' of the 6th and 7th NDPs. Furthermore, sports appeared under the 8th NDP, but this time it was considered a key policy goal under 'Sectoral Issues in Social Development'. All these milestones emphasise the increasing recognition of the utility of sport SDP at the national and grassroots levels. As shown in the sports ministry's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) from 2016 onward, a yearly sports policy goal to advance the SDGs in local communities has been repeatedly set. Here,

the focus has been on community health and well-being, participation by women and persons with disabilities and collaborations with key stakeholders.

Some elements of SDP were also expressed in the Sports Act of 2016 (Act 934). To achieve the objectives of the Act, specific functions were enumerated to include but not be limited to:

> *"collaboration with stakeholders; promoting para-sport and secure the adoption of policies of gender equity, equal opportunities and access to sport, child protection in sport and drug-free sport". (page 4-5)*

Despite the above aspirations, what is lacking is a national implementation guide that outlines collaboration with non-state actors and SDP NGOs alike. There are also limited details of how sport will address the sectorial issue of community health and well-being, mass participation in sport and the empowerment of persons with disabilities and women.

Zambia

From the time that Zambia obtained her political independence, sports policy objectives have been part of the long-term public policy objectives, known as the NDPs. To date, Zambia has had seven NDPs[2] since 1964. Most significant among the seven NDPs is probably the 3rd NDP (1979–1983) as it demonstrated the central government's recognition of sport as a public policy area through the creation of a Ministry of Youth and Sport and subsequently a cabinet ministerial post (GRZ [Government of the Republic of Zambia], 1979). Before then, a Directorate of Sports Office situated under the Ministry of Labour and Social Services was responsible for all sport-related government policy objectives during the implementation phase of the 2nd NDP (1970–1974). The 2nd NDP also proposed a National Sports Advisory Council (NSAC).

Another significant NDP wherein government sports policy aspirations are identified is in the 4th NDP (1989–1993) which proposed the writing of the first ever-comprehensive National Sports Policy (NSP) (GRZ [Government of the Republic of Zambia], 1989). The NSP, officially published in 1994, outlined a dual approach of elite sport performance and grassroots or mass sport participation (MSYCD, 1994). Despite its well-articulated twin-tracked sports policy approach aspirations, consisting of grassroots sports development and elite sport, the Department of Sport Development (DSD) failed to implement the 1994 NSP. The continuing economic challenges of the 1980s and 1990s were cited as having exacerbated the inadequate funding for sports, weak governing structures for sports and

limited sports facilities to support the implementation plan (MSYCD, 2009). Today, the situational analysis conducted by Chipande and Banda (2018) demonstrates advancements in policy design and coordination between state and non-state actors but perennially inadequate financial commitment to support the plans.

Worth noting is also the 5th NDP (2006–2010) (GRZ [Government of the Republic of Zambia], 2006) which stressed the recognition of sport, recreation and PE as tools for human and economic development and also as means of halting the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (GRZ, 2006). This policy shift from *sport for sport's sake* to sport positioned as a tool for human and economic development was a new policy direction emanating from advancements in both local and international SDP activities (Banda, 2013). Locally, two indigenous SDP NGOs – EduSport Foundation and Sport in Action – were established in 1999, and internationally, in 2001, the UN had established a Special Advisor role on SDP to the UN Secretary-General. Despite SDP NGOs being recognised for the complementary role they play in supporting the government achieve its human development policy objectives, negative attitudes towards the status of SDP NGOs at provincial and district levels need addressing as stated by a Country Director of an NGO:

> *Within the Ministry [sport], at headquarters as well as provincial level, the relationship between NGOs and the Ministry itself still needs a lot to be done in reducing the gap in building relationships…apathy towards those from the NGO sector still lingers among [state sector] officers despite headquarters' recognition of NGOs as complementary to their work, NGOs as partners since we cannot compete with government.*

Governance structure and resource commitment

Ghana

The current administrative structure of sport in Ghana comprises the Ministry of Youth and Sport with two distinctive state sports agencies comprising the National Sports Authority (NSA) and the National Sports College (NSC), Winneba. The NSC was established 'train, equip and foster retention of sport coaches, administrators and [athletes]' (Charway & Houlihan, 2020, p. 502). The focus on the responsibility for nationwide sports implementation lies with the NSA. Under the NSA are subnational structures like the Regional Sport Offices (RSO) and DSUs. The NSA also has a less formal relationship with non-state organisations like the National Sports Association, National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee and sports for development organisations. These

relationships are defined by partnerships, collaborations or funding (of the activities of the national sports associations during international competitions).

Nationwide sports funding and resources are allocated from the sports ministry to the NSA before trickling down to the region and district offices where sports policy goals translate into action. These allocations are thence reported and captured under the MTEF, which are made available online. Interviews with regional sports directors acknowledged these allocations, but they were far from content regarding the government's actual commitment to funding regional sports:

> *the support that is supposed to go to the various regions, rather goes to the head office [National Sport Authority], and they will decide what to give you. We know the disbursement of the regional funds are documented but practically it doesn't happen.*

Furthermore, the regional sports directors lamented on the sports ministry's over-reliance on football. For instance, on April 26, 2021, the president of Ghana announced 25 million US dollars (approx. 156.8 million Ghana cedis [GHC])[3] budget to support the various national football teams. This amount exceeds the total MTEF-approved budget allocations (154.3 million GHC) to the sports sector from 2018 to 2021.[4] One of the regional directors stated:

> *we concentrate so much on football in this country and it takes a chunk of the money. In fact, when the parliament of Ghana for that matter government approves money, two Black Stars [the national men soccer team] matches can consume the whole budget for the year. So, it is in our small way that we are doing things.*

Besides support from the regional offices, the DSUs received additional financial support from the sports component of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF). Regrettably, the sports component of the DACF is not mandatory. This means that it is based on the decision of the authorities of the district assemblies. The statement below mirrors the concerns of the DSUs:

> *There is as sport most components of what we called the District Assembly Common Fund, but that area is more political. The district assemblymen are politically elected, so they use the sport money to organise community games within their electoral areas leaving out the District Sport Unit.*

Aside from the funding challenges, the regional directors and district implementers lamented the absence of the right leadership at the NSA. The regional directors stressed that the lack of a qualified leader has contributed to the challenges they face:

> *to be brutally frank with you, we have a leadership crisis. So, as we even sit now, it is very difficult to tell our direction, because of leadership. If we don't have the*

> *right people, we are indirectly killing sport. The way we are working and moving now, I will not be surprised that government might say that the National Sports Authority has outlived its usefulness. Because if someone wants a particular sport service at the regional secretariat and the secretariat is unable to provide, then what is the essence of the secretariat. This is what is happening today.*

Zambia

The key sport governing entities and policy-making bodies that seem to attract the most media attention due to their tripartite squabbles are the Football Association of Zambia, National Sports Council of Zambia and DSD under the recently renamed Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts. At the core of such squabbles are mainly contentions regarding various kinds of resources such as financing of the football national team, contractual agreements and remuneration of the national football coach; election and appointments of Football Association officials; and questioning each entity's jurisdiction regarding matters related to football, the national sport.

Both DSD and NSCZ admit that the popularity of football as a national sport and the invested interest of political leadership in football straitjacket DSD or NSCZ officials who have jurisdiction to act in the best interest of all other sporting codes. For example, a DSD official commented that the overall national budget is mostly utilised on football elite participation:

> *The NSCZ receives insufficient funding which federations would like to be used to fund their competitions, but it is insufficient as mentioned. The NSCZ receives roughly 2 million Kwacha*[5] *whilst a single football match would use about 5 million Kwacha.*

Football uses most of the allocation towards elite performance and grassroots sport that is budgeted for sport in Zambia. When football does not get its demands met, the state intervenes.

Other two key actors within the elite-focused governance structure in sport include National Olympic Committee of Zambia (NOCZ) and National Paralympic Committee of Zambia (NPCZ). At the grassroots, there are Provincial Sport Advisory Committees (PSAC), SDP NGOs and sports academies. The NSCZ has put in place provincial and district-level structures to technically support the operation of grassroots sport initiatives. However, the funding allocated to the NSCZ does not trickle down to provincial sport programme implementation as it is spent on administrative costs for such structures to remain in place despite their failure to execute their mandated duties of supervising and implementing sports programmes at the grassroots as stated by NSCZ representative:

> *There are provincial sport advisory committees which are meant to fund provincial sport activities; however, the limited budget only gets spent on administrative arrangements such as meetings at district and provinces.*

Besides the poor funding for provincial and district structures for sport in Zambia, some stakeholders (PE Teachers Network, SDP NGO Network[6]) have continued to bemoan the appointment of personnel within national, provincial and district sport structures as having inadequate experience to lead the development of sport in Zambia. The lack of qualified workforce within sport administration has been a perennial issue in Zambia due to the negative attitude and low status of sport as a recognised industry (Banda, 2010, p. 2013). Any 'Jelita or Mulenga'[7] with political connections can be appointed to lead sport and use the post to advance their civil service career prospects as commented by a former civil servant with qualifications in sport:

> *In the Ministry of Sport, particularly the DSD, the personnel are not qualified for office. They have no training in sport and use the sport appointment as a steppingstone to other government departments. If they do not get moved, they tend to stay in sport whilst not having the passion or vision for sport…conversely, I cannot go to Department of Agriculture, Health or Finance to work there with my sport qualifications while those with qualifications in agriculture are appointed to run sport.*

The current situation is that there is a workforce without qualifications in PE, sports development or sports management that is making key decisions impacting the development of sports in the country.

Multi-sector engagement and collaborations

Ghana

The Sports Act of 2016 included provisions for inter-ministerial partnerships at the district levels where policies translate into actions. This is evidenced in the Sports Act's (sports ministry's) creation of the DSUs situated in all the 261 district assemblies. There was also instigation of inter-ministerial cooperation with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development which have oversight responsibility over the district assemblies. The membership of the DSUs comprised representatives from the regional sports offices (linked to the National Sports Authority) and the district PE of the Ghana Education Services (linked to the Ministry of Education). Charway et al.'s (2022) analysis of the sports policy-implementation gap in Ghana revealed that, even though the sports ministry policy goal is focused on community health and empowerment (of persons with disabilities and

girls/women), the DSUs membership did not include representatives from the health, gender and social protection sectors.

As mentioned, elements of SDP initiatives appear in the sports ministry's policies. In this light, the sports ministry has been receptive to the programmes and activities of notable international SDP organisations operating in Ghana like the Right To Play and Right To Dream. The latter, in particular, has various important partnerships with the Ministry of Education.

Ghana hosts many local SDP organisations with experiences in various communities. On February 29, 2012, the network of local SDP organisations called the Youth Development through Sports (YDS) was launched with support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The launch was attended by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. However, members of YDS lamented the absence of policy actions to mainstream SDP activities at both regional and district offices:

> *As a coalition of [local] SDP organisations, we had interesting discussions [with] and approached by the sport ministry, but it did not work because the ministry did not give it the backing it needed.*

This comment from a representative of YDS was supported by one of the SDP organisations when asked about collaborations with the Ministry of Youth and Sports:

> *We've sent letters to the Ministry of Youth and Sports for collaborations, but then the letters always get lost somewhere in the system. And we've tried it a couple more. If you're a grassroots NGO, no one wants to look at you. There are many other organisations I have observed that are doing similar things to what we are doing in communities and actually have access to the children and youth and are actually make an impact on them. But no one cares. So, we have to cut our own path.*

This indicates a weak link between the sports ministry's SDP aspirations and grassroots implementation. Thus far, there have not been specific plans to either mainstream/legitimise SDP programmes or recognise the local SDP sector as strategic partners. The collaborations and partnerships with the SDP sector may have a wider impact on the sports ministry's sport for community health, mass participation and the empowerment of persons with disabilities and women.

Zambia

Banda's (2015) examination of UNESCO's Quality PE (QPE) pilot project in Zambia revealed a lack of alignment in public policy design and implementation. As the QPE project was not the first project adopting a multi-sectoral approach, the lessons gained by state and non-state actors from other cross-cutting issues such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic have not translated into incremental policy design. While Chipande and Banda (2018) highlight a clear alignment between DSD's community sports objectives and recognition of community actors such as SDP NGOs, across government departments, there is less evidence of incremental policy design to reflect the recognition of the benefits of policy coherence when addressing matters cutting across sectors.

However, some SDP NGO sector leaders continue to stress that the health sector is more receptive to collaborative activities compared to other sectors such as education. For example, a Country Director of a foreign-linked SDP NGO lamented that:

> *It is not all government departments or ministries that are receptive to sports NGOs. However, the Ministry of Health or department of health is open to working with NGOs. Ministry of Education seems to be difficult working with Sport for development NGOs. Interactions with Ministry of Education are less sustainable compared to Ministry of Health projects.*

The difference in such longevity of working relationships may be attributed to the sustained funding for public-health-related projects coupled with the historical experience of Department of Health officials working with civil society organisations since the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The interactions between SDP NGOs and the Education Department have been activities, short-lived experiences, such as the commemoration of special days evident in the DSD and education budgetary reports.

The foreword to the NSCZ 2021–2026 clearly espouses that the Council aims 'to revitalise the institution [sport] in order to realise its potentiality of contributing to social and economic development of this great country, Zambia'. However, the NSCZ (2021–2026) Strategic Plan recognises and outlines how the strategic objectives are not aligned with other key development objectives such as the SDGs or outcome pillars of the 7th NDP (2017–2021). Furthermore, there is neither the articulation of how sport will contribute to social development nor the identification of any targeted SDGs.

While the NSCZ strategic plan acknowledges the weak link between the 7th NDP and the strategic plan itself, the Council has however utilised the National Constitution to strengthen its alignment with local needs. For example, there is a strong drive towards the enactment of the Constitution (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2016, Article 231 on promotion of the attainment and mainstreaming of gender equality in institutions. This and other national values and principles mainly informed by other universal human rights and development objectives are utilised. By so doing, one would conclude that the NSCZ's strategic plan is informed by both national values and international human development objectives.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The findings show substantial similarities in the challenges that the SDP actors (state and non-state) face and the opportunities they can offer in the government-led policy implementation paradigm. For both countries there is a lack of implementation guides and inadequate human resources, and financial support. In Zambia, a collaborative effort to mainstream the SDP initiatives failed due to a lack of funding for the implementation phase. Ghana has not made any specific attempt to initiate a mainstreaming process. Actors from both countries have either collaborated or partnered in various ways. In Ghana, there have been successful inter-ministerial collaborations, more collaboration among the SDP NGOs but less collaboration/partnership between state and SDP NGOs. Zambia on the other hand has had some level of interaction between state and SDP NGOs and among NGOs. Despite these exchange relations, financial resources are not evenly distributed. The governments of both countries recognise SDP NGOs as strategic partners. However, when it comes to financial assistance and resource distribution, football is predominantly favoured at the expense of all other actors due to its cultural and historical significance for both countries.

Despite both governments' recognition of SDP NGOs, the historical dependency of SDP NGOs on foreign funding persists, as both governments' budget allocation towards SDP is either lacking or inadequate. Hence, the lack of locally generated financial resources constrains the strategic autonomy and Southern agency of indigenous SDP NGOs. This makes them vulnerable to pursuing foreign agendas in order to access new funding or retain old funding streams. Although progress is evident in relation to conducting local need assessments (particularly in Zambia), foreign streams may not align strictly to the local needs and funding criteria may not accommodate the locally designed intervention mechanisms. These peculiarities continue to weaken local or Southern agencies (see Darnell & Hayhurst,

2012; Lindsey & Grattan, 2012). Furthermore, SDP NGOs continue to struggle to gain access to central government funding despite their recognition as key non-state actors in delivering community sports development in particular and for their general experience in the use of sport as a tool for social change.

Disappointingly, it is only through the recognition of sport as a tool for development via UN' initiatives that both governments recognised domestic NGOs operating within the SDP space. When neoliberalism introduced non-state actors to provide public services, non-state providers of educational services were easily welcomed in the education sector of both countries. Conversely, non-state actors, like indigenous NGOs from the SDP sector, were initially ostracised and denied access to the sports policy space. While external funding continues to sustain the work of most SDP NGOs, attention to unmuting the voices of SDP NGO leaders to influence the design and implementation of local interventions will be enhanced when both governments demonstrate significant resource commitment to strengthen local agency practices.

Notes:

1. Actual names of the National Development Plans as published by the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana:
    i. 1st NDP - Consolidation Development Plan (1957-1959)
    ii. 2nd NDP - Second Five-Year Development Plan" (1959-1964)
    iii. 3rd NDP - Seven-Year Development Plan for National Reconstruction and Development (1964-19670)
    iv. 4th NDP - Ghana Five-year Development Plan, (1976-1980)
    v. 5th NDP - Vision 2020 - The First Step:1996-2000
    vi. 6th NDP - Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (2002-2009)
    vii. 7th NDP - Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (2010-2017)
    viii. 8th NDP - The 40-year Long-term National Development Plan of Ghana from (2018 to 2057)

2. The actual names of the National Development Plans published by the Ministry of National Development Planning of Zambia are:
    i. 1st NDP - First National Development Plan
    ii. 2nd NDP - Second National Development Plan (1970-1974)

iii. 3rd NDP - Third National Development Plan (1979 -1983)

iv. 4th NDP - Fourth National Development Plan (1989 -1993)

v. 5th NDP - Fifth National Development Plan (2006 -2010)

vi. 6th NDP - Sixth National Development Plan (2011 – 2015)

vii. 7th NDP - Fifth National Development Plan (2017-2021)

3. Conversion on April 26, 2021 is 5.8 US Dollar = 1 GHC via xe.com/currency convertor.

4. Conversion on January 1, 2018 is 1 GHC = 4.5 US Dollars; January 1, 2019 is 1 GHC = 4.5 US Dollars; January 1, 2020 is 1 GHC = 5.7 US Dollars; January 1, 2021 is 1 GHC = 5.9 US Dollars; via xe.com/currency convertor.

5. Conversion on December 28, 2021 is 1 Kwacha = 16.6 US Dollars via xe.com/currency convertor

6. One of the authors belong to the media (WhatsApp/other) networks which have a huge nationwide membership of PE teachers and another composed of SDP NGOs.

7. Jelita or Mulenga - A local expression of primary school story names for a woman or man (respectively). Hence, any man or woman with connections in high places despite lacking in academic credentials stands a chance of being appointed to a high-level decision-making post/role in government or government affiliated institution.

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Article 3

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Sport and sustainable social development in Ghana: analysing the policy-implementation gap

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ABSTRACT

The global optimism for sport as 'an important enabler of sustainable development' by the United Nations appears in many countries' policy documents. In Ghana, sport is linked to the social dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But the acknowledgement of the potential of sport, in itself, cannot be the decisive evidence of deep commitment or successful implementation. The research analyses how sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) have been involved and resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy. Qualitative data were derived from government policy documents, government officials and key actors from non-state sport organisations. Matland's Ambiguity-Conflict Model was the theoretical framework used to analyse the policy-implementation link. The findings identified challenges in policy implementation associated with resources distribution, non-involvement of local implementing actors, football's overbearing importance and legitimation of sport for development organisations. The impact of these challenges for sustainability were discussed.

