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Potentialities in health and physical education

Potentialities in health and physical education: professional boundaries and change agendas

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Abstract

This special issue raises some demanding issues about the future of health and physical education (HPE) at a time when arguments for enhanced curriculum prominence exist alongside the possibility of increased marketization in school governance arrangements. These complexities are reviewed in terms of their implications for change agendas in schools, both in regard to subject teaching and more widely in terms of their consequences for the professional boundaries which shape and define educators work. Papers in the special issue focus on two broad areas: teachers' expertise, their curriculum development and enactment role and their accountability expectations; and secondly the future of HPE in relation to social and emotional learning, physical literacy and healthy lifestyles. Our editorial aspiration is that collectively the papers in the special issue stimulate further professional discussions and inform future research agendas.

Introduction

This special issue brings together an international collection of academic papers that evaluate the global prospects and professional challenges for health and physical education (HPE) at this time. The timing of the special issue is judicious as positive associations with experiential learning and the benefits of increased physical activity for physical, social, emotional and mental wellbeing are contributing to a renaissance in the way HPE related arguments about the education of the body are framed and considered. However, while the nature of this resurgence is largely welcomed by both academics and teachers, it is also situated within a wider neoliberal context that views HPE as ripe for privatised reforms. Such reforms increasingly shape how teachers negotiate curriculum spaces, organize their teaching and reappraise the potentialities of HPE. Moreover, there is a concern that the precariousness nature of advanced capitalism may excessively trouble young people and lead to wide-spread insecurities as they struggle to see encouraging outlooks for their lives (Masquelier, 2019). In this light, Kirk (2019) highlights that educators need to be increasingly alert to the social and economic challenges that influence young people's health, wellbeing and life chances as they attempt to construct equitable and socially just HPE programmes. These intentions broadly reflect Priestley and Philippou's (2018, pp. 156-157) call for the development of practices that are 'sensitive to broader pedagogical purposes and educational principles, and less likely to be influenced by non-pedagogical pressures which render education a means to an end, a performance to be delivered, and an ongoing game of performativity'.

Thus, HPE programmes are on the one hand well-positioned to argue for their contribution to a well-rounded personalised and meaningful education, but at the same time challenged by a context that often concentrates on 'what works' agendas, where schools focus on being competitive and efficient and where teachers are expected to achieve high levels of performativity. Therefore, in addition to critically reviewing the impact of neoliberal reforms on HPE, the special issue focuses on empirical findings covering various attempts by teachers to design programmes that are imaginative, authentic and capable of enhancing students' opportunities in life. Collectively, these initiatives can contribute to overtaking concerns that the

HPE has often been shaped and defined by overly abstract discussions on aims and purposes (McNamee & Bailey, 2010). These discussions have often failed to address the disconnections between policy aspirations and school enactment (Kirk, 2010) and have led Lawson (2018) to call for future research agendas to engage more coherently with evidence of value, impact and outcome. Therefore, the context surrounding the special issue is a challenging one: for while it seeks to understand and support well-argued and researched change agendas in HPE, it also recognises the increasing influence of market beliefs in contemporary education and the need to not unduly alienate the professionals charged with enacting reforms and building sustainable improvements. For as research from policy enactment in schools highlights, at least some degree of compatibility with teachers' beliefs and practices is pivotal to progress (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012). These complexities raise demanding issues about the globalised spaces HPE operates in and teachers' perception of professional agency, and the effects this has on teachers' efforts to support curriculum change and improve students learning. It also raises concerns about how democratic renewal, community growth and access to all areas of schooling can flourish in the multiple policy contexts in which HPE in schools operates.

We see these various concerns as redolent of Dewey's interest in the potentialities of education, as evident in Dewey's (1927/1984) intention for education to seek out the fulfilment of personal capacities 'in rich and manifold association with others: the power to be an individualized self, making a distinctive contribution and enjoying in its own way the fruits of association' (p. 329). Dewey's view of realizing intelligent conduct in practical life through integrating the personal perspective with social experience spanned the entirety of his career. This is noticeable from his earlier writings on participatory democracy being a social and ethical ideal containing institutional components (Dewey, 1888/1969) through to his later writings on democracy and radicalism, where Dewey (1937/1987, p. 298) reasserts the 'fundamental principle of democracy is that the ends of freedom and individuality for all can be attained only by means that accord with those ends.' Dewey's ongoing anticipation was that teachers could become 'sufficiently courageous and emancipated to insist that education means the creation of a discriminating mind' (Westbrook, 1991, p. 313). In this environment, students would seek out rich evidence for discussion and for reappraising initial judgements, and schools overall would become 'supremely interesting places' (Dewey, 1922/1983, p. 334).

Dewey's optimistic and cooperative-based social thinking views were underpinned by the belief that the state had an active role to play in connecting collective moral purposes with individual freedoms. In addition, laissez-faire liberalism might also have a role to play in education, providing such diversity was alert to the constraining limitations of capitalism as well as its constructive possibilities (Thorburn, 2019). On this view, Dewey's, faith in democracy as an ethical ideal never wavered, as he considered that building communities where experiences and resources were available for all should help people to develop their 'particular capacities and powers through participation in political, social and cultural life' (Westbrook, 1991, p. xv). As Bernstein (2010, p. 82) succinctly notes, 'Dewey never thought that democratic communal life was incompatible with liberalism.' Moreover, Dewey highlighted that engagement in discussing differences is inevitable in achieving change: for 'without creative conflict there is a danger of complacency and stagnation' (Bernstein, 2010, p. 85). The key for Dewey as a pragmatist with a focus on practical problem solving was how educators respond to change and of whether schools as part of democratic communities can encourage intelligence, inventiveness, protection of rights and the promotion of participation. Thus, Dewey believed that conflicts in education could be resolved through negotiation and by exercising in practice a form of socialized intelligence (Westbrook, 1991). In this light, Dewey's perspective remains relevant given the greater politicisation and economisation