KEYWORDS
Ghana; sport; policy-implementation; state and non-state policy actors; community health and well-being

Introduction

The launch by the United Nations (UN) of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016 received strong international support from the major economic powers including the International Monitory Fund (IMF) and World Bank. In the discussion of the implementation of the SDGs, sport was identified as 'an important enabler of sustainable development' (UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) 2015, 3). In light of this, leading international organisations including the African Union, The Commonwealth Sport, World Health Organisation, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and UNESCO (Sherry et al. 2019; Burnett 2021; Lindsey and Darby 2019) as well as some countries (Craig et al. 2019; Moustakas and Işık 2020; Campillo-Sánchez et al. 2021) have incorporated sport into their development policies. In Ghana, the SDGs dominated the political discourse and have been prominent in the government's business and development

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policies with, for example, the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana linking sport to the social development dimension of the SDGs (NDPC (National Development Planning Commission) 2019). Moreover, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs became the policy goal of the Ministry of Youth and Sport (like all other ministries) from 2016 onwards.

The Ghanaian government has made a strong public commitment to the UN's SDGs (Ministry of Finance, 2019; ElMassaha and Mohieldinb 2020) and is relatively well-placed to make progress towards their achievement for four reasons: first, as explained in more detail below successive Ghanaian leaders have worked closely with the UN in devising the SDGs; second, Ghana has a relatively stable political system ranking eighth out of 53 African countries (TheGlobalEconomy.com 2020); third, the country is considered by both the IMF (Agou et al. 2019) and the World Bank (Geiger, Trenczek, and Wacker 2019) as a fast-growing economy with its per capita GDP just below the average for the continent; and fourth, Ghana hosts over 6,000 non-governmental organisations (Hushie 2016; Kumi 2017; Ibrahim and Alagidede 2020) - a number of which have experience of using sport as a medium for achieving their objectives (Charway and Houlihan 2020). Given the relative political and economic stability of Ghana it is arguably a valuable case to test the potential for the successful delivery of SDGs commitments by government.

There have been concerted efforts in Africa where sport as a tool for development has been used to tackle various community health issues like HIV/AID, non-communicable diseases and malaria to mention a few (African Union 2008; Delva et al. 2010; Hansell, Giacobbi, and Voelker 2021; Lindsey and Banda, 2011; Mwaanga 2010). In Ghana, the government through, the sport ministry has made policy provisions to improve community health and well-being since 2016. In line with target 3.3 of SDG 3 the sport ministry has focused on sensitising Ghanaian youths on reproductive health issues such as sexually transmitted diseases and infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS and more recently the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) (Minstry of Youth and Sports 2016-2021). Furthermore, the initiation of the Youth and Sports Resource Centres of Excellence (YSRCEs) in 2016 indicated the sport ministry's commitment as it provides Ghanaian youths with access to recent sport ministry programmes in 2020, such as 'Reprotalk (Reproductive Talk)' and 'Community Information Dissemination for COVID-19' (Minstry of Youth and Sports 2021). The 'Policy Outcome Indicators and Targets' in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework from 2016 to 2021 showed that 8,355,609 Ghanaian youths have been involved in the sport ministry's community health and well-being programmes (Minstry of Youth and Sports 2016-2021).

Scholars on African sport and development policies have noted that many African countries have not just adhered to international policies, but they have also made domestic legislative provision to reinforce the adherence (Lindsey and Bitugu 2018). However, governments' commitment towards implementation and to ensuring compliance are uncertain (Keim and de-Coning 2014). It is for this reason that, Keim and de-Coning (2014, 195), in their study of 10 sub-Sahara African countries, stated that despite the available sport policies and legislative arrangements, '… further potential exist to improve policy analysis and policy content'.

The purpose of this article is to analyse how, and with what success, the government's commitment to the SDGs was translated into programme delivery at the local level (regional and district) in relation to health, one of the central SDGs. In addition, the article examines how sport partners (governmental and non-governmental) have been involved and

resourced in implementing the government's commitment to the community health and well-being policy. The next section explores in more detail the status of the SDGs in Ghanaian politics. This is followed by a discussion of Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict Model of policy implementation which is used as the framework for the analysis of the empirical data on which the study is based. The findings section analyses the policy implementation challenges at the national, regional and district levels and leads into the concluding discussion.

Institutionalising the SDGs in Ghana

Since the beginning of the millennium, Ghana's commitment to the UN development goals has survived the nation's political divide. Four presidents from the two major opposing political parties (the National Democratic Congress and the National Patriotic Party) in Ghana have remained committed to the two sets of UN goals, first the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000–2015) and now the SDGs (2016–2030). As evidence of the strength of their commitment, two successive Ghanaian presidents have served as the Co-Chair of the UN SDGs Advocates Group from 2016 to date (NDPC (National Development Planning Commission) 2019). Regardless of how one may look at the SDGs, the presidency of Ghana has been the instrumental 'link' between the UN Goals and Ghana's domestic (sport) policies (Houlihan 2009). The government has continually indicated that the SDGs are useful to the local development agenda of Ghana. The depth of national commitment to the SDGs is evident in the government's development policies (NDPC (National Development Planning Commission) 2019; SDGs Advisory Unit of Ghana 2021). Also, domestic policies such as the Ghana Beyond Aid and the 40-year Long-term National Development Plan of Ghana (2018 to 2057) have been designed to reinforce the 17 SDGs. Of the 17 SDGs we focused on health (SDG 3). Health is a part of the social dimension of the SDGs meant to 'ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages' (UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) 2015, 18). Using sport for health - particularly community wellbeing, and physically active and healthy lifestyle - is one of the key provisions of Ghana's 2016 Sport Act 934 and one of the major goals of the sport ministry since 2016 (MTEF, 2016–2021). The government adopted a multi-sectorial approach where the services and a plurality of different actors have been institutionalised (see Figure 1). The institutionalisation also illustrates how the SDGs policy is intended to be implemented at the local level through funding, partnerships and monitoring and evaluation.

Further evidence of the commitment by the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Finance is the development of the SDGs budgeting and tracking system. The budgeting and tracking system is an integrative software system, 'Hyperion', that gathers data related to the 17 SDGs (Ministry of Finance 2018, iii). The system serves as the monitoring tool to ensure that budgetary allocations and expenditure of the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs, herein referred as district assemblies) reflect the SDGs (ibid.). Funds allocated to the sport ministry support the activities and programmes of the National Sport Authority (NSA), the regional sport offices and the district sport units. It is noteworthy that the regional sport offices are not autonomous as they function in accordance with the missions of and directives from the NSA and the sport ministry. Additionally, the district sport units receive funding support from the MMDA's District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) which comes from the central

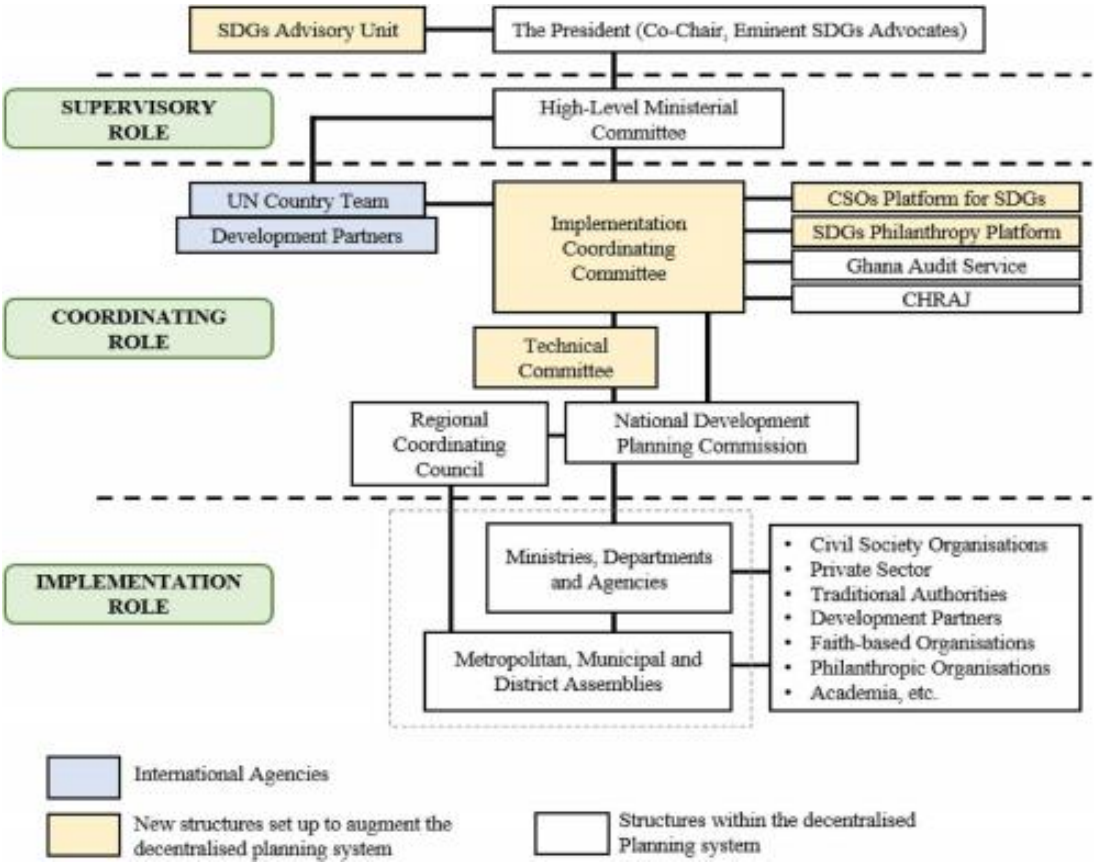

Figure 1. institutional arrangement for implementing the SDGs in Ghana.
Source: NDPC (National Development Planning Commission) (2019).

government. Such supports fall under the 'social services' section of the DACF. The district sport units are composed of members from the Ghana Educational Service, MMDAs, and regional sport offices. Apart from the state sport actors already mentioned, there are also non-state actors such as National Sport Federations (NSFs) and Sport for Development (SDP) organisations which have activities and programmes in the districts. Although the NSFs receive some financial support from the NSA and the sport ministry, the SDP organizations do not (Charway and Houlihan 2020).

The information generated from the SDGs budgeting and tracking system is one of the two methods the government uses to evaluate the nationwide implementation of the SDGs. The second method for evaluation is statistical information from the Ghana Statistical Service through national censuses and surveys (GSS (Ghana Statistical Service) 2017). It has however been difficult to evaluate the impact of government policy at the local level, particularly the lived experiences of the frontline implementing actors in the regions and districts who directly impact the SDGs (ibid.). With focus on the sport policy subsystem of Ghana vis-à-vis policy implementation, this research filled this gap, by collecting qualitative data from the frontline implementing state and non-state sport organisations in the communities.

For the purpose of this research the policy making authorities were considered to comprise those government institutions that play leading (supervisory and coordinating) roles in the implementation of the SDGs including the Office of the President, National

Development Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Youth and Sport and the National Sport Authority (See Figure 1). The primary implementing actors at the local level were state (regional and district sport offices) and non-state actors (National Sport Federations and Sport for Development organisations).

Theoretical framework: ambiguity-conflict matrix

Matland's (1995) model served as the framework for the analysis of issues of policy clarity and comprehensibility tied to low or high ambiguity as well as congruence and relevance tied to low or high conflicts were analysed (Matland 1995). Matland specified the appropriateness of the different policy approaches (top-down, bottom-up or combined), in a matrix of four implementation categories, to explain their combined impact on how the interplay of ambiguity and conflict affects policy implementation. Ambiguity refers to the vagueness or uncertainty of policy goals or policy means. Conflict occurs among two or more organisations when policies or resources for implementation are seen as more beneficial to some organisations than others. The model has four policy implementation categories: administrative, political, experimental, and symbolic (see Table 1).

Administrative implementation posits that policies made by authorities are well-defined and understood by implementing actors and that the means or resources to achieve the policies are nonconflictual. The kernel of this category is that the implementation outcome is determined by the provision of adequate resources. Matland mentioned that this category is applicable to the top-down traditions whereby the rational choice decisions of implementing actors are consistent with policy goals. Low policy ambiguity means that there is clarity of policy objectives, compliance, consensus and unfiltered information flows from the top to local implementers. Low policy conflict indicates that implementation guides or toolkits, appropriate human resources and other relevant resources are provided for successful implementation.

Political implementation refers to a situation where there is low policy ambiguity and high policy conflict. Central to achieving implementation outcomes is the power to influence policy. Here, there is clarity of policy goals, however the collective agreement among implementing actors is conflicting and the outcome of the implementation process is determined by which implementing actor or group of implementing actors have enough resources and are best positioned to influence policy. This occurs in two ways, (1) when some implementing actors are favoured by policy makers due to their history, cultural or social significance and (2) when opposing implementing actors construct a strong coalition or have adequate resources to negotiate with the policy making authorities. Policy making authorities may attempt to ensure compliance through coercion, incentives or political promises. Matland noted that in some instances local implementing actors (often far from policy making authorities) may exercise some power by following their own mission and refusing to comply with policy objectives. Though negotiation for cooperation maybe initiated with the opposing implementing actors, the top-down approach to policy implementation is more applicable under this category.

Experimental implementation indicates high policy ambiguity and low policy conflict. The central driving force for the implementation outcomes are the contextual conditions which entail resource mobilization by local implementing actors. High policy ambiguity means that policies are subject to different interpretations by local implementing actors.

Table 1. Matland's ambiguity-conflict matrix of policy implementation.

		conflict	
Levels		Low level conflict	High level conflict
Ambiguity	Low Level Ambiguity	Administrative implementation *Key determinant: Resources* • Policy goals are well-defined • Information flow is hierarchical • Rational choice decisions are consistent with policies • not amenable to external/ environmental influence • coercion and compliance are ensured • Applicable to top-down approaches	political implementation *Key determinant: Power* • Policy goals are clarified • Compliance is contested by opposing actors • Policies are negotiable with authorities • Some implementing actors are favoured • Applicable to top-down approaches
	High Level Ambiguity	experimental implementation *Key determinant: External conditions* • policy ambiguity is essential • Depends on individual actor interpretation • Depends on resources of implementing actors • Learning is derived from Successful implementation • Applicable to bottom-up approaches	Symbolic implementation *Key determinant: coalition strength* • Policies are vague and ill-defined • Little information about policy • Coalition of local implementing actors with ample resources influence policy • Applicable neither to the top-down and bottom-up approaches

Also, the means of achieving policy objectives may vary among implementing actors. There is low conflict because each local actor implements the ambiguous policies according to their individual interpretation and strength or capacity. The category is experimental because implementation outcomes maybe a success or failure depending on resource adequacy of the local implementers. Matland noted that successful implementation produces learning outcomes that are often beneficial to policy making authorities. Sometimes policy makers or governments deliberately make ambiguous policies in order to shift the burden of interpretation to the local implementing actors. More applicable to this category is the bottom-up approach to implementation.

The fourth category, ***symbolic implementation***, is characterised by high policy ambiguity and high policy conflict. The key determinant of the implementation outcome is the local level coalition strength. The strength of the coalition of local implementing actors with adequate resources to influence policy significantly. There is high policy ambiguity because the policies are symbolic and often abstract, vague and ill-defined in nature. Unlike experimental implementation, Matland noted that the strength of local coalitions shapes the outcome of the implementation.

Research design and method

The research used a case study design to collect and analyse qualitative data from multiple stakeholder organisations within the sport policy subsystem of Ghana. Yin (2009,18) stated that the case study, in relation to data collection and analysis, 'copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest…, relies on multiple sources of evidence…, benefits from the prior development of theoretical

propositions to guide data collection and analysis Considering that this research studied the relationship between policy and implementation involving multiple actors (Ragin 1992), data were collected from two overlapping sets of policy actors: (1) those primarily fulfilling policy making, supervisory or coordinating roles like the executive, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs); and (2) those state and non-state organisations primarily concerned with implementation comprising the state subnational structures (regional and district offices), National Sport Federations (NSFs) and sport for development organisations.

Access and sampling strategy

After gaining approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), initial and formal contacts were made with participants from the aforementioned organisations on the two levels. Each of the participants was also issued with an informed consent form ahead of the interview. This was done through gatekeepers/mediators from the network that the first author has known in his past 10-year experience as both a sport administrator and researcher in Ghana. With regards to the policy making authorities the research used purposive sampling of senior government officials and policy makers given their expert knowledge of the SDGs policy implementation process in Ghana. Further, policy documents and reports were accessed online or requested from the policy making authorities (see Table 1). With regards to the actors primarily concerned with implementation, purposive sampling was once again used to gain access to directors and senior officials from the National Sports Authority (NSA), Regional Sport Offices (RSOs), National Sport Federations (NSFs) and Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) organisations. However, two NSFs and two SDP organisations declined the requests for interviews without citing any specific reasons. Snowball sampling was used to access the coordinators from the District Sport Units (DSU). It is worth mentioning that until 2019, Ghana had 10 regions. Currently there are 16 regions but with limited structures in the additional six regions. The research therefore used state sports organisations from the previous 10 regions, specifically taken from the northern, mid, and southern parts of Ghana. This selection of regions was designed to ensure a balance of data sources in terms of urbanisation, wealth, population density and culture. See the full list of the interviewees in Table 3.

Data collection

The data collection formed part of an ongoing research project which began in 2019. The research used multi-method data collection through document analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). This allowed for triangulation in order to make a strong case for the research outcome (Bowen 2009). Details of the methods of enquiry are as follows:

Document analysis

Insights were drawn from policy implementation documents to analyse how sport has been captured and reported. They comprised both government and private documents (see Table 2 for full details). Some of the documents were accessed online while others were requested from participants after interviews. In doing so, biased selectivity was checked, for instance,

by ensuring that requested or provided documents served the purpose of the research rather than merely suiting research participants (Yin 2009). The research also followed Scott's (1990) four quality control principles of handling documentary sources which are data authenticity, credibility, representative and meaningfulness.

Semi-structured interviews

The rationale for this type of interview was to understand the implementation process from the perspective of key government officials (DeJonckheere and Vaughn 2019). Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic participants preferences in relations to the interview mode were considered. Consequently, interviews were conducted digitally via Zoom or face-to-face (see Table 2 for the full details). For the face-to-face interview the researcher adhered to the COVID-19 health and safety protocols in Ghana which included wearing a mask and maintaining the minimum distance of one meter (Government of Ghana 2020; Kenu, Frimpong, and Koram 2020). Interviewed participants were from policy making authorities and implementing organisations (see Table 2). The interview guide for the policy making authorities covered areas about the measures put in place to ensure implementation nationwide, the engagement of implementing actors in the policy process and the role of sport in advancing the SDGs in Ghana. Research questions to the regional sport directors and senior managers from the NSFs and SDP organisations included their engagement with the sport ministry, collaborations, access to government resources and their contribution to the social objectives of the SDGs.

Focus group discussion (FGD)

to Three FGDs were conducted as a complement to the semi-structured interviews in order to analyse the reliability of responses particularly from the regional sport directors. Overall, the purpose was to find out whether the policy goal of the SDG 3 through sport has been practical, understood and implemented. The discussions involved four to six District Sports Unit (DSU) coordinators/representatives (see Table 3) who provided insights into the communities where they worked (Bryman 2012). Participants were given the flexibility to share

Table 2. Sourced documents.

Documents	Publishing source (year)
Voluntary National Review (VNR) report on the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development	National Development planning commission (2019) United nations (2019)
SDGs Advisory Unit Annual report	Office of the president of Ghana (2019)
Ministry of youth and Sport: Medium-term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)	Ministry of Finance (2016–2020)
Formula for Sharing the District Assemblies common Fund – Allocation statement	Parliament of Ghana Library repository (2016–2020)
Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	United nations (2015)
Growth and poverty reduction Strategy (GPRS II)	National Development planning commission (2003–2009)
Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDI-II)	National Development planning commission (2010–2017)
Ghana Millennium Development Goals report	National Development Planning Commission (2006, 2008, 2010 and 2015)

their experiences. Additionally, given the political nature and the hierarchical order of the DSU, a neutral location for each of the three FGDs, was selected to allow participants to speak more freely (Elwood and Martin 2000). The FGDs were aided by an interview guide with similar objectives as the semi-structured interviews but with deeper frontline insights.

Reflexivity

Collecting data from a familiar context requires critical reflection regarding the researcher's position. Additionally, it involves an ongoing process of self-disclosure and explanation (Dowling 2008). Being a Ghanaian (first author) who speaks multiple Ghanaian languages and with a previous work experience in Ghana, provided me with an 'easier entrée, a head start in knowing about the topic and understanding nuanced reactions of participants' (Berger 2015, 223). Nonetheless, the researcher's position as an insider required attention to ethical dilemmas. Floyd and Arthur (2012, 172) stated that, there is often the 'deeper level ethical and moral dilemmas that insider researchers have to deal with once 'in the field These dilemmas are; (1) to gain trust participants were invited to give informed consent prior to the interview and were also told that, their personal details would be anonymised throughout and after the research (Jacobsson and Åkerström 2013); (2) there was also the risk of neutrality that participants may want to discuss personal matters or other unrelated issues (Patton 2014; Mapitsa and Ngwato 2020; 3) the risk of projection bias by both the researcher and participant(s) was taken into consideration; (5) the researcher avoided assuming that the research participants were fully aware of the details of the SDGs as either a sport policy goal or cross-sectorial policy in Ghana; and (6) the researcher also paid critical attention to implied statements, incomplete sentences or use of non-verbal cues (like facial expressions and symbolic gestures) to signify certain meanings (Berger 2015). Here, I ensured the clarity of the questions asked in the interview while also probing participants to fully grasp their responses.

Data processing and analysis

The data analysed comprised the identified documents (in Table 2) and interviews (semi-structured interviews and FGDs). The duration of the semi-structured interviews was from 40 to 60 minutes and the FGDs from 70 to 90 minutes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data were manually and digitally analysed. The data processing began with familiarising ourselves with the data by thoroughly reading and

Table 3. participants for semi-structure interviews.

empirical categories	Semi- structured interviews	FGD	participant	Description
Policy making authorities	4 (all digital)*	_	4	Government officials
Implementing actors	13 (5 digital)*	_	13	Regional Sport offices (*n = 3*), National (para) Sport Federations (*n = 6*) and Sport for Development organisations (*n = 4*)
	_	3	15	District Sport Units (DSU)**
Total			**32**	

**Digital interviews via zoom.*
***DSU were selected from the same regions as the Regional Sport Committees.*

re-reading through the data, making notes and forming ideas about coding. By using the MAXQDA Plus (2020), initial codes were extracted and labelled through the open coding method. The extracted codes were then linked together through axial coding to form meaningful organised categories (Gratton and Jones 2010). Thence, the organised categories were downloaded in excel format for manual analysis to generate main themes and sub-themes where necessary. In addition to the authors' collective analytical efforts, the probing and feedback from peer debriefing helped to generate credible themes (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The data analysis was undertaken both inductively and theoretically. By using the inductive approach, we engaged in data immersion, pattern matching and explanation building to generate common themes from the data (Yin 2009). The data from the document analysis and policy making authorities were inductively analysed to know how the government of Ghana had captured sport's contribution to the social goals of the SDGs in its reports and policies. The theoretical approach, as the name denotes, adopted the coding strategy based on the theoretical lens used for the research. Thus, aided by Matland's Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix of policy implementation, the following themes emerged; clarity and relevance of sport and SDGs as a policy goal**;** inclusivity of the policy implementation process; collaborations and interdependence among implementing actors; and policy implementation conflicts – here emerging themes were resource distribution, human resource capacity, reliance on football and discretion.

Findings

Policy making authorities' commitment to sport and the SDGs

This section shows how the role of sport in achieving the SDGs is captured and reported by the Government of Ghana and state institutions that play supervisory and coordinating roles (see Figure 1) towards the implementation of the SDGs. At the Ministry of Youth and Sports one of the policy goals in connection to the SDGs is 'to contribute to … the attainment of a healthy population through … sports' (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2020, 2). This goal serves as the basis for reporting the SDGs.

Stimulated by the United Nations' MDGs, the emphasise on the social development role of sport was first captured in Ghana's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) (2003-2009) and Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDI-II) (2010-2017). However, the Ghana MDGs reports (2006, 2008, 2010 and 2015) published by the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana did not provide a single report on the actual social contribution of sport.

Following the UN's categorical statement of sport as a significant enabler of 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) 2015, 3), the social role of sport, among other areas, has not only regularly appeared in Ghana's development policies but its social significance has been noted in some national reports as shown below:

> The Unit will aggressively seek to build new partnerships with educational institutions, traditional leaders, sporting organisations, and deepen its partnership with civil society organisations to expand its outreach. - 2019 SDGs Advisory Annual Report (page 37).

> [The government will] provide more sports amenities and encourage the youth to engage in sporting activities. - 2019 Voluntary National Review (page 101)

The above comments illustrate the government's intentions to prioritise sport through partnership and interventive actions. However, details regarding how sport would be used to achieve the SDGs in local communities was lacking from the reports. Furthermore, the relevance of sport to the SDGs and the approach adopted to ensure that the sport sector is fully involved in the SDGs' implementation was described by senior government officials as:

> We have considered sport in a number of ways. So, in the medium-term development framework the strategy and objective are to provide sports facilities and recreational facilities in all districts to promote the uptake of sports…, to revitalise the school sports programmes [such as] the inter colleges, community sports festivals, etc. to promote healthy lifestyle through what we call keeping active. We had also planned to partner with the GFA [Ghana Football Association] to try and see how we can use it to educate people on the SDGs and how best they can support the implementation. – Eris

From 2016–2020, the sport ministry's MTEF policy outcome indicator for the healthy population was 'increased participation in sports at all levels for health, fitness and wealth creation'. The unit of measurement for the said indicator was stated as the 'number of mass sports and other sporting activities organised So, from 2016-2020 of the MTEF, the MOYS, through the National Sport Authority, spearheaded and organised a total of 330 sporting activities in some communities. In addition, as at 2020, the infrastructure section of the MTEF showed the construction of 'community sport facilities' and 'Youth and Sports Resource Centres of Excellence (YSRCEs)'. The community sport facilities were mainly football stadia constructed in two selected communities while the YSRCEs are ongoing projects in each of the former 10 regions. The YSRCEs comprise 5000-seater sport complex, adolescent health facilities as well as counselling and ICT centres. It is worth mentioning that all these community projects were initiated and implemented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports without the active involvement of the regional sport offices and district sport units (as shown in the next two sub-headings).

Summarizing the above, the policy making authorities have shown commitment (in the form of strategy development and resource allocation) with regards to the role of sport in their efforts to meet the SDGs. Thus, illustrating Matland's administrative category where goals are well-defined, and implementation takes a top-down model. The emphasis on partnership with sporting organisations and the social role of sport for community health and well-being are crucial but the government's (through the sport ministry) approach towards implementation is more political. For instance, the sport ministry's intervention in implementation in local communities to prioritise football indicates political implementation. It also shows that local implementing actors that are football-related like the Ghana Football Association will be more favoured.

Local level implementation

Symbolic implementation at the regional level

The regional sport directors (RSDs) interviewed agreed on the relevance of the sport to achieving the SDG 3 in general, but they did not hesitate to speak about the challenges that prevent them from contributing to the health of the people within the communities where

they work. These challenges are their non-involvement in the implementation process, the lack of implementation guidance and the lack of financial and human resources.

With regard to the extent to which regional sports directors have been involved by the sport ministry and the National Sport Authority (NSA) in the implementation process and whether they have been provided with implementation guidelines typical comments were:

> Specifically, we have not been involved by the NSA [National Sports Authority] and the sport ministry… The NSA and sport ministry do things the way they want, but not even according to our structures. So, it is a big challenge for us. – RSD 1

> We had meeting about the SDGs and they (MOYS and NSA officials) said they are going to start the implementation but up until now there is no action taken. [So] I am working within my own strengths, till they come out with detailed guidelines. – RSD 2

Additionally, the directors remarked that they do not receive their yearly financial quota from government to support their community health programmes and activities. Some partly blamed the Ministry of Youth and Sports for channelling most of the funding to the Ghana Football Association, particularly the senior national team called the Black Stars:

> We have a quota from government, but we have never received that quota from the government. – Regional Sport Officer 3

> We concentrate so much on football in this country. In fact, two Black Stars matches can consume the whole budget for the year. So, it is in our small way that we are doing things. It is difficult to actually hit the [SDGs] targets. – RSD 2

When they were asked about how they have been able to work and contribute to the health of the communities they said that they had relied on internally generated funds from the renting of the regional stadium facilities. They also mentioned collaborations with various organisations at both the regional and district levels. But primarily, they depend on the district physical education (PE) teachers from the Ghana Education Services to support their limited number of community coaches and coordinators at the district sport units:

> Apart from [one of the] district sport units (DSUs) where we have NSA staff, we do rely on GES (Ghana Education Service) PE coordinators in the districts. For instance, when we organise inter-district sport festivals, we rely on them. – RSD 1

> For the mass sports we rely on sponsors that help us facilitate health and keep fit activities. We do liaise with individual keep fit clubs and regional health centres. Also, we partner with FM stations and MMDAs/DSUs to organise health walks and marathons. - RSD 3

In summary, the situation of the regional directors is illustrative of symbolic implementation with high policy ambiguity and high policy conflict over means. As noted by Matland (1995, 168), when policy is ambiguous, or abstract or only serves as a 'referential goal', then different interpretations may ensue for those who put policy into action. As shown above, the regional directors used their discretion to perform their civic duties in the absence of an implementation guide. The main challenges as illustrated above undermining their efforts to contribute to a 'healthy population' are: the lack of policy direction; inadequate financial and human resources; overriding of SDGs by football interests; and the non-involvement in the implementation process of the National Sport Authority and the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

Political implementation at the district level

The activities of the District Sport Units (DSUs) are supposed to be funded under the social services section of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF). A thorough search of the parliamentary annual authorised 'formula for sharing the DACF' from 2016 to 2020, indicated that although sport is an approved area under the social services section of the DACF, the allocation of funds meant for sport is not mandatory. The allocation is based on the discretion of the district chief executive officers. Unlike sport, it is worth pointing out that, the fund allocations to other social service areas like disability, education, disaster management and housing are mandatory and clearly defined.

The DSU is where policy translates into actions. Those interviewed were frontline implementers comprising district sport community coordinators/coaches and PE Coordinators from the Ghana Education Services. They spoke about health issues, lack of resources, non-involvement and over concentration on football. They believed that without their services the health of the people in the communities will worsen if both the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) continue to neglect their contributions.

When asked about the health issues that they encounter while working with people within their respective communities they mentioned issues associated with breathing (particularly asthma), malaria and ulcers due to prolonged hunger or bad nutrition. They remarked that all the health issues they encounter need medical attention and assessments. They also mentioned that the dusty playing fields either cause or exacerbate respiratory problems that they encounter. Additionally, they also stated that the ill-equipped and bad playing fields have caused injuries among young people who participate in their programmes:

> I think there is also dusty fields which to me I think it causes asthma and difficulty in breathing. – DSU Group 1

> Another key health challenge is the lack of good equipment, and bad playing fields. If you come to the [playing fields in my district], the ground is as hard as stone… It is very rough, bad state facilities and playing fields are poor and stony – DSU Group 2

They also mentioned that they are faced with the daunting issues relating to funding and non-involvement in the implementation processes at the district assemblies:

> I challenged the district authorities some time ago and I told them that we are aware that 2% or 5% of the [District assembly] Common Fund is for sports. But when we present our budget, we follow it up million times before a token is given in support of our sports. At times they didn't even mind me. It is hell. – DSU Group 3

> You see this is an African country, if you push, [the district authorities] will send you home… as we sit down here as individuals, we cannot take any decision until our leadership asks for our input but they don't. – DSU Group 2

District level actors also commented on the use of the supposed sport funds for political and canvassing purposes. This includes the over concertation on football related activities at the expense of games, recreational and play activities:

> The politics in sports is too much. … On certain occasions, the [district] assembly authorities purchase equipment like jerseys, footballs and whatever and they go to the various villages giving it out to clubs without involving us. – DSU Group 3

> If our authorities know very well, they will channel most of the money to physical activities and sports within communities and we will do away with a lot of the diseases and illnesses. That is where the national health care cost will reduce. But everything is centered on soccer. – DSU Group 1

Despite these challenges, the interviewees stated that they have been able, to some extent, to discharge some aspects of their programmes and activities by relying on private organisations and collaborations with some NGOs that use sport to address health issues.

> [My district] is in collaboration with Breast Cancer International to organise health walk. They bring their doctors to conduct free screenings… At times the diseases are detectible and once detected then they help. There is also Marcot Surgicals Limited, that sponsor us with sanitary pads for girls and women. – DSU Group 3

> There is Right to Play and sometimes they come with a lot of learning materials like their game manuals and equipment like footballs, jerseys and others. They give them to the various[district] schools. Sometimes, they organise workshops for the schoolteachers and we will monitor their activities. – DSU Group 2

In sum, the quotes from district sport unit implementers typify Matland's political implementation category where policies are well-defined but operate in the context of high conflict due to over-reliance on football activities, inadequate or no funding, and non-involvement of the frontline implementing actors. These create an implementation deficit where frontline implementers, who regularly translate policy into action, are either disregarded or neglected. In effect, the discretion and autonomy of the frontline implementers to cope with policy delivery uncertainties (like scarce resources) which may ultimately shape public policies may go overlooked (Lipsky 1980). The disregard of the roles of the frontline implementer is further illustrated among the national sport federations and the sport for development and peace organisations below.

Political implementation with national sport federations

The National Sport Federations (this includes some para-associations) have regional sport structures with district clubs that engage young people in the communities. Even though they are federated under their respective international sport federations, they pointed out that the government has ignored their contribution to national development.

The federations state that as compared to the Ghana Football Association/football which receives hefty portion of government funding, all other national sport federations do not receive such support:

> Through our regional leagues in the districts we contribute a lot in terms of player development, young athletes becoming healthy and paying medical bills. And so, hopefully within the next five to 10 years, we should start seeing a shift of mindset towards other sports aside [from] football. – Ceres

> Disable sport associations provide yearly programmes to the NSA and sport ministry, yet, we are neither financially supported nor recognised. But when it comes to the physically disabled sport the sports ministry supports their amputee football more, over the last five years. –Makemake

The statement from the National Sport Federations interviewees typifies Ghana's overwhelming support for football related activities (Charway and Houlihan 2020) which casts a shadow over the community development activities of other NSFs. This failure undermines

the government's collaborative efforts to achieve the SDGs through sport in local communities and provides evidence that implementation has clear characteristics of Matland's political implementation category.

Symbolic implementation with sport for development and peace (SDP) organisations

Of the over 6000 NGOs operating in Ghana it is not known precisely how many use sport as a primary strategy and would qualify as SDP organisations. However, it was clear from the interviews that sport is a primary or secondary vehicle for addressing social issues for a large number. The Youth Development through Sport (YDS) coalition of SDP organisations in Ghana has been instrumental in the use of sport to address health outcomes like the SDGs. The programmes and activities of the SDP organisations are not unknown to the sport ministry because both the 2016 Sport Act 934 of Ghana and the SDGs policies recognises them as strategic partners towards national development. The four members of SDP organisations that were interviewed work for self-funding local NGOs at the grassroots level. The participants that were interviewed from SDP organisations mentioned that the SDG 3 is relevant and integral to their work in the communities but also pointed out the lack of collaboration and recognition from both the district assemblies and the sport ministry.

With regards to health (SDG 3) their programmes have focused on HIV AIDS, malaria, mental health and girls and women's health issues:

> Basically, we focus a lot on HIV/AIDS and malaria. And I'm sure you are aware of how deadly malaria is in our side of the world. We also have a girl empowerment and health programme that we run. – Haumea

> We look at general health and fitness since every child growing up needs to play and be active. We also run mental health campaigns for children from broken homes and our volunteers comprising university students struggling with anxiety and depression issues from their studies. – Orcus

They indicated that they do not necessarily need financial support from the sport ministry or from the district assemblies. Rather, they need legitimacy and partnerships in order to supplement government's efforts in the communities. One project organiser commented:

> Government should use organisations like ours, because we are non-governmental and not political. The things we can achieve together maybe bigger than what government, through the ministries and MMDAs, can do. If government really wants to achieve something that is universal, then they should be involving us. – Sedna

A similar comment was made by the manager of a second project:

> Resources and funding are considerations but what we really must look at are legitimacy, promotion and recognition. The recognition of SDP organsations is very crucial towards the growth of SDP sector. It is sad the lack of needed recognition. – Gonggong

Despite the lack of recognition and partnership with the sport ministry and district assemblies, there is considerable collaboration between SDP organisations:

> Our strategy is to partner organisations like ours that have some things that we need. For instance, Right to Play assists us with capacity building programmes. Right to Dream absorbs most of our girls into their football academy. Alive and Kicking supports our health outreach programmes like HIV/AIDS and malaria through football. - Haumea

In summary, the mainstay of the SDGs is the recognition of NGOs as strategic partners (UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) 2015; NDPC (National Development Planning Commission) 2019). But the comments from the SDP organisations evince how they have not been considered as partners by both the sport ministry and district assemblies, particularly, in the joint efforts to achieve 'healthy population' of Ghanaians in the local communities. This shows that fostering strategic partnership with NGOs is ill-defined or simply ignored as cooperation might result in a loss of control over policy. As a result, conflicts in the form of disregard and lack of partnership have ensued. Accordingly, typifying Maitland's symbolic implementation. As with symbolic implementation, the collaboration strategy among SDP organisation as noted above maybe integral to forming 'coalition strength' that will be crucial to determining policy success or failure (Lipsky 1980).

Discussion and conclusion

The above findings illustrate the intricacies of the policy-implementation nexus frequently cited in the public policy literature. Can the government's commitment to the SDGs simply be a political strategy for Ghana's image or to ensure continued funding from the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT) which gives concession to low and middle-income countries (LMICs) implementing the SDGs? Generally, the findings reveal weaknesses in the policy implementation of SDG 3 through sport due to the gap between government policy statements and practice, that is, what government seeks to do as against what government is actually doing. We will therefore discuss the challenges that accounted for the SDG health and sport policy-implementation gap through the lens of Matland's Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix of Policy Implementation. These challenges comprise the lack of resources, the non-involvement of local implementing actors, clientelism due to football's overbearing importance, the legitimation of SPD organisations. The implications for sustainability and similar research around the world will be discussed. Additionally, we reflect on the utility of Matland's typology and discuss its strength and weaknesses in relation to the research findings. The concluding part makes recommendations for further research.

In line with Matland's typology, the research findings showed that the policy implementation related to the health of the Ghanaian population (SDGs 3) through sport is predominantly political at both the policy making and local implementing levels although there were instances at the regional level that showed elements of symbolic implementation. As noted in the findings, the SDGs as a policy goal are well-defined, however the symbolic-political implementation indicates high conflicts over the means of implementation. For instance, the resources available for the actual implementation are unevenly distributed and often politicised by leading government actors at the sport ministry and the district assemblies. Hence, conflict over the means of implementation where the decisions of the frontline implementing actors are misaligned with the stated policy goals. For instance, since government officials from the sport ministry and the district assemblies have taken over the actual implementations of the SDGs in ways that they deem fit, the local implementing actors from the regional and district sport offices follow their 'own missions' (Matland 1995, 164).

Additionally, conflict over means of implementation occurred due to the unavailability and skewed distribution of funding, the lack of implementation guidelines and sufficient

human resources for successful implementation. As a result, mistrust among the local implementing actors could impede successful implementation. We argue that, to have significant impact on successful implementation, government has to ensure regular and appropriate distribution of funds to regional sport offices, provision of sufficient human resource at the local district level and an inclusive policy implementation process.

Further, conflicts among local implementing actors as described occur in the form of clientelism where some groups are favoured over others. Clientele relationships between the sport ministry and the Ghana Football Association (GFA) as well as between district assemblies and certain community groups (that engage in football related activities) permeates the findings. The prioritisation of football illustrates the political clientelism described by Stoke (2011) as 'programmatic redistributive politics' where politically elected officials in government draw policy resources to favour certain groups for canvassing and political support. The leverage of football's popularity for political reasons, as revealed creates asymmetrical relationships among the implementing actors (Lemarchand and Legg 1972). What may ensue is that a large number of actors may be neglected, and the wider impact of development may not be attained (Van de Walle 2014). For instance, despite the UN's 2030 Agenda for the SDGs emphasis on mobilising resources from non-state actors to complement governments efforts, the SDP particularly sector relevant to health have neither been utilised nor captured in the reports of the sport ministry. The SDP sector entails diverse community-based NGOs offering various social services which complements government's efforts in the local communities.

The symbolic-political implementation issues discussed also undermines the social significance of sport and hence the sustainability of health outcomes. In reference to Lindsey's (2008) concept of sustainability: government, through its institutions, must ensure frequent and equitable distribution of resources to implementing actors; avoid the clientelistic tendencies that cause disparities among implementing actors; legitimise and recognise SDP organisations as strategic partners in order to 'strengthen community capacity' (ibid., 282); and ultimately work with local implementing actors to make a well-defined implementation guide tailored to needs of communities.

A study funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat which has involved 71 countries since 2017 showed evidence of 'sports policies identified as development objectives' linked to specific SDGs (Sherry et al. 2019, 13). In recent studies, (country-specific) SDGs and sport policies have been analysed (Lindsey and Darby 2019; Moustakas and Işık 2020; Campillo-Sánchez et al. 2021). The studies provide evidence for vertical policy coherence of SDGs and sport policies between national and international organisations. Despite this, the research findings also noted the need to improve and carefully examine horizontal policy (in)coherencies involving sport NGOs and government institutions at the local level. Campillo-Sánchez et al. (2021) study on Sports and SDGs in Spain for instance found that there are inconsistencies in 'alliances, the exchange of experiences and roles between the different actors (state and nonstate)' (p. 14). A similar conclusion was reached in the research conducted by Moustakas and Işık (2020) about Botswana, which revealed policy weaknesses which included a lack of stakeholder engagement, limited community sport facilities, no concrete implementation plan and overwhelming financial support for football. These challenges show a similar pattern to those identified in this study. By failing to utilise or analyse the opportunities that policy coherence offers, local implementation actors may act at their discretion or pursue divergent paths, as shown by this study.

In general, Matland's Ambiguity-Conflict Matrix of Policy Implementation was a useful analytical tool as it incorporates elements of top-down and bottom-up implementation, rather than seeing them as alternative approaches. The four different implementation categories, their characteristics and the conditions under which these characteristics affect the success of policy implementation provided a valuable ideal type against which Ghana's experience could be assessed and analysed. Thus, it provided the analytical grounds to substantiate the call for scrutiny regarding expressions of sport as a cost-effective low risk policy tool or magic wand used by governments to solve wide range of social problems (Coalter 2010). The Matrix nonetheless would benefit from being used in combination with other theories of the policy process (such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework or the Multiple Streams Framework) to better explain how power is exercised by policy actors.

To conclude, we want to re-emphasise on the importance of the SDP sector which has gained global momentum and have appeared in many national policies (Sherry et al. 2019). Despite the presence of many SDP organisations in various local communities of Ghana, there have been little research covering their contributions to sustainable development particularly related to health. Therefore, we recommend further research to explore how the SDP actors organise themselves and mobilise (finance) resources to contribute to sustainable development despite being excluded from government-led policy implementation.

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Article 4

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Participation of girls and women in community sport in Ghana: Cultural and structural barriers

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Abstract

Despite numerous international and national policy documents promoting girls' and women's empowerment and participation in community sports, the actual access to sport for women and girls is still restricted in several countries. This paper explores the situation in Ghana. Through the analytical lens of Cooky and Messner's theory of 'the unevenness of social change', we analyse the cultural and structural barriers that prevent girls and women from participating in sport in Ghanaian communities. The data material is document analysis, focus groups and semi-structured interviews with male and female officials representing state-funded regional and district sports organisations as well as non-state sports organisations in Ghana. The findings reveal that cultural barriers, rooted in deep-seated cultural norms and structural hindrances that undermine gender-inclusive policies, contribute to the limited participation of girls and women in community sport. Furthermore, the interplay between these cultural and structural factors leads to gender-specific practices and fewer women in leadership positions. Based on our analyses, we suggest that structural changes (enforcing and implementing gender policies) can result in cultural changes (positive gender equality outcomes) over time.

Keywords

Community sport, Ghanaian culture, girls and women, participation, policy implementation and sustainable development

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Introduction

Sport is popular in Ghana and the commitment to gender equality in sport is underlined in several policy documents such as the Sports Act 934 of 2016. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (gender equality) is outlined in the Ministry of Youth and Sports' Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) from 2016 to 2021, which details the promotion, empowerment, and enhancement of the participation of girls and women in community sport. The sparsely available research on the topic (Adam, 2014; Sarpong et al., 2022) indicates that participation in community sport is nevertheless higher among boys and men than among girls and women. The purpose of this article is to analyse the cultural and structural factors that account for the low participation of girls and women in Ghanaian community sport through focus group discussions and interviews with leaders and administrators at the district and regional level. Theoretically, we are inspired by Cooky and Messner's (2018) suggestion of analysing barriers and changes in girls' and women's access to sport at various analytical levels. We will address the cultural and structural levels since these have been insufficiently captured in earlier studies from Ghana, despite the importance of addressing these levels to improve access to sport for girls and women. The interviews with leaders and administrators are especially suited to develop knowledge of structural and cultural barriers. The article is structured as follows: first we describe the empirical context and then present our theoretical perspective, research design and methods, followed by the indings and the discussion and conclusion.

Empirical context: Community sport in Ghana

In Ghana, community sport is funded through the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) and coordinated by the District Sport Units (DSUs) of the various district assemblies. Policies, especially those outlined in the Local Governance Act 936 of 2016 (which discourages gender-based discrimination – subsection a – and promotes equal treatment in sports – subsection c); the Sports Act 934 of 2016 (ensuring equitable treatment in community sports – section 3(m)); and the sport ministry's commitment to SDG 5, serve as directives for the DSUs to prioritise the empowerment and participation of girls and women in community sport. As described in the Sports Act 934 of 2016, community sport at the DSUs includes recreational activities, play, games or any form of physical activity that promotes inclusivity and community health and well-being. The DSUs are composed of district assembly representatives (under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development), district physical education (PE) teachers (from the Ministry of Education) and district sport development officers (from the Ministry of Youth and Sports). DSUs work closely with the regional sport offices to implement the sport ministry's policies on gender empowerment, gender equality in sport, and increased participation of girls and women in communities (Republic of Ghana, 2016). In this regard, the DSUs are strategically positioned to partner or collaborate with relevant NGOs or community-based organisations, particularly those organisations with experience in empowering girls and women to participate in community sport. Moreover, the DSUs provide resources and support to schools within the community during district

school sport games. Among these are the provision of district playfields and courts, as well as the provision of game officials. Ghana does not have a district sport club system that emphasises sport-for-all or sport-for-development initiatives. Although there are sports clubs affiliated with national sports associations/federations, their programmes do not align with the DSUs as these clubs seek to promote the development of a particular sport and provide opportunities for young people to pursue professional careers as athletes. It is imperative to emphasise that these sports clubs are primarily football clubs, as football is the most popular sporting Ghana due to its historical and cultural significance to Ghanaians (Charway and Houlihan, 2020; Darby, 2013).

As far as the ratio of female to male participation in community sporting Ghana is concerned, there are no statistics available to estimate how many girls and women participate (Charway and Houlihan, 2020). However, the sparsely existing studies on gender participation in sport indicate low participation among girls and women in community sport. Adam (2014) studied the leisure patterns of various communities throughout Ghana and found that 61% of female respondents had never participated in physical activity or sports compared to 8% of male respondents. A survey conducted by Sarpong et al. (2022) among 180 female respondents from various communities in the western part of Ghana revealed a lower participation rate for women in college sports. Low female participation in Ghana's community sport activities has been attributed to the misconception that sport and physical activity are reserved for men and the constraints associated with the social roles of women and girls (Nkrumah and Domfeh, 2015; Ofei-Aboagye, 2004). Yussif (2021) found that socio-cultural, economic, political and religious barriers affected female participation in the programmes of community-based organisations (including sport organisations) in a district in northern Ghana. Adam (2014) attributed the low rate of female participation mainly to cultural norms and the patriarchal nature of the Ghanaian society.

The aforementioned studies are descriptive and focus primarily on personal or cultural barriers. Our study complements their findings by analysing the cultural and structural factors that may explain the low participation of girls and women in community sport from the viewpoint of gender-implementing actors. Knowledge about structural and cultural barriers is especially relevant to consider to be able to improve girls' and women's access to sport.

Theoretical framework – cultural and structural factors influencing girls' and women's participation

As described for several countries, sport has historically been dominated by men when it comes to opportunities to participate, access resources and positions and gain public attention and recognition (Theberge, 2003). Over the last 40 to 50 years, there has been an increasing recognition of the rights of girls and women to have access to sport as a public good, and this is also the case in Ghana. Despite these public goals, girls' and women's participation in sport entails several barriers. Some of these barriers are rooted in assumptions that sport is not suitable for women based on the ideology of natural biological differences between men and women – what Messner (2018) refers to as hard essentialism. According to Messner, sport has been a key site for the

naturalisation of this ideology. Another argument has been that sport is culturally inappropriate for girls, without reference to biological differences. Taking inspiration from Messner (2018), but not strictly following his definition, we refer to this as soft essentialism.[1]

We are interested in the barriers to and the opportunities for promoting girls' and women's access to community sport and follow Cooky and Messner's (2018) suggestion of analysing the changes in girls' and women's access to sport at three levels. An argument for this division is that changes at one level do not automatically follow changes at another level – what Cooky and Messner refer to as 'the unevenness of social change'. Even though the levels are in some cases closely connected, they can be analysed separately.

The personal and interpersonal level includes the everyday practices on the ield: Who is actually taking part in sport? What are their motives for playing sport and what does sport mean for them? This level is addressed by studies on motivation for sports participation (Saavedra, 2009) as well as studies on gendered practices in grassroot sports (Persson, 2023).

The cultural level refers to beliefs or cultural values. This level includes the norms that designate gendered roles and indicate girls' and women's place within the social structure. The cultural factors include gender ideologies and stereotypes (Messner, 2018), religious beliefs (Walseth, 2016),household chores (Kay, 2006) and conceptions of girls and women in sports (Hargreaves, 2002).

The structural level refers to the institutional context, meaning the priorities and actual offers of sport for women, as well as the structures of organisations, the gender composition and leadership and the allocation financial and human resources of organisations (Evans and Pister, 2021).

The notions of hard and soft essentialism (Messner, 2018) combined with Cooky and Messner's (2018) suggestion of an analytical distinction between the personal, the culturaland the structural levels is our theoretical lens to understand the context and situation regarding girls' and women's access to sport. The existing studies on gender from Ghana and sport have primarily addressed the personal and interpersonal levels (Adam, 2014; Sarponget al., 2022). Thus, placing the individual at the centre of analysis, our study contributes by examining the cultural and structural factors that account for the low participation rate of girls and women in community sports. As we see it, our interviews with officials from DSUs, Regional Sport Offices and NGOs are particularly relevant for gaining knowledge of the cultural and structural levels.

Research design and methods

This study is a part of an ongoing research project which began in 2019. The purpose of this research is to analyse the cultural and structural barriers to girls' and women's participation in Ghanaian community sport at the district level. As we see it, the complementary backgrounds and experiences of the two researchers were useful in the research design and process. The first author, who conducted the interviews, is a man from Ghana who has experience in sport administration in Ghana. The second author, who is a woman, has experience in gender studies and has never been to Ghana. We had

thorough discussions from the outset about the research context, theoretical framework and the interview guide as well as how to prepare for unexpected responses.

The first author's position as a Ghanaian offered both opportunities and challenges for the data collection and research as a whole. In terms of opportunities, the researcher's familiarity with the context gave him an 'easier entrée, a head start' (Berger, 2015: 223), and probably also gained him trust. Challenges such as the tendency to take for granted and overlook certain issues (Patton, 2014; Yin, 2009) were discussed by the two authors both before the data collection and during the analyses. Challenges for male interviewers interviewing women about gender inequality were also discussed and prepared for as recommended by Styhre and Tienari (2013).

Data collection

The data were collected through three focus group discussions (n = 15), semi-structured interviews (n = 13) and document analysis (n = 10). Overall, 28 participants (10 women and 18 men) were interviewed. Tables 1 and 2 provide details. The participants for this study had a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 20 years of experience in community sport. The interview guide for the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions addresses the research question about the barriers contributing to girls' and women's

Table 1. Participants of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

Empirical categories	Semi- structured interviews	FGD	Number of female and male participants
Regional Sport Offices	6	-	3 female and 3 male sport directors (from 6 regions)
District Sport Units	4	3 (5 in each)	4 women and 15 men (from 19 districts)
Girls and women-based NGOs	3	-	All women (3 NGOs represented in regions/districts)
Total	**13**	**15**	**28 (10 women and 18 men)**

Table 2. Sourced documents.

Documents	Publishing source (year)
Sports Act 934 of 2016	National Sport Authority/Ministry of Youth and Sports
Formula for Sharing the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) – Allocation statement	Parliament of Ghana Library Repository (2016–2021)
Local Governance Act 936 of 2016	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Ministry of Youth and Sports: Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)	Ministry of Finance (2016–2021)
Reports, policy strategies, and publications	DSUs and NGOs (2016–2021)

low participation in community sport and how the low participation rate can be increased. The focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face in accordance with the Government of Ghana (2020) COVID-19 guidelines.

Document analysis included key documents requested from DSUs, regional offices and non-governmental organisations. These documents include policy documents, reports and publications. Additionally, we obtained accessible documents online (see Table 2).

We conducted semi-structured interviews with both women and men serving in various positions in different organisations. Unlike focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to provide more in-depth communication and conidently share personal information and experiences that may not have been possible in a group setting (Frisina, 2018). Interviews were conducted with three men and three women from the regional sport offices, four women from the DSUs, and three NGOs. Three of the six regional directors were interviewed during the initial collection of data in 2020, while the remainder (including DSUs and NGOs) were interviewed during the second round of data collection in 2022. Although the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews followed the interview guide, their emphasis differed slightly. Interviews with regional directors focused on gendered labour, organisational policies and practices and resource allocation; interviews with females from DSUs focused on social barriers, gendered labour, organisational policies and practices that restricted participation; and interviews with NGO participants emphasised collaboration and social barriers. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 40 and 60 min.

The focus group discussion with the participants from the DSUs during the initial data collection provided insight into the DSUs and the community in which they work. We tried to stimulate open discussions among the participants, allowing them to share their experiences from the various districts. This enabled us to collect and analyse a variety of narratives and perspectives simultaneously (Frisina, 2018; Krueger, 2014). The focus group discussions lasted between 70 and 90 min.

Ethical considerations

After gaining approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), we established initial contacts and constant communication with the participants via multiple mediators. Each participant gave their informed consent before participating in the research. As part of the informed consent, the research participants were assured that their identities, sensitive information and personal statements would be kept anonymous and securely stored (Kaiser, 2009). It is worth noting that due to the fear of job loss for the participants (particularly from the DSUs) as well as the culturally sensitive nature of this research, we assigned pseudonyms to the participants (Chambers, 2022). In light of this, sites for data collection were established away from the workplaces of the participants from the DSUs (Elwood and Martin, 2000).

Data processing and analysis

First, documents from relevant government policies and reports obtained before, during and after the interviews were analysed in accordance with the four quality control

principles of Scott (1990), which are data authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaningfulness. Each document was printed and read carefully and thoroughly. In essence, document analysis is of importance to the structural analysis of the DSUs and NGOs. We transcribed the recorded interviews manually and analysed them digitally with MAXQDA Plus 2022. An open coding method supported by the theoretical framework of this study was used to generate 36 initial codes. Among the initial codes generated were family/parental roles, conceptions about girl's and women's participation in sport, religion, patriarchy, collaboration, policy guidelines, implementation of community sport, funding and leadership. The initial codes were then arranged into categories. We performed a collective analysis where the categories were discussed between the two authors and adjusted. Through the use of the theoretical lens for this study (Cooky and Messner, 2018), common themes that influence the low participation of girls and women were extracted (from the categories) under cultural and structural constraints. Cultural barriers include themes such as house chores and gender stereotypes, as well as religion and early child marriages. Structural barriers were grouped into institutional barriers and organisational practices. Gender policies and recruitment were considered institutional barriers, whereas under-representation of women within an organisation and partnerships were considered organisational practices.

Findings

The participants referred to both cultural and structural barriers to explain the low participation of girls and women in community sport.

Cultural barriers

The participants stated from the outset that girls and women do not have equal access to community sport due to the patriarchal nature of the Ghanaian society. Moreover, they recounted specific cultural barriers, including cultural beliefs and practices related to household chores, gender stereotypes, religion and early child marriages. These cultural constraints are discussed in greater detail below.

Gender stereotypes

The participants in this study recount how gender stereotypes and essentialist gender beliefs are barriers to the participation of girls and women in community sport. As a male DSU recounted:

> *The misconception about sport being for boys is in both rural areas and the cities. Sometimes the girls tell us that their parents don't want them to run or train for fear of developing men features or may not be able to give birth.* (male DSU member)

The DSU and NGO participants also mentioned that they often encounter these stereotypes in the communities where they conduct routine activities. Here, both female coaches and girls are often subject to stereotypes about their appearance, womanhood and physical capabilities. As one female DSU mentioned:

While training the youth in the community, some community members, especially the men, will refer to us as the weak species, and sometimes they will yell to me, 'Go and marry and give birth'. (female DSU member)

The research participants described an endemic issue of female stereotypes in Ghanaian community sport, as suggested in previous studies (Adam, 2014; Nkrumah and Domfeh, 2015; Sarpong et al., 2022). To change such assumptions requires education and gender empowerment initiatives. According to the DSUs, they lack the resources to empower the entire community and are therefore only able to educate the parents and girls who participate in their programmes. As one NGO pointed out, 'The best thing we can do is share our experiences as female coaches, mothers and former athletes who have achieved success'.

Household chores

According to the accounts of the research participants, household chores are a cultural practice reserved for girls and women, who are viewed as family caregivers. They mentioned that parents would allow the boys to participate in sports while the girls stayed at home to assist their mothers and take care of the family. Furthermore, it is evident from their assertions that parents play an active role in ensuring that girls stay at home to assist with housework. The participants from DSUs and NGOs that have programmes in rural and urban areas shared these challenges. According to them, household chores for girls are time-consuming and, as a result, leave the girls withinsuficient time to participate in community sport programmes. As described in studies from Ghana (Nkrumah and Domfeh, 2015) and other countries (Kay and Spaaij, 2012), girls' responsibility for household chores is taken for granted.

Women/girls have house chore routines, and so how do you expect a girl to frequently come to our programmes? In the morning, they sweep the compound, do some laundry, cook for the family at night and shop or sell with their mothers in the market at the weekend. Some even have to hawk on the streets for the family. These prevent them from joining our programmes. (male DSU member)

The research participants mentioned that sometimes they succeed in persuading parents about the importance of community sport and physical activity, and as a result, the parents release their daughters, albeit reluctantly. Nevertheless, the girls often leave early during their programmes to attend to house chores.

…the [girls] will be like, 'I will have to go home early to help my parents at home; when I don't go home early my mum will beat me'. (male DSU member)

Girls who sell with their mums at the market will let us know that they have to leave early to help their mum sell at the market. (female DSU member)

Girls' opportunity to participate in community sport is restricted by house chores as shown by Kay and Spaaij's (2012) studies of young people's participation in sport programmes from India, Zambia and Brazil. As underlined by Kay and Spaaij (2012), the family culture needs to betaken into account to foster participation and social change.

Early child marriages and pregnancies

The DSU and NGO participants identified child marriage as a fixed cultural issue in Ghana. A DSU participant from the northern regions of Ghana stated:

> *There is family pressure and so the moment they finish basic school (at 13 or 14 years of age), they get married, and their husbands will not allow them to come and participate… it's difficult to get them when they finish school.* (male DSU member)

An annual report we examined from one of the NGOs that has engaged 2000 girls (mainly from coastal areas of Ghana) indicated that child or teenage pregnancy is one of the major barriers to girls participating in their community empowerment and sport programmes. As one NGO member recounted:

> *What we encountered was that the [girls] have this mindset from the community that by 13 or the latest 15 years a girl should have a child. When I told them that I didn't have a child, they were surprised and they said that I would be ridiculed and insulted if I were to be in their community.* (female NGO member)

Both the 1992 Constitution and the Children's Act (560) of 1998 of Ghana set the marriage age at 18 for both boys and girls and repudiate all forms of forced marriages. Nonetheless, child marriage has been prevalent in some areas and is primarily driven by socio-cultural barriers such as 'poverty, teenage pregnancy and cultural norms such as betrothal marriages, exchanges of girls for marriage and pressure from significant others' (Ahonsi et al., 2019: 13). Sub-Sahara Africa, particularly West and Central Africa, has the world's highest rates of child marriage (UNICEF, 2018). According to Koski et al. (2017: 13), 'more than half of women born in the most recent cohort were married before age 18' in West Africa. Whereas child marriage rates have plummeted below 20% in Ghana and Togo among West African countries, the number of cases of child marriage is higher in northern and rural areas of Ghana (de Groot et al., 2018). The DSU participants commented that these are sensitive cultural issues and given their limited resources, they can engage only those girls who are available and are taking part in the activities. On the other hand, NGOs engage some parents and girls through community forums.

Religion

Religion is a core part of the Ghanaian society and comprises 73% Christian denominations, 20% Islamic, 3% traditional religion and 1% no religion (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The DSU participants revealed that some religious sects in Ghana prohibit girls from participating in sport. Provision 9 of the Children's Act (560) of 1998 states that all children (18 years and below) have the right to social activity, and it further stipulates that no group or person 'shall deprive a child the right to participate in sports… or other leisure activities'. The DSU participants retorted that this is far from what happens on the ground.

> *The religious aspect is very key, especially from the Muslims and some of Christian sects like Jehovah Witness and Seventh Day Adventist. They will discourage the girls and tell them not to go and do sports.* (male DSU member)

A DSU participant from mid-Ghana who was attacked while training young girls and boys in a field expressed shock to learn that his district assembly director acquiesced in a directive from the head of the Muslim sect that attacked him. He recounts:

> *One time I was attacked by a Muslim group while on the field after I insisted that Muslim girls in my district schools participate in community sport. I was just following the right-to-play-law of the state.* (male DSU member)

According to DSUs from the northern part of Ghana, religious-based rules are non-negotiable, particularly for Muslims. However, girls who wish to participate in community sports but are concerned about their appearance are educated about alternative ways to dress that cover their bodies.

> *… if a girl wants to join our programmes, we recommend tracksuits that cover their entire body in order to be in tune with their parents and religious demands.* (male DSU member)

In this way, they are able to avoid untoward reactions from their community, which is predominantly Islamic. Restrictions on Muslims girls' participation in sport have been revealed in several other studies (Kay, 2006; Strandbu, 2005; Strandbu et al., 2019; Walseth and Fasting, 2003), whereas there are, according to Walseth (2016), surprisingly few studies on how Christianity influences women's participation in sport. The main message from studies on Muslim girls and sport is that religion is interwoven with culture (Walseth, 2016). Even though religions such as Islam could be described as encouraging physical activity and health improvement (Walseth, 2016), religion is also used to restrict women's access to sports.

Summing up cultural barriers

The cultural barriers referred to in the study are ingrained in deep cultural norms and stereotypes. The assumptions that participation in sport will contribute to developing masculine features and restrict the ability to give birth can be seen as examples of hard essentialism (Messner 2018), while girls' responsibility for household chores and religious concerns can be seen as examples of soft essentialist views. As suggested in earlier research, the underlying cultural barriers to girls' and women's participation in community sports in Ghana are not new (Adam, 2014; Nkrumah and Domfeh, 2015; Sarpong et al., 2022). While the DSU participants, regardless of gender, make efforts to encourage girls to participate in community sport, they are met with stiff opposition from key social actors such as parents, religious sects and community members who adhere to obsolete gender stereotypes and long-held cultural practices such as early child marriage and house chores. This is consistent with the research of de Groot et al. (2018) about child marriages in Northern Ghana, where social norms and beliefs as well as parents play a significant role in the marriage process and the maintaining of tradition. It is evident from the findings that negotiating and challenging these beliefs is difficult without a conscious and pragmatic effort to engage the aforementioned social actors in gender education programmes.

Structural barriers

The participants' descriptions of the structural barriers can be grouped into two categories, namely institutional barriers and organisational practices. The institutional barriers include policies and resource allocation for gender empowerment and recruitment, while the organisational practices comprise gendered practices, cultural beliefs, policies, leadership and partnerships embedded in and often taken for granted in organisations (Schein, 2004).

Institutional barriers

Under the empirical context, we noted that there are policy provisions in Ghana that support girls' and women's empowerment and participation in community sport. Although these policy statements may be well-intended, interviews with the DSU participants and regional sport directors (RSDs) revealed institutional barriers in implementing a gender-balanced community sport programme. Among the main challenges they cited were a lack of funding, implementation strategies and gender-based recruitment polices.

Lack of funds. During the interviews, DSU members and RSDs lamented a lack of sufficient funds to provide gender empowerment programmes and activities. As one male DSU member put it, 'How do we educate parents and communities about the importance of girls and women participating in community sport when the assembly does not provide any assistance?' According to the analysis of Charway et al. (2022) on sport policy implementation at the district assemblies in Ghana, directors (politically appointed) allocate the sport component of the DACF to DSUs at their discretion. Their analysis further revealed that since the sport component of the DACF is not backed by a legal instrument or a legally enforceable act, district assembly directors often use it for canvassing purposes.

The participants from the DSUs expressed an awareness of the sport ministry's policy commitment to gender equality and equal access to community sport. Nevertheless, they all agreed on the following statement:

> *DSUs do not have any policy guidelines for addressing or improving the low participation of girls and women.* (male DSU member)

It is not clear from the interviews whether the main problem is a lack of funds or a limited allocation of resources to women's sports.

Lack of implementation strategies. Furthermore, the participants pointed out that despite attending several district assembly meetings, no real commitment from the district assembly authorities had been made to mitigate the low participation rate of girls and women in community sport. As one female DSU member stated, 'At meetings, the authorities act as if they care about the issues, but they really don't, and at times I feel that my input is taken for granted'. According to one female regional sport director, the sport ministry is in the process of drafting a national sport policy guide (which includes provisions on gender

empowerment and equal access to sport). The committee is composed of four males and three females and has no representation from DSUs or regional sport offices. A female regional sport director, who was critical of the committee's provision regarding girls' empowerment and participation in sport, asked the following:

> *How do you even come up with a strategic plan when those who are supposed to implement in the districts are predominantly men?* (female RSD)

Despite women being included in the committee, the lack of women in sports leadership at the local level, as seen in several other countries (Evans and Pister, 2021; Fasting et al., 2014), is viewed as an obstacle to implementing the policy.

Lack of gender-based recruitment policies. A further obstacle to the achievement of SDG 5 that emerged from our interviews and is supported by the document analysis is the absence of recruitment strategies or policy guides that can lead to an increase in female leadership in the DSUs and regional sport offices. Involving DSUs, regional sport offices and relevant NGOs in policy development can provide practical cultural and structural insights that are crucial to the development of effective policy. As one female NGO participant put it, 'Gender equality shouldn't just be a talk because there are deeper cultural issues to consider'. In her opinion, gender stereotypes such as 'men head the family' and 'women are submissive' prevent women from getting leading positions and thus make them play second fiddle to men. This situation makes gendered recruitment policies necessary. The impression from our study aligns with the conclusion in a recent review (Evans and Pister, 2021), which found that even if a gender equality policy statement exists, the actual actions for pursuing gender equality are less elaborated.

Organisational practices

The participants interviewed described organisational practices related to women's leadership, gendered practices and partnerships as contributing factors to the low participation rate.

Under-representation of women in leadership. We began by first and foremost asking about gender representation in the DSUs and regional sport offices. From the outset, it was clear that women were far less or not represented in both organisations. As one male DSU member mentioned, 'We have just one woman in about 26 districts of our region'. A female DSU from a different region also stated, 'I am the only person in my DSU. All the rest are men'. According to male and female DSU participants, there are enough qualiied women available, but they are not being employed. As one female participant mentioned, 'Year in and year out, we have women graduating as coaches and PE (physical education) teachers from our universities and training colleges'. As another participant concurred, 'There are many former sportswomen that I know who are interested if given a chance'. A female senior executive of an NGO that advocates for women in sport in Ghana and works closely with the ministry of sports and national sport associations and is present in almost every region of the country, reluctantly summed up the situation:

> *There are many delicate cultural issues and lack of organisational support involved in this matter, and although we are doing our best, we admit that women in sport are underrepresented, particularly at the district levels.* (female NGO member)

In addition, our audit of the Sports Act 934 of 2016 revealed that the membership of the DSUs does not include any representation from the Gender, Children and Social Protection Ministry. This is despite representation from the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Like the other ministries with representation in the DSU, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has regional offices (called the Department of Gender) that work closely with district assemblies to implement and empower gender policies. Having a representative of the Department of Gender in the DSU could be a valuable resource and might help enhance the way in which gender issues are handled within the DSU. The under-representation of women in leadership was described as a crucial factor that accounts for the low participation of girls and women in community sport.

Gendered practices. When we probed the reason for the lack of female representation in leadership, the responses from male and female RSDs who have an influence on employment at and staffing of DSUs differed starkly. The statement below exemplifies the position of the male RSDs:

> *It is about choice and willingness to enter the sport sector. Not every woman would like to be in sport. The sport space in Ghana is rough and lacks resources, and this is something women can't handle. Giving birth is also a problem for women. Also, women are not good at account- ability.* (male RSD)

The above view is shared by the several male RSDs who were interviewed. The view that women lack accountability and are incapable of handling tough situations is a quintessential example of 'hard essentialist' gender stereotypes. Contrary to the male directors, the women we interviewed expressed discontent with the lack of respect for women in leadership positions:

> *Our voices are not respected. It was very difficult to get to my current position due to opposition from the [National Sports Authority and the sport ministry] (who are primarily men). When I finally became the director, a group of men from the community came to my office to question my appointment.* (female RSD)

In 2021, the National Sports Authority (NSA) took steps to employ and place women in the DSUs following the 2019 national regional reorganisation, which saw the creation of 6 additional regions (to the 10 already existing regions) with their districts. According to some of the newly employed women, district assemblies were surprised to learn that they were women when they arrived for work. As one of them stated, 'They thought it was a man coming'. The other stated, 'They said I am the first woman to serve as a district sport development officer since the district assembly was established'. The gendered practices described above are neither accidental nor isolated, they align with studies

revealing how hard essentialist beliefs about 'masculinity and femininity are reinforced [through] socialization' in Ghanaian traditional communities (Gyan et al., 2020: 2). Therefore, it is not surprising that male RSDs interviewed hold 'unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings' about women in leadership positions and gendered practice as a whole (Schein, 2004: 26). The result shows how sport, in many ways reinforces 'actively traditional notions of masculinity' (Anderson, 2009: 4) and creates an environment that places women in a subordinate position (Cornell, 1995).

Partnerships. In addition to the DSUs, many NGOs arrange grassroot sport for women. Under provision 25 of the Sports Act 934 2016, one of the key responsibilities of the DSU's mandate is to engage in collaborative or strategic partnerships with NGOs in order to implement the sport ministry's policy on SDG 5 – gender equality and empowering women and girls – in Ghanaian communities. The NGOs included in this research are community-based organisations primarily concerned with empowerment, fostering partnerships and providing a safe environment for girls and women to participate in sport. Along with early child marriages and teenage pregnancy, which were discussed previously, the NGOs indicated that they constantly deal with harassment and violence against girls and women who participate in their community sport programmes. Therefore, joint action and collaborative partnerships are necessary to make a broader impact. From the interviews, it was evident that efforts to collaborate with the DSUs had been unsuccessful.

> *We collaborate with NGOs alike and government agencies like CHRAJ (Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice) on issues like harassment and abuse, but when it comes to the DSUs, they are not available. If you write to them, they will not respond.* (female NGO member)

The DSU participants confirmed that such collaborations have not been successful, and they claim that collaboration with NGOs must be approved by district assembly authorities or directors. A female DSU stated:

> *Many NGOs and government agencies can complement what we do in the communities, but there is little we can do when the district assembly is not interested. They do not even fund our programmes.* (female DSU member)

This statement supports Charway et al.'s (2022) analysis of sport policy implementation in Ghana, which indicated that the contributions of NGOs that address social issues through sport at the grassroot level have been overlooked in the sport policy implementation. The lack of collaboration between NGOs and DSUs is seen as a major structural barrier to increasing girls' and women's participation in sport.

Summing up the structural barriers

Analysis of the sport ministry policies (among other policies) and interviews with DSU and regional sport office participants revealed that there were no oficial implementation guides or involvement of DSUs and regional sport offices in planning programmes aimed

at increasing the participation of girls and women in community sport. There is also a lack of or misappropriation of funds by district authorities to support the activities of the DSUs. Consequently, partnerships and collaborations with NGOs and other agencies that could enhance girls' and women's participation in sport, as well as address other issues in the community such as gender-based violence, have not been established. Despite the institution's challenges, it was a surprise to see the sport ministry's MTEF showing continued achievements and support for sustainable development programmes promoting gender equality. These structural challenges of lack of funding, implementation guidance and involvement illustrate the policy-implementation gap in Ghanaian communities that Charway et al. (2022) identify as undermining sustainable development. Our findings provide evidence that well-intended/instituted policies in the absence of a real commitment to implementation may result in poor community development outcomes.

Discussion and conclusion

We have revealed both the cultural and structural barriers to girls and women participating in sports. Unlike the earlier studies from Ghana (Adam, 2014; Gyan and Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2022; Sarpong et al., 2022) that primarily addressed the personal or cultural level, we have observed that cultural factors also influence or interact with organisational practices or policy implementation, resulting in gendered practices and fewer women in leadership positions at DSUs and regional sport offices. The female RSDs recounted the obstacles they faced in obtaining their positions in a sector dominated by men and operating in a patriarchal society. As with the female RSDs, and in line with the research of Sarpong et al. (2022), the male directors were of the opinion that the presence of more women in the DSUs could enhance the participation of girls and women in community sports. However, the male RSDs were adamant in their assertion that the lack of women in leadership might be due to a variety of factors. These factors include gendered preferences, childbirth, women not being accountable and the rough terrain of Ghanaian sports. Their statements exemplify both hard and soft essentialist views and provide evidence that reflects the patriarchal Ghanaian culture and traditions (Schein, 2004). As a result, most DSUs lack or do not have female representation, as can be seen from our findings. According to Gyan and Mfoafo-M'Carthy (2022), such gendered practices undermine the objectives of well-intended public policies.

Although studies have indicated that ingrained socio-cultural practices in institutions and organisations are hard to change (Kassinis and Stavrou, 2013), there is evidence that deliberate and concerted efforts to establish, enforce and implement gender policies (structural changes) can result in positive gender equality outcomes over time (cultural changes) (Ollier-Malaterre and Foucreault, 2017; Skirstad, 2009). A typical example is gender quota policies in sports organisations that have proved to increase women's participation and leadership in sport (Ottesen et al., 2010). This suggests that enforcing and legitimising sport-related gender policies, such as increasing women in leadership positions in communities, might lead to organisational change and, in turn, to a shift in work culture in due course.

This study could potentially contribute to feedback loops crucial for the ongoing development of the national sports policy guide mentioned in the findings (Gain et al., 2020),

particularly concerning gender mainstreaming, stakeholder cooperation, institutional change for gender equality and women's rights and sustainable development. Feedback loops are essential for the development of effective interventions and can help identify potential areas for improvement to create more effective policies. In addition to the feedback loops for policy outcomes, organisational learning could be enhanced at DSUs, regional sport offices and NGOs. In the first place, these organisations can learn how to work in context by responding better to the socio-cultural demands of their local communities. In this regard, DSUs have the potential to exchange best practices and learn from one another. An illustrative example comes from DSUs in Muslim communities, where valuable insights can be gained. These DSUs permit girls to wear tracksuits, enabling them to cover their bodies and train without compromising Islamic principles. Another socio-cultural consideration is the context specificity of barriers, such as early child marriage and religious practices, which vary across different communities. In line with studies on girls' and women's engagement in community sports, making broad gender equality policies without accounting for the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds could potentially be incongruent (Brady and Arjmand, 2002; Spaaij, 2013). A valuable model for guidance can be drawn from the Berhane Hewan project in Ethiopia, which operates under the auspices of the Ethiopian Ministry of Youth and Sports. Through collaborative partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental entities, the project established a community dialogue and mentorship programme focused on addressing the detrimental consequences of child marriage (Muthengi and Erulkar, 2010). The mentorship initiative involved families, community leaders, and local women who worked together to reintegrate married young girls into social club activities, including sport and physical pursuits.

Some limitations of this study need to be discussed. A first possible limitation is the familiarity of the first author with the context or field of study, which could have led to biases such as taking for granted and overlooking interesting findings, or overstatements or negative interpretations of research findings. We did, however, attempt to address these limitations through our discussion and analysis by taking advantage of one of the authors being an insider to the field and familiar with the context, the other author not. A second limitation is that since the study focused on social and structural barriers, personal or interpersonal factors that could contribute to the low participation rate of girls and women in community sport were not analysed. Interviews with women and girls or detailed ethnographical studies can elicit more data about girls' and women's own experiences. Talking with girls and women who wish to participate but are not doing so could have provided insight into other perspectives.

Although some of the participants in this study mentioned the safety concern issues as barriers to participation in community sport, these issues were not presented as significant barriers. It might be the case, as indicated in interviews with sports leaders in Zambia, that gender-based violence and harassment are perceived as broad societal issues (not specific to sports) and, therefore, they were not deemed crucial to underscore in the interviews about sports participation. Safe sport issues that affect girls and women as revealed in other African countries (Erulkar and Muthengi, 2009; Fasting et al., 2014; Shehu, 2010; Solstad and Rhind, 2018; Solstad and Strandbu, 2019) could have been addressed in this study. These issues included child marriages and gender-based violence and harassment and are important because in a recent report, the Institute of Statistical, Social and

Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana described women in contemporary Ghanaian society as 'overwhelmingly' subjected to objectification and stereotyping and regarded as a marital or sexual commodity (Anyidoho et al., 2016: 37).

In conclusion, this research underscores the significance of gender equality in the effective execution of sustainable development initiatives at the local level. The study revealed various cultural and structural barriers that offer the potential for in-depth exploration in future research. The insights drawn from local perspectives and contextual factors examined in this study contribute to the imperative for incorporating global south viewpoints into the discourse on gender, sport for development and policy implementation.

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Note

1. Messner's concern is changes in the USA from the 1950s to 2010 (Messner, 2018) and his definition of soft essentialism describes the specific dominating gender ideology in the context of USA around 2000.

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Article 5

Charway, D., Asare, F., & Grønkjær, A. B. (re-submitted). Leave no one behind? Analysing the implementation of sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities in Ghana's district sport units. *Social Inclusion.*

Leave no one behind? Analysing the implementation of sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities in Ghana's district sport units

Sport inclusion policies for persons with disabilities are prevalent in many countries; however, actual support in local communities is lacking or inadequately addressed. In this paper, we analyse the implementation of sport inclusion policies and the extent to which they exclude or include disabled sport associations in Ghana's district sport units (DSUs). Using document analysis, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews, we collected data from representatives of state and non-state organisations, drawing insights from ableism and policy networks to analyse the implementation of sport inclusion policies. The findings reveal that despite inclusion provisions at the local level, the policy implementation process presents challenges for DSUs. These challenges include the lack of funding, conflicts among network actors, deliberate disregard, membership gaps, and the absence of an integrated programme for disabled sport associations. These findings further inform understanding of collaborative alliances, local autonomy, and implication of ableism for policy networks.

Keywords: ableism; disability sport association; district sport units; Ghana; policy implementation; sustainable development.

Introduction

In recent years, disability issues have been mainstreamed into the global policy agenda, as evidenced in the 2016 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated with the slogans "no one will be left behind" and "make sure the furthest behind are reached first" (UNGA, 2015). The two slogans have been central to Ghana's development policy as well as the implementation of its sports policy (NDPC, 2019). It is evident from the Ministry of Youth and Sports' (herein referred to as sport ministry) Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) from 2016 to 2021 that the provision for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sport is being implemented, albeit with limited details. The mainstreaming of disability sport at both the government and NGO levels has been described in studies from several countries (Sørensen & Kahrs 2006; Hammond 2019; Kitchin et al. 2019), but few have examined how disability mainstreaming is implemented in practice at the community or district levels. No study addresses the implementation of sport inclusion policies in Ghanaian communities for persons with disabilities.

A key component of community implementation of the sport inclusion policies is the strategic partnership between government agencies and NGOs (NDPC, 2019). It is in light of this that District Sport Units (DSUs) in Ghana play a crucial role in implementing inclusion sport policies for persons with disabilities and associated groups. DSUs function as service delivery mechanisms at the grassroots level, interpreting and implementing government sport policies. They do this while fostering partnerships, navigating cultural and religious barriers, and influencing broader policy analysis and development.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the implementation of sport inclusion policies and the extent to which it excludes or includes disabled sport associations in Ghana. In so doing, the study seeks answers to whether the quest for "no one will be left behind" reflects genuine social concern and has a real impact on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in sport. Ableism helps to explain how disabled sport associations or related groups are considered in the DSUs. Moreover, policy network theory as inclusive governance provides the analytical framework to examine the degree of membership, integration, resource distribution, and power balance when implementing the inclusion sport policies of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Forming the empirical basis of this research is a textual analysis of sport policies and other relevant documents, a focus group discussion with representatives from 15 DSUs and 3 disabled sport associations, and semi-structured interviews with 3 regional sport directors.

Theoretical insights: Inclusive policy implementation

This section begins with a discussion of ableism, which is a concept in which a group described as "abled" is favoured over those considered "disabled." In the second part, an analysis of policy networks as inclusive governance is presented, along with an analytical framework for the research. The concluding section highlights inclusion as a multifaceted process and defines it through the lenses of policy networks.

Ableism

Ableism is a multidimensional concept that frames disabled people's experiences on the general principle that persons with disabilities face difficulties in participation that non-disabled people do not typically experience and that there is something we can do to address these difficulties (Ives et al., 2021). Ableism encompasses discriminating, stereotyping, prejudice, and social oppression towards persons with disabilities in many aspects of life

including sport policies (DePauw, 1997; Bogart & Dunn 2019; Christiaens & Brittain 2023). Ableism also occurs at various levels (macro, meso, and micro) of policy implementation where, according to Lyons (2013, 240), "ableism privileges ability over disability in organisational, structural and individual practices." This results in an "ableist system of dividing practices" that is commonly referred to as institutional ableism (Campbell, 2019, p. 147). As a result of such ableist systems, there is often stigma, exclusion, differentiation, negation, and/or prioritisation of the abled, which leads to a lack of support for persons with disabilities and their groups (Campbell, 2019).

As DSUs occupy a meso-level position, institutional ableism is essential for understanding how attitudes unfold and how inclusion policies for persons with disabilities are implemented. In light of this, we analyse how structures, practices, and unquestioned beliefs about disability undermine "even the most well-intentioned policies by maintaining the substantive oppression of existing hierarchies" (Beratan, 2006, p. 1). Studies about ableism also illustrate how inclusive practice and implementation governance (Jeanes et al. 2018) for people with disabilities "ha[ve] been used by various social groups to justify their elevated level of rights and status" (Wolbring, 2008, p. 253). This is essential for DSUs that are in a strategic position to implement inclusive sport policies while balancing cooperation with district assemblies, following government objectives, and engaging relevant disabled groups.

Policy network as inclusive governance

Policy implementation is fragmented with governance spanning complex networks of relationships. These relationships often include, but are not limited to, government and non-governmental organisations, bureaucracies, and interest groups/civil societies (Rhodes, 2006). In light of this, policy implementation is seen as the product of the complex interplay of interdependent (state and non-state) actors. Hence, the collective efforts and shared beliefs of actors within the policy (sub)system affect policy outcomes. In our meso-level analysis (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992; Carlsson, 2000), we used policy network as the conceptual framework to analyse DSUs implementation of sport policies for disabled sport associations in Ghana.

Policy Network emerged from the Global North where the advent of pluralism (the shift from government to governance) and the proliferation of the private sector/NGOs allowed frequent interaction between state and non-state orgnaisations. Policy network as an analytical theory comprises "sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between

government and other actors…with interests" in policy implementation (Rhodes, 2006, p. 424). Hickey (2015, p. 1) described inclusive governance as "a normative sensibility that stands in favour of inclusion as the benchmark against which institutions can be judged and also promoted." Put together, policy network as inclusive governance refers to the implementation of policies that incorporate inclusive practices while excluding elements of ableism that undermine inclusive development outcomes. In any policy network, there is an "exchange of information, expertise, trust and other policy resources" (Boumans & Ferry 2019, p. 413). The emphasis on implementing inclusive sport policies at the DSU level with relevant persons with disabilities stakeholders who complement public service in communities makes the concept of policy network particularly appropriate for this research.

Table 1. Characteristics of policy communities and issue networks

Dimension	**Policy communities**	**Issue networks**
Membership	• Very limited number with some groups consciously excluded	• Large
Integration	• Frequent and high-quality interaction • Share basic values and there is continuity over time • Accept legitimacy of outcome	• Limited interaction • Limited access and continuity • A measure of agreement exists, but conflict is never present
Resource distribution	• All participants have resources • Basic relationship is an exchange relationship	• Limited distribution of resources • Exchange relationship is consultative
Power	• Balance of power between members although one group may dominate	• Unequal powers reflect unequal resources and unequal access

Edited Source: Rhodes and Marsh (1992)

Inclusion is a multifaceted and complex concept to define. However, it is characterised by an "equitable and participatory experience." Christiaens and Brittain (2023) conceptualise three kinds of inclusion, which include: (a) full inclusion – where individuals with disabilities participate on an equal footing alongside non-disabled individuals. Here, it is the persons with disabilities who initiate their participation due to the lack of strategies or competencies within community sport organisations to engage them; (b) parallel inclusion –

where individuals with disabilities participate in a non-disabled setting but are not involved in the same activity session as their non-disabled peers; (c) inclusive choice – which emphasises choice and opportunity. This entails persons with disabilities having the freedom to participate in whichever sport they choose and being given equal opportunities to engage in community sports programmes.

For this study, we draw upon inclusion initiatives facilitated by Disabled Sports Units (DSUs), aimed at providing equal opportunities and participatory experiences for disabled sport associations. This participation encompasses Rhodes and Marsh's (1992) policy network dimensions, including the extent of membership, integration, resource distribution, and power dynamics within the DSUs. Through an analysis of these aspects, we seek to gain insights into the inclusiveness of DSU initiatives and their impact on fostering equitable and empowering experiences for disabled individuals within the realm of sport. Rhodes and Marsh's (1992) typology of policy networks which suggests a continuum between policy communities and issues network. This is done in relation to the extent to which DSUs' implementation of inclusion sport policies excludes or includes national disabled sport associations (DSAs) in Ghana. Characteristically, the two types of policy network differ on the degree of membership, integration, resource distribution, and power (see Table 1).

Protection, societal perception of persons with disabilities, and participation in community sport

Persons with disabilities were first integrated into Ghana's community development programme as part of the country's second Five-Year Development Plan (1959–1964). Despite providing employment and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities, the plan's political rationale was described as an extension of the "colonial rehabilitation project for disabled soldiers" and was curtailed when the government at the time was overthrown (Grischow, 2011). It was not until the publication of Ghana's National Sport Policy (NSP) of 1994 that persons with disabilities were again integrated into a national policy. The integration of persons with disabilities followed strong advocacy from organisations like the Ghana Federation of Disability and the Danish Sports Organisation for Disabled (now Parasport Denmark) (Charway & Houlihan 2020). Consequently, the Association of Sports for the Disabled (ASD, also referred to as ASFOD) was created in 1994 and recognised by the NSP as a means to facilitate and promote the implementation of an inclusive sport policy in Ghanaian communities for persons with disabilities. Currently, the ASD as an umbrella

organisation has 18 disabled sport disciplines under five sport associations, namely the Parasport Associations (9 disciplines), the Ghana Amputee Football Association (1 discipline), the Ghana Blind Sports Association (2 disciplines), the Ghana Deaf Sports Federation (3 disciplines), and the Ghana Dwarf Sports Association (3 disciplines) (National Sports Authority, n.d.). The majority of the associations have offices in almost all regions and in most districts.

Following Ghana's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), Ghana's Persons with Disabilities Act 715 of 2006 recognises persons with disabilities' right to sport and physical education. In accordance with the act, district assemblies (through DSUs) are responsible for ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to sports and cultural events, participate in their programmes, and receive appropriate support. Notwithstanding the Persons with Disabilities Act 715 of 2006 and other anti-discrimination laws, Ocran (2019) asserts that the social, political, and economic rights of persons with disabilities have not been protected in practice. A number of studies have been conducted on persons with disabilities living in Ghanaian communities, including their experiences related to health, employment, discrimination, and begging (Avoke, 2002; Naami & Hayashi, 2012; Naami, 2015; Agyei-Okyere et al., 2019). Although these studies have not focused wholly on sport, they reveal that persons with disabilities continue to face stigma, social exclusion, and discrimination and continue to be defined by unspoken African norms and myths.

Empirical context: District sport units and sport policy implementation

DSUs translate policy into action and foster partnerships at metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies (herein referred to as district assemblies) in Ghana. DSUs are located in 261 district assemblies. Although the DSUs were created by the Sports Act 934 of 2016, they are required to foster inter-ministerial cooperation between the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MOYS), Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MOLGRD), which oversees the district assemblies. As a result, the DSUs' leadership and management are composed of members from the aforementioned ministries. The funding and resourcing of DSU activities is the shared responsibility of MOYS and MOLGRD. MOYS (through the national sport authority) provides human resources and sport equipment to DSUs through its regional offices. MOLGRD (through the district assemblies), on the other hand, supports DSUs through the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF). The DACF has a

sports component under “social services” intended to ensure the delivery of all sporting programmes. Disbursements of the DACF’s sport fund are made at the discretion of the district chief executives who are politically appointed by government.

There are also NGOs associated with disabled sport like the Association of Sports for the Disabled (ASD) and the National Paralympic Committee of Ghana (NPCG). As its name suggests, the NPCG is primarily concerned with the Paralympic Games and often focuses on the national disabled sport associations under the International Paralympic Committee. The ASD has a wider brief and is integral to the development and implementation of sport policy in Ghanaian communities. As evident in the Ghana Sports Act 934 of 2016, disabled sport is mainstreamed, with ASD representatives on the governing board of the National Sports Authority and recognised by MOYS (Charway & Houlihan 2020). However, little is known about the implementation of inclusion sport policies in DSUs for persons with disabilities.

With inclusion and partnership as core elements to the implementation of the SDGs in Ghanaian communities, it will be imperative to see how DSUs partner with the disabled sport associations that work with persons with disabilities. One of the policy objectives of MOYS is to “attain the SDGs through youth development, empowerment, and promotion of sports.” As a result, MOYS mentions in its 2016–2021 MTEF the success and continued effort to support disabled sports associations in local communities. Such supports include providing disability-friendly facilities for sports in communities, ensuring the capacity and skill development of youth with disabilities, and ensuring collaboration with local disability groups in local communities. Despite the MTEF’s statements of support, there are no documents that demonstrate or describe how DSUs or local communities implement and govern inclusive practices.

Research design and methods

The case study design was used to collect and analyse qualitative data from coordinators within DSUs and disabled sport associations in Ghana. A combination of document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions was employed in the data collection process which took place between 2020 and 2021. Access to research participants was made possible by gatekeepers/mediators the first author has known, both as a sport administrator and researcher in Ghana over the past ten years. A consent form was also given to each participant prior to the data collection.

Data were purposefully collected from two groups. The first group was from DSUs located in the northern, middle, and southern regions of Ghana. A total of five DSUs were considered for the interviews in each region. It is worth mentioning that Ghana had 10 regions until 2019. Currently, there are 16 regions, but the additional 6 have limited structures. Accordingly, the research used reference sports organisations from the previous 10 regions of Ghana. The selection of regions was designed to ensure a balance of data sources in terms of urbanisation, wealth, population density, and culture. The second group from which data were collected involved three disabled sport associations that are more formerly structured and recognised by the ministry. Here, a total of 3 senior officials and 12 district representatives were interviewed.

Data collection

Document analysis included policy documents that aided the implementation of inclusion provisions. Some of the documents were requested from the interviewees, while others were downloaded from online. To avoid selective bias, the documents were painstakingly selected and examined based on the study's objectives (Yin, 2009).

The *semi-structured interview* was used in order to understand implementation from the perspective of key DSU officials (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The semi-structured interviews, unlike focus group discussions, allowed participants to share in greater depth personal information and experiences that may have been difficult to express in a group setting (Frisina, 2018). Among the key questions were awareness of inclusion as a key policy area for the sport ministry, resource distribution, partnership, and inclusion of persons with disabilities sport associations in both planning and implementing sport policies. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in accordance with the COVID-19 health and safety protocols in Ghana. The semi-structured interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

The purpose of the *focus group discussion (FGD)* was to assess whether the sport policy implementation had been inclusive and reflected the characteristics of the policy community or issues network or both. Unlike semi-structured interviews, we were able to gather and analyse a variety of narratives and perspectives simultaneously due to participants' freedom to speak freely (Krueger, 2014; Frisina, 2018). Unlike many FGDs, where participants are more guarded in what they say, the participants in this study spoke freely without being reticent. An explanation for this is that the interview was conducted in a negotiated space/environment conducive to the participants' comfort and where they did not feel the pressure to express themselves.

Table 2. Sourced documents

Documents	**Publishing source (year)**
Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	National Development Planning Commission (2019)
Ministry of Youth and Sport: Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)	Ministry of Finance (2016–2021)
Formula for Sharing the District Assemblies Common Fund – Allocation Statement	Parliament of Ghana Library Repository (2016–2020)
Sports Act 934 of 2016	National Sport Authority/Ministry of Youth and Sport
Persons with Disability Act 715 of 2016	Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection
Local Governance Act 936 of 2016	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Reports, minutes, and publications	DSUs and Disabled Sport Associations (2016–2022)

Table 3. Participants for semi-structured interviews and FGDs

Empirical categories	**Semi-structured interviews**	**FGD**	**Participants**	**Number of Persons with disabilities**
Regional Sport Directors	3	-	3 (from 3 regions)	-
District Sport Units	-	3 (5 each)	15 (from 15 districts)	-
Disabled Sport Associations	3	3 (4 each)	15 (from 3 associations represented in regions/districts)	13
Total	**6**	**27**	**33**	

Overall, three FGDs comprising five DSU coordinators/representatives provided insights into the communities where they worked (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, given the political nature and the hierarchical order of the district assemblies (where DSUs are located), a neutral location for each of the three FGDs was selected to allow participants to speak more freely (Elwood & Martin, 2000). The FGDs were aided by an interview guide with similar objectives as the semi-structured interviews. The FGDs took the form of face-to-face discussions, and we followed COVID-19 health and safety protocols in Ghana, which included wearing a mask and maintaining a minimum distance of one meter (Government of Ghana, 2020; Kenu et al., 2020). The duration of the semi-structured interviews was from 40 to 60 minutes and the FGDs from 70 to 90 minutes.

Reflexivity

As a whole, the research was enriched by the diverse cultural backgrounds of the authors. The first two authors' experiences as Ghanaians and former sport administrators in Ghana offer both opportunities and challenges for data collection and analysis. As Floyd and Arthur (2012, p. 172) state, there are often "deeper level ethical and moral dilemmas that insider researchers have to deal with." This leads us to draw insights from Olmos-Vega et al.'s (2022) intertwined reflexivity approach, which integrates personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual reflexivity. We exercised (1) personal reflexivity in order to consider the possibility of interlocutor projection bias in the analysis of the research data and interviews. In this instance, the third author provided outsider insights into the data analysis. In addition, personal reflexivity enabled us to anticipate and avoid being influenced by participants who may wish to discuss personal matters during interviews. Our (2) interpersonal reflexivity helped us to examine how our strengths and weaknesses could complement each other. For instance, the first and third authors' experiences in sport policy implementation and management complemented the second author's expertise in disability studies. By doing so, we were able to thoroughly discuss and choose the appropriate theoretical lenses for the research. Through (3) methodological reflexivity, we were able to consider from the outset "aligning methodological choices with the theoretical framework" of the research (Vega et al., 2022, p. 245). The participants gave their informed consent. We used pseudonyms to avoid victimisation and job loss among DSU participants and to protect the identity of disabled sport association participants. In addition, we considered the different capabilities of the participants and negotiated interview locations that were appropriate,

conducive, and safe for the collection of data. Our (4) familiarity with the context gained us the participants' trust and gave us an "easier entrée, a head start" (Berger, 2015, p. 223). In light of this, we paid attention to non-verbal cues and probed for clarity during interviews (Yin, 2009; Patton, 2014; Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020).

Data processing and analysis

The data analysed comprised the identified documents, FGDs, and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcribed data were manually and digitally analysed. The data processing began with the researchers familiarising themselves with the data by thoroughly reading and re-reading the data, making notes, and forming ideas about coding. By using the MAXQDA Plus 2022, researchers extracted and labelled 33 initial codes through the open coding method. The extracted codes were then linked together through axial coding to form meaningful organised categories (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The organised categories were downloaded in excel format for manual analysis to generate main themes and sub-themes where necessary. Further probing and feedback from peer debriefing helped to generate credible themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data analysis was undertaken both inductively and theoretically. First, by using the inductive approach, we engaged in data immersion, pattern matching, and explanation building to generate common themes from the data (Yin, 2009). The data from the document analysis were inductively analysed to extract inclusive provisions from DSU sport policies. The theoretical approach, as the name denotes, adopted the coding strategy based on the theoretical lens used for the research. As a result, the following themes emerged: (1) evidence of mainstreaming or inclusive provisions for persons with disabilities and disabled sport asscoiations, (2) composition and membership of DSUs, (3) decision-making and planning of district programmes, (4) distribution of funds and sharing resources, and (5) conflicts.

Findings

Evidence of inclusive policy provisions for persons with disabilities

At the national or ministerial level are provisions to implement disability policies through sport at the district level. These provisions can be found in the sports, education, and local government ministries that provide joint support for the DSUs.

The DSUs are created under provision 25 of the Sports Act 934 of 2016 and, among other functions, have the responsibility to assist in the formulation and implementation of (inclusive) sport policies, programmes, and activities (25a,m); advise district assembly authorities on inclusive sport facilities, programmes, and budgetary allocations (25b); organise and promote parasport in districts (25d); and facilitate the work of and provide equipment to sport organisations in the districts (25m).

Specifically, under the core functions of the Sports Act 934 of 2016, provision 3 references inclusive policies even though persons with disabilities are not mentioned:

> *To provide a conducive and enabling environment for national sport associations as well as promote, encourage and secure the adoption of policies of equal opportunity and access to sports. (Provision 3)*

Furthermore, the Local Governance Act 936 of 2016 which outlines, defines, and regulates all the activities and programmes of district assemblies makes special provisions relating to inclusion. Among other things, provision 48 of the act requires district assemblies to include and integrate marginalised groups regardless of their identity. Concerning social and cultural practices such as sport and physical activity, district assemblies (with all its units like DSUs) shall ensure:

> *Equal treatment, social protection, and promotion of effective participation of marginalised groups in public life. (Provision 48)*

Moreover, the Persons with Disabilities Act 715 of 2006, which encompasses the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (DSWCD) as well as the Ministries of sport Youth and Sport, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, among others, promotes equal access to district sporting events, facilities, and programmes:

> *The ministry responsible for education, sports [and] district assemblies…shall as far as practicable ensure, the provision of adequate facilities, programmes and incentives, that persons with disability have access to sports and cultural events. (Provision 38)*

The above-mentioned policy provisions form the basis for an inclusive policy network in which the DSUs in the local districts play a crucial role. This type of network aims to ensure that its members are representative and that the network facilitates the sharing of resources and collaboration, integrates disabilities programmes, and maintains frequent interaction among key stakeholders. In spite of the inter-ministerial approach to support DSUs, there is no detailed individual or joint policy guideline from the ministries that define inclusion of persons with disability in community sport or allows the DSUs to implement pragmatic inclusive policies that include and complement key partners like disabled sport associations/groups (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). Having no such policy guidelines may reinforce deeply rooted preferences and discretionary practices among DSUs, which may create an environment conducive to ableist tendencies and behaviours (Campbell, 2019). Additionally, the "degree of freedom in interpreting what constitutes inclusion ... may have major implications for the experiences of [persons with disabilities]" and disabled sport associations (Christiaens & Brittain, 2023, p. 1049). In the subsequent findings, we will elaborate on this further.

Composition and membership of DSUs

In accordance with the Sports Act 934 of 2016, the composition of DSUs is fixed and legitimised. The composition of a DSU consists of a DSU leader nominated by the National Sport Authority through the regional director, two representatives from the sport and education regional offices, and four nominees by the district chief executive. According to the 15 DSU members, the membership as highlighted in the Sports Act does not reflect what happens on the ground. They reported that DSUs are very limited in terms of their actual composition and membership:

> *The catchment area of some districts is huge with different sport associations. How can three or four people work well if they have more than 30,000 people to deal with? You cannot do this if you don't have the right expertise and human resource. Besides we are under-resourced. (northern DSU member)*

To buttress this, one regional director mentioned:

> *Although we involve [persons with disabilities] in many ways, I think we have not done enough to have them instituted as core members in both the regions' sport*

offices (RSOs) and DSUs. At the RSOs we don't have special coaches to support the DSUs. (southern RSO)

The lack of community coaches with special coaching competencies illustrates a kind of "full inclusion" where the DSUs are willing, but they lack the personal and appropriate coaching skills (Christiaens & Brittain, 2023). This undermines Following our audit of the Sports Act of 934 2016 and discussions with DSU participants, we noticed that neither the DSWCD (which operates in all district assemblies) nor the disabled sport associations were represented in the DSUs. The DSWCD was established by a government legal instrument in 1961 to mainstream persons with disabilities programmes and to assist district assemblies in formulating and implementing social protection and inclusion policies. The DSWCD also provides support services to disabled sport associations. During our visit to DSWCD's headquarters, we noticed that nearly all of the disabled sport associations are housed within their premises. With aims for fostering strategic partnerships and implementing inclusive sport policies (NDPC, 2019), excluding disabled sport associations or actors from DSU membership undermines community development and neglects their concerns.

Planning and integration of disability programmes

Ideally planning, budgeting, and implementation of inclusive community sport programmes are done by the DSUs in consultation with the district assemblies and support from the regional sport offices. Here we asked members of DSUs, disabled sport associations and also regional sport directors about inclusive planning of district sport programmes. Particularly about how they integrate disabled programmes into their implementation plan. The DSUs acknowledge the presence of the disabled sport associations in various districts, but they cannot support them due to budgetary constraints and resource limitations. Instead, they prioritise other "abled" sport programmes which they think are popular in the community at the expense of the disabled sport programmes. One DSU member said:

Let me confess, they come to us and we see them in the communities, but we deliberately ignore them from our programmes. Our hands are tied financially, and so we have to prioritise. (southern DSU member)

A similar comment was made by another DSU member:

There are not many [persons with disabilities] in the districts, and so sometimes we forget about them. Also, it is difficult and demanding dealing with them. (northern DSU member)

In response to why it is difficult to deal with persons with disabilities, the DSU member explained that persons with disabilities' needs are numerous, complex, and require special attention which they cannot give due to financial and human resource constraints. During one of the discussions, DSUs shared the view that disabled sport associations are resilient and persistent in the face of challenge. In addition, interviewees stated that once a decision is made to include persons with disabilities, they begin to request more.

The disabled sport association members interviewed mentioned that their exclusion from the DSU programmes and sport sector as a whole is not a surprise. They said that at the national level, although the government professes to be committed to their programmes, disabled sport associations are constantly ignored when it comes to actual or real support. They provided their reasoning as to why integrative disability programmes have not been considered by DSUs and the sport sector as a whole:

We feel that they only involve us as a formality and for the books to fulfil their own goals. But when it comes to implementation at any level, we are completely neglected even though we are present everywhere. (DSA member)

Our analysis of the sport ministry's 2016–2021 MTEF showed a track record of how disabled sport programmes organised in the various local communities have been prominently featured and prioritised. Unfortunately, and as shown in the interviews, this is the opposite of what happens at the DSU level. Even though DSUs are somewhat responsible for not including disabled sport associations in their programmes, district assembly directors are more culpable since they make final decisions regarding funding for DSUs. Essentially, the deliberate omission of programmes for persons with disabilities and disabled sport associations from the planning process to give preference to "abled" sport programmes illustrates how "ableism privileges ability over disability" (Lyons, 2013, 240).

Distribution of funds and sharing of resources

Here, we analysed DACF distributions and support from regional sports offices. In addition, we asked DSU participants how they use funds received from district assemblies to implement programmes for persons with disabilities and how they share resources through collaboration with other disabled sport associations.

Distribution of funds

Both funding and provision of disability friendly sport facilities in districts and communities come from DACF distributions with support from the sport ministry through the national sport authority and regional sport offices. In Charway et al.'s (2022) analysis of the parliamentary annual authorised "formula for sharing the DACF" from 2016 to 2020, sport and disability are two of the five components under social services through which fund allocations are made that support persons with disabilities in the districts. It is important to note that all fund allocations except sport are mandatory. Also, while the sport allocations are meant for the DSUs, the disability component is used by the district assemblies to provide social welfare and protection services to persons with disabilities within the districts in general.

Against this backdrop, we asked DSU participants how often they receive funds or use funds received from district assemblies or regional sport offices to support and implement programmes for persons with disabilities in their communities. There was some dissatisfaction among DSU participants due to the limited or non-existent financial support for their programmes. They further claimed that even when they receive support from the DACF, it is woefully insufficient:

> *We are involved in the budgeting for the sport programmes, but when it comes to distribution, we are mostly neglected until we insist. And then if we are lucky, we are given peanuts which we have to decide what to do with it. (mid-Ghana DSU member)*

Regarding support from the regional sport offices, another DSU mentioned:

> *They support us with the regional sporting facilities, but in terms of funding, they don't give us anything. (southern DSU member)*

Sharing of resources

The DSAs lamented the lack of resource sharing. They mentioned that the RSOs provide them with sport facilities for their community programmes, but they do not receive any collaboration or support from the DSUs:

> *We know the DSUs are there in the communities, but they don't support or collaborate with us. In fact, they don't complement our efforts in the communities. (DSA member)*

In a nutshell, the absence of a government legal instrument requiring sport funds to be mandatory indicates institutional neglect (Campbell, 2019). Additionally, this undermines the government's Persons with Disabilities Act 715 of 2006 and other well-intended provisions in the Sports Act and the Local Governance Act. This also causes structural challenges that neglect persons with disabilities initiatives/programmes and further discrimination against persons with disabilities groups (Beratan, 2006). For example, prioritising or using discretion to make decisions due to limited resources may result in what Chouinard (1997) termed the "othering'" of disabled people.

Conflicts

The members of the DSU discussed two types of conflicts arising from the discretion exercised by the district assembly chief executives or authorities when it comes to organising sport programmes for persons with disabilities: conflicts of interest and conflicts with disabled sport associations. They further mentioned that the latter is a consequence of the former.

Conflicts of interest

According to the DSU members, conflicts of interest occur due to the political interests of the district authorities in planning and organising sport programmes for persons with disabilities in the communities. DSU members commented that they are generally not involved in such sport programmes for persons with disabilities; sometimes they are not even aware of them until they are arranged and organised. While their non-involvement is not surprising to them, they cautiously stated the following:

> *Sometimes we are handicapped due to politics which affect our sport programmes, and when you challenge the district authorities you can lose your job. (southern DSU member)*

Another member made a similar comment:

> *This (referring to politics) happens all the time especially during election year. By the time we realise the assembly directors are organising, particularly, amputee football tournaments or making donations to them. (mid-Ghana DSU member)*

One DSU member noted that focusing on amputee football, for instance, would undermine the efforts of the disabled sport associations in districts with a variety of sport disciplines. These groups include the Ghana Deaf and Dumb Federation and the Ghana Blind Sport Association. According to the DSU members, the political actions of the district assembly authorities make DSUs the target of misconceptions about their work and conflicts with district sport associations. When we asked how they intend to resolve or mitigate the conflict, the DSU participants spoke about the need for a collective and relentless effort by all DSU officials in Ghana to appeal to the sports ministry to provide them with local autonomy free of political interference.

Conflict with the various disabled sport associations

The disabled sport association members lamented that the DSUs, like the sport ministry, tend to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting disabled sport, albeit on a limited scale:

> *I always feel that they see disability sports to be one sport. For example, when they support physically challenged sports then they will report that they supported all the disabled sports. (DSA member)*

Further, the DSAs remarked that there are several disabled sports, including blind sports, physically challenged sports, deaf and dumb sports, para-cycling, and para-lifting, among others. One DSA member remarked that collaboration is undermined due to the lack of engagements and consultation to understand their plight in the districts, “resulting in many persons with disabilities remaining idle.” In

such a policy network, “the absence of consensus and the presence of conflict” is inevitable (Rhodes, 1992, p. 184). In light of the conflicts, the DSA participants, in general, were indignant at being neglected and marginalised. One member said, “sometimes I feel they use us for their political gains and pretend they care.” When asked about what steps can be taken to mitigate the neglect, they revealed that the leadership of the ASD has recently held a series of meetings with all the disabled sport associations in Ghana and relevant stakeholders to approach the sport ministry. They intend to do so as a united front and well-composed group. According to them, such an approach will increase awareness of their community sport services and differentiate them from other organisations with a focus on national sport events, such as the National Paralympic Committee of Ghana.

Discussion and conclusion

The study aimed to analyse the extent to which disability sport associations are included in the implementation of inclusive sport policies at DSUs. Using the policy network analytical framework, we found that the policy implementation process presented challenges, despite inclusion provisions at the local level. Among the challenges are decision-making at district assemblies, conflicts among network actors, representation gaps, a lack of funding, a lack of partnership opportunities, and an absence of an integrated programme for disabled sport associations. Generally, the findings show that persons with disabilities have been neglected, discriminated against, and left “behind” in DSU programmes. The findings indicate that a policy community exists but one that excludes disability sport. The decision-making at the district level seems to exhibit many of the characteristics of Rhodes and Marsh’s (1992) definition of the policy community, including “limited members with some groups consciously excluded” and “shar[ing] basic values and…continuity over time” (p. 187). In light of this, the discussion concentrates on the collaborative alliance, local autonomy for DSUs, and implications of ableism on policy networks. Lastly, we discuss the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

To address complex societal issues and achieve common objectives, collaborative alliances are formed among a variety of stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, community groups, and other relevant actors (Ansell & Gash, 2008). These alliances often transcend traditional bureaucratic boundaries and foster innovative

solutions to complex policy implementation challenges by promoting information sharing, mutual learning, and collective problem-solving (Emerson et al., 2012). At the local level, DSUs occupy a strategic position to look beyond the bureaucracy (district assembly) and initiate an alliance process with members of the disabled sport associations, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, and regional sport offices. Regrettably, as indicated by the findings, the DSUs have remained inactive, attributing blame to the district assembly authorities, despite their potential to establish an alliance crucial for shaping policy outcomes and advancing social inclusion. Collaborative alliances are closely intertwined with the principles of inclusion, as they emphasise the active participation and representation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly marginalized or underrepresented groups, in decision-making processes (United Nations, 2007). By fostering partnerships between disabled sport associations, government agencies, and other stakeholders, policy networks can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources, build lasting social capital and influence legislation governing sport funds distribution to DSUs (Vail, 2007; Misener, 2013; Peachey et al., 2018).

As the core of the policy network, DSUs must have autonomy to govern, implement, and ensure community participation. As the findings demonstrate, DSUs are largely controlled by the district assembly authorities and therefore lack autonomy. The lack thereof, as the findings showed, result in the neglect or underfunding of DSUs and non-prioritisation sport inclusion policy implementation and disabled sport associations. Although the establishment of the DSUs signifies the sport ministry's decentralised sport policy implementation at the local level, there are, as Olowu (2003, p. 41) states in his review of most African local institutions, "considerable institutional and political challenges involved in making it a reality." In addition, this illustrates the challenges associated with "implementation in dispersed governance" where policies do not necessarily align with local delivery (Hudson et al. 2019, p. 3). Furthermore, the lack of autonomy as well as detailed and defined policy guidelines for DSUs leaves the implementation of sport programmes for persons with disabilities in the hands of the bureaucracy (district assemblies). In light of this, the district assembly authorities exercise delegated discretionary authority to make decisions, ultimately resulting in bureaucratic politics (Smith, 2023). In accordance with Bach's (2022) description of bureaucratic politics and as shown in the findings, district assembly authorities "pursue distinct or [their own] interests" by organising sport programmes for persons with disabilities without necessarily consulting the DSUs. The result is what Matland (1995) described as political implementation, where certain disabled sport disciplines under some DSAs are favoured over others. As can be seen in the findings, amputee football-related

activities (under the Ghana Amputee Football Association) are often organised by the district assemblies at the expense of other disabled sport disciplines (under several DSAs). Furthermore, this may lead to conflicts between the district assembly, DSUs, and DSAs that may feel overlooked. As a preventative measure, it is essential to have a clearly defined disability sport policy where autonomy, distribution of funds, and actual implementation are backed by government legislation.

The implications of ableism for policy networks in this study are significant. In contexts where power dynamics are often influenced by politics and resource availability, ableism can exacerbate existing exclusion and further marginalise disabled sport associations (Christiaens & Brittain, 2023). For instance, ableism influences policy implementation priorities and deepens exclusionary practices, reinforcing structural discrimination (Morgan & Campbell, 2018). District assembly directors, as shown in the study findings, use their political position to influence disabled sport priorities in ways that align with their interests. This reinforces discriminatory practices that limit opportunities for DSUs and disabled sport groups. This may lead to systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities and disabled sport associations and their inclusion in policy making and implementation processes. As mentioned by the disabled sport association participants, their non-integration and non-involvement, leave them with a sense of being used or exploited (Wolbring, 2008), thus undermining the national development agenda for "no one will be left behind" in communities, which is core to Ghanaian's agender to achieving the UN SDGs. Overall, addressing ableism within policy networks is crucial for promoting inclusive policy communities characterised by shared values, equitable decision-making, and resource distribution. This requires challenging existing power dynamics, amplifying the voices of people with disabilities, and ensuring that policies and practices are informed by principles of accessibility, equity, and social justice (Christiaens & Brittain, 2023).

Even though the policy network provided valuable theoretical insights into the challenges in the implementation process and the interdependencies among key stakeholders, it provided limited insights into how the challenges may prompt policy change (Sabatier, 1993). As Rhodes (2006) stated "policy network analysis does not, and cannot, explain change … it stresses how networks limit participation". In this light, drawing on additional theories such as advocacy coalitions may offer a deeper understanding of how power or dominance (of district assembly authorities) and negotiations among and between DSUs and DSAs affect policy outcomes and thus lead to the maintenance of ableist policy and obstruct policy change. Furthermore, the focus on DSUs as the unit of analysis limits the emphasis

placed on other relevant actors in the implementation of persons with disabilities sport policies at the community level. This may include the media, non-sport-based NGOs, as well as the private sector. In the policy network, these actors may not be core but are significant in ways that "define, shape, interpret and reinterpret policy outcomes" (Evans, 2001, p. 543).

Despite the limitations, the study provides a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by DSUs when implementing persons with disabilities sport policies in Ghana. Since there has been no empirical research on persons with disabilities and sports in Ghana, the design of this study could be pertinent for analysing the intersectional – structural and sociocultural – challenges persons with disabilities face when participating in community-based sports. Finally, the research opens a window for agenda-setting and policy learning that considers the practical needs of persons with disabilities and disabled sport associations in communities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Summary in Norwegian (Sammendrag på norsk)

Innledning: Den tydelige vektleggingen av idrettens potensiale til å bidra til bærekraftig utvikling i FNs policydokument «*Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*» er en utviklingsmilepæl. Dokumentet inspirerte flere regjeringer til å samarbeide med relevante aktører for å inkludere idrett i sine utviklingsplaner. I Ghana er idrettssatsinger med sosiale utviklingsmål knyttet til spesifikke bærekraftsmål (Sustainable developmental goals - SDGs). Likevel innebærer anerkjennelsen av idrettens potensiale i seg selv bare en start og ikke en endelig bekreftelse på en dyp forpliktelse eller vellykket implementering i lokale samfunn.

Mål: Målet med denne studien er å analysere målsettingene og implementeringen av bærekraftsmål gjennom idrett fra både statlige og ikke-statlige aktører i Ghana. Studien tar for seg tre av de 17 bærekraftmålene: sunn livsstil (SDG 3), kjønnslikestilling og styrking av kvinners og jenters posisjon (SDG 5), samt funksjonshemmedes rettigheter (SDG 10).

Teoretisk rammeverk: Flere teoretiske tilnærminger ble brukt for å analysere politikkutforming og implementering av bærekraftmålene gjennom idrett i lokalsamfunn i Ghana. Som et utgangspunkt, hjalp makronivåteorier om staten - statsmakt, neo-pluralisme og ny-institusjonalisme - med å forklare hvordan bærekraftmålene ble oversatt til nasjonale idrettsstrategier. Videre ble tre teoretiske rammeverk om implementering gjennom involvering av ulike aktører brukt som analytiske rammeverk: Matlands teori om ambivalens og konflikt i organisasjoner, et sosiostrukturelt perspektiv, og policy-nettverksteori. Disse teoriene ble brukt til å analysere implementeringen av henholdsvis helse, jenters og kvinners deltakelse i samfunnsidrett, og idrettsinkluderingspolitikk for funksjonshemmede.

Metode: Denne case studien bygger på kvalitative data samlet inn fra myndigheter som utformer og implementerer politikk, regionale idrettsdirektører, representanter fra distriktenes idrettssenheter, nasjonale idrettsforbunds/foreningers tjenestemenn og representanter fra organisasjoner for idrett og utvikling og fred. Totalt deltok 52 personer i semistrukturerte intervjuer (n=25) og gruppeintervjuer (n=27). I tillegg ble dokumentanalyse av idrettsstrategier og andre relevante dokumenter utført for å komplementere de semistrukturerte intervjuene og gruppeintervjuene med forskningsdeltakerne. Det er viktig å understreke at selv om de lokale idrettsenhetene samarbeider tett med de regionale idrettskontorene, er de lokalisert i og primært finansiert av «district assemblies».

Resultater: Resultatene viser kompleksiteten i sammenhengen mellom politikk og implementering når det gjelder idrett og bærekraftsmålene. De presenteres i fem artikler som behandler ulike aspekter ved hovedproblemstillingen. Resultatene i artikkel 1 og 2 gjelder oversettelsen av bærekraftsmålene til nasjonale idrettspolitiske retningslinjer. Artiklene 3, 4 og 5 fokuserer på implementering av helse, likestilling mellom kjønnene og inkluderingspolitikk for personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne i ghanesiske samfunn..

Artikkel 1 gir en historisk oversikt over institusjonaliseringen av idrett i Ghana og undersøker politiske, økonomiske og sosiokulturelle implikasjoner idretten har hatt for nasjonsbygging og utvikling. Fotballens dominans i idrettsfeltet og problemstillinger knyttet til migrasjon, kjønnslikestilling og rettigheter for personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne diskuteres også med

tanke på deres betydning for idrettspolitikken. Artikkelen viser hvordan regjeringens involvering i idrett fokuserer på idrett for idrettens egen skyld og ikke bare idrett for utvikling og fred (SDP). Idrett som et verktøy for bærekraftig utvikling ble først innarbeidet i nasjonale politiske strategier etter anbefalingene fra FNs tusenårsmål og lanseringen av bærekraftmålene i begynnelsen av årtusenet.

Artikkel 2 er en sammenlignende analyse av statlig bruk av idrett som et verktøy for utvikling i Ghana og Zambia. Artikkelen diskuterer den globale politiske drivkraften til initiativ som ofte samles under benevnelsen «Sport for development and peace» (SDP). Artikkelen viser hvordan bærekraftmålene er blitt inkorporert i politiske agendaer i Ghana og Zambia. Intervjuer med statlige tjenestemenn og tjenestemenn fra SDP-organisasjoner og tekstanalyse av nasjonale politiske dokumenter viser betydelige likheter i utfordringene som SDP-aktører (statlige og ikke-statlige) står overfor i de to landene. Selv om begge landene bruker betydelige ressurser på fotballaktiviteter på bekostning av SDP-aktiviteter i lokalsamfunn, har Zambia (til forskjell fra Ghana) gjort fremskritt i å engasjere SDP-organisasjoner. Dette har blant annet skjedd ved at de i Zambia er det satt i gang samarbeid med offentlige etater for å integrere SDP-initiativer.

Artikkel 3 analyserer hvordan idrettens partnere (statlige og ikke-statlige) har vært involvert i og finansiert gjennomføringen av den ghanesiske regjeringens politikk for å forbedre helse og trivsel i samfunnet. Artikkelen bygger på tekstanalyse av regjeringsdokumenter og intervjuer med høytstående regjeringsrepresentanter og sentrale aktører fra ikke-statlige idrettsorganisasjoner. Inspirert av Matlands ambiguitet-konfliktsmatrise konkluderer artikkelen med at implementeringen kan beskrives som en symbolsk-politisk implementering. Symbolsk implementering viser til at idrettspolitikk er ment for resultater knyttet til helse i lokalsamfunn, og at de ofte framstår som uklare, abstrakte og dårlig definerte. Politisk implementering viser til at noen aktører favoriseres som beslutningstakere eller har ressurser som gjør at de kan påvirke de politiske prosessene. Artikkelen konkluderer med at den mangelfulle implementeringen fører til en skjev fordeling av ressurser, manglende involvering av lokale implementeringsaktører i politikkprosessen, en overveldende makt for organisasjoner som jobber med fotball og neglisjering av organisasjoner som jobber mer generelt med idrett for utvikling.

Artikkel 4 analyserer kulturelle og strukturelle faktorer som bidrar til den lave deltakelsen av jenter og kvinner i ghanesisk idrett på distriktsnivå. Dokumentanalysen viser at det er en uttrykt politisk ambisjon om å øke kvinners deltakelse i idretten. Intervjuer med regionale idrettsdirektører og representanter fra distriktenes idrettssenheter viser kulturelle og strukturelle utfordringer knyttet til gjennomføringen. Kulturelle barrierer inkluderer forventinger om at jenter og kvinner skal ha ansvaret for husarbeid, kjønnsstereotypier knyttet til idrett, religion som forhindrer kvinners deltakelse og tradisjonen med tidlige ekteskap og barnefødsler. Strukturelle barrierer inkluderer institusjonelle barrierer (som kjønnspolitikk og rekruttering) og organisatoriske praksiser (som underrepresentasjon av kvinner innen organisasjoner og partnerskap). Artikkelen diskuterer også hvordan kulturelle faktorer påvirker organisatoriske praksiser og politikkimplementering.

Artikkel 5 analyserer implementeringen av politikk for inkludering av personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne i idrett og i hvilken grad idrettsforeninger for personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne blir trukket inn i samarbeid med lokale idrettssenheter i Ghanas. Denne studien henter innsikt fra policynettverket for å analysere medlemskap, integrasjon,

ressursfordeling og maktbalanse. Analyser av dokumenter viser at det finnes klare ambisjoner om å inkludere personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne. Intervjuer med tjenestemenn fra distriktenes idrettssenheter avslørte utfordringer i implementeringsprosessen. Siden distriktenes idrettssenheter mangler autonomi og juridisk støtte, bestemmer «district assemblies» hvordan de skal bruke midler til idrett for personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne. Andre utfordringer inkluderer mangelen på representanter for funksjonshemmede idrettsforbund i DSUs; mangelen på integrering av idrettsprogrammer for funksjonshemmede; konflikter mellom funksjonshemmede idrettsforeninger, DSUs og «district assemblies»; og bruk av funksjonshemmede idrett til politiske formål. Videre diskuterer artikkelen implikasjonene av «ableism» for politiske nettverk.

Konklusjon: Målet med denne studien er å analysere målene for og implementeringen av bærekraftsmål gjennom idrettsorganisasjoner i Ghana. Studien viser at Ghanas regjeringspolitikk for idrett for bærekraftig utvikling er tydelig artikulert og har bred støtte, noe som gjenspeiler trender i Zambia og andre nasjoner. Avhandlingens funn peker på fire utfordringer som omfatter politikk, sosiokulturell dynamikk, organisatoriske forhold og institusjonelle rammer. Alle disse vanskeliggjør politiske resultater og hindrer effektiv implementering av idrett og SDGs i Ghana. De fire utfordringene kommer til uttrykk i politikk som skjev tildeling av midler til fotball; i sosiokulturelle dynamikker på grunn av det ghanesiske samfunnets patriarkalsk natur, religiøs tro, fastlåste oppfatninger av kjønnsroller og holdninger til funksjonshemmede; i organisasjonsbetingelser som mangel på tilstrekkelige midler, kvalifiserte idrettsledere og kvinner i lederroller; i institusjonelle rammer som fravær av klare retningslinjer for implementering av politikk, ikke-inkluderende politikkutformingsprosesser og begrenset legitimitet til SDP-organisasjoner. Disse utfordringene gjør det vanskelig å realisere Ghanas forpliktelse til å bruke idrett som et verktøy for bærekraftig utvikling. For å nå disse målene, er det viktig å gjennomføre en grundig vurdering av lokale behov og rådføre seg med statlige og ikke-statlige aktører, inkludert de på distrikts- og regionalt nivå.

Appendix 2:

Reseach approval by Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD)

Sikt

Notification form / Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Sport? An Analy... / Assessment

Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number	Assessment type	Date
202579	Standard	15.03.2021

Title
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Sport? An Analysis of Multi-stakeholder Approach to Policy Implementation in Ghana

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)
Norges idrettshøgskole / Institutt for idrett og samfunnsvitenskap

Project leader
Derrick Okpoti Charway

Project period
01.03.2019 - 31.12.2023

Categories of personal data
General

Legal basis
Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 31.12.2023.

Notification Form

Comment
NSD has assessed the change registered on 15 March 2021.

We find that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 15 March 2020, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to continue.

Zoom was added as a data processor in the project. NSD presupposes that the processing of personal data by a data processor meets the requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation arts. 28 and 29.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
NSD will follow-up the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Simon Gogl
Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

Appendix 3:

Project overview and informed consent letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

Sustainable Development Goals through Sport: An Analysis of Policy Implementation in Ghana

This is an inquiry regarding your participation in a research project with the primary aim of analysing the roles and policy objectives of sport institutions/organizations in Ghana and their collective contribution to national development goals. In this letter, I will provide you with information about the project's purpose and what your involvement will entail.

Purpose of Project

The research seeks to analyse how sport policy objectives of state (sport ministry, regional and district sport offices) and non-state (National Sports Federations and sport for development organisations) actors in Ghana navigate towards achieving some aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). The UN SDGs are an indispensable component of Ghana's long and medium-term development goals and thus, form the basis for the policy goals of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in Ghana. In this light, this study addresses three of the 17 SDGs; healthy living (SDG 3), gender equality, women and girls' empowerment (SDG 5) and disability (SDG 10) which in itself gives focus to the growing field of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP). The SDGs cover three main dimensions of sustainable development, that is, "economic, social and environmental" (UNGA, 2015: 3). The choice of the three goals or the focal areas for this research therefore addresses the social dimensions of development at the community level which invariably have links to sport.

This research project is in fulfilment of my doctoral thesis at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences is the institution responsible for the project.

What does your participation in this research project entail?

You are being asked to contribute to this research because of your specific role in and insight into sport policy making and implementation in Ghana.

If you agree to participate in this project, you will be asked take part in an interview. It will take approx. 1 hour. The interview includes questions about policy process, sport policy and SDGs, and multi-stakeholder approach to policy implementation of healthy living, gender equality, women and girls' empowerment and disability. Your answers will be recorded with a tape recorder. Also, the researcher will be taking handwritten notes during the interview.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

The research project has been approved by The Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS (personvernombudet@nsd.no, +47 55 58 21 17).

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

I will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. I will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act. Your name and contact details will be replaced with a code and encrypted. The list

of names contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.

The project is scheduled to end April 2023. Your personal data will be anonymised. Also, your personal details will not appear in the final publication of this research.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, kindly contact:

- *The researcher, Derrick Okpoti Charway via email: d.o.charway@nih.no or by telephone: +4741387020*
- *Researcher's supervisor, Professor Åse Strandbu via email: ase.strandbu@nih.no or by telephone: +4795917938*
- *The Data Protection Officer, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences via email: personvernombud@nih.no*
- *The Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS via email: personvernombudet@nsd.no or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17*

Yours Sincerely,

Derrick Okpoti Charway
(Researcher)

Consent to participate in the research project

I have received and understood information about the project, "*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Sport? An Analysis of Policy Implementation in Ghana"* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

I give consent to participate in the interview of the project.

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix 4:

Interview Guide for policy making authorities

1. Personal profile
    a. How long have you been working at the MOYS/ NSA/ PCYSC?
    b. What is your position and department where you work?
    c. What are your responsibilities?
    d. What occupies you most of the time?

2. Policy Goals of MOYS
    a. What are main functions of the MOYS?
    b. How about the policy goals of the MOYS?
    c. How are policies formulated?
    d. Were the stakeholders/ organisations involved in the policy formation?
    e. How were the organisations were involved?

3. The SDGs and Sport in Ghana
    a. How do MOYS policies align with SGDs?
    b. Which SDGs have priority in Ghana?
    c. What are the measures/ guidelines put in place to ensure implementation nationwide?
    d. Have non-state sport organisations been involved in the SDGs implementation?
    e. Can you tell me the names of some of these non-state sport organisations?
    f. How was the collaboration initiated?

4. SDG - Healthy living
    a. How has the MOYS addressed health as one of the important goals of the SDGs?
    b. What are some of the health issues have the MOYS has focus on?
    c. Besides regional and district sport offices which other organisations have been involved with regards to sport and health?
    d. What financial support are they given?
    e. What are some of the health issues that MOYS have focus on?

5. SDG - Women empowerment
    a. How relevant is gender equality and women empowerment to the MOYS?
    b. How has the MOYS tackled gender equality and women empowerment issues?
    c. Have there been collaborations made with non-state sport organisations to address the issues?
    d. Who are they?
    e. How do MOYS collaborate with them?
    f. Is there financial support?

6. SDG - Disability
    a. What is the MOYS priorities persons with disabilities?
    b. What are the specific issues addressed by the MOYS?
    c. How do you do address these issues?
    d. Are stakeholders involved?
    e. Who are they?
    f. How do MOYS collaborate with them?
    g. Is there financial support?

7. Do you have any other contribution or comment you may want to add?

Appendix 5:

Interview Guide for policy regional sport directors

1. Personal profile
    a. How long have you been working?
    b. What is the nature of your work and for how long have you been on this position?
    c. What are your responsibilities?
    d. What occupies you most of the time?
    e. How many staff do you work with and what is the nature of their work?

2. SDGs and Sport as a policy Goal in Ghana
    a. How is the SDGs as policy goal of MOYS relevant in the work you do?
    b. What are the guidelines or outlined strategies to implement the SDGs?
    c. How were the guidelines made and were you involved?
    d. Do you work within the scope of the guidelines?
    e. Do you have alternative strategies to implement the SDGs?
    f. How have you mobilised funds for implementation?
    g. Do you get support from government? If yes, what kind of support?
    h. What is your opinion about equal support for all stakeholders implementing the SDGs?
    i. Beside development of sport within communities, is it relevant to also focus on implementing the SDGs in communities?

3. SDG 3 - Healthy living
    a. Specifically, what are the notable health issues you deal with in the communities?
    b. Are these issues similar or same in all the communities where you work?
    c. How do you use sport to address or solve these issues?
    d. Do you have community based programmes for healthy living?
    e. What are some of the programmes?
    f. Are you well-resourced to tackle these health issues?
    g. Besides your community workers/officers/coaches are there other organisations that you partner to address the health issues?
        i. Can you name them if yes?
        ii. How do you see such collaboration?

4. SDG 5 - Gender equality and empower all women and girls
    a. In accordance to the SDGs what are the notable issues pertaining to women and girl's empowerment in the communities?
    b. How do you ensure women and girls' full participation in your programmes?
    c. Do women and girls have equal opportunity for leadership and in decision making?
    d. In what ways do you promote gender equality and empower women and girls?
    e. Do you collaborate with other organisations in addressing gender equality and empower women and girls?
        i. Can you name them if yes?
        ii. How do you see such collaboration?

5. SDG 10 - Disability
    a. How accessible are your programmes to persons with disabilities?
    b. How do you ensure inclusive and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities?
    c. What are the notable persons with disabilities that you deal with?
    d. What are some of the issues pertaining to persons with disabilities?
    e. How do you resolve them?
    f. Are there organiations you collaborate with regards to persons with disabilities issues?
        i. Can you name them if yes?
        ii. How do you see such collaboration?

6. Do you have any other contribution or comment you may want to add?

Appendix 6:

Focus group discussion for community sport implementers

1. Personal profile
    a. What are your roles?
    b. How long have you been working?
    c. What is the nature of your work?
    d. What are your main tasks?
    a. What is your interest/ What occupies you most of the time?

2. SDG 3 - Healthy living
    a. Specifically, what are the notable health issues you deal with in the communities?
    b. Are these issues similar or same in all the communities where you work?
        i. If yes what are some of the issues
    c. How do you use sport to address or solve these issues?
    d. Are you well-resourced to tackle the health issues?
    e. Do you have community based programmes for healthy living?
    f. What are some of the programmes?
    g. Are the communities receptive of the programmes?
    h. Are there challenges to undertake your programmes?
    i. Do you partner with other organisations to address the health issues?
        i. Can you name them if yes?
        ii. How do you see such collaboration?

3. SDG 5 - Gender equality and empower all women and girls
    a. Do women and girls have equal opportunities for participation in sport in your communities?
    b. What are some of the barriers that constrain girls and women from participating in sports in their communities?
        i. Any reason for the barriers
        ii. Why or why not
    c. What are the barriers in your organisation to include women?
    d. Did you participate in any specific policy initiatives aimed at empowering and increasing participation of girls and women in sport?
        i. Would you be able to share with me what the policies are if yes?
        ii. Do you feel that your non-involvement is a cause for concern?
    e. Have you developed a gender strategy(ies) at your office?
    f. What steps do you take to ensure the full participation of women and girls in your programs?
    g. In what ways do you promote gender equality and empower women and girls?
    h. Does your office have the resources or capability to address factors that limit their participation?
    i. Have you collaborated with other organisations to enhance girls' and women's participation in community sports?
        i. If so, can you name them?
        ii. How do you see such collaborations?
    j. During the past few years, the sport ministry has made significant commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is to empower and increase participation of girls and women in sport at the community level.
        i. Are you or others in your organisation aware of the ministry's commitment?

4. SDG 10 - Disability
    a. How accessible are your programmes to persons with disabilities (persons with disabilities)?
    b. How do you ensure inclusive and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities?
    c. What are the notable persons with disabilities that you deal with?
    d. What are some of the issues pertaining to persons with disabilities?
    e. How do you resolve them?
    f. Are the communities receptive of your programmes?
    g. Are there challenges to undertake your programmes?
    h. Are there organiations you collaborate with regards to persons with disabilities issues?

    i. Can you name them if yes?
    ii. How do you see such collaboration?

i. During the past few years, the sport ministry has made significant commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is to empower persons with disabilities and and promoted disabled sport at the community level.
    i. Are you or others in your organisation aware of the ministry's commitment?

5. Do you have any other contribution or comment you may want to add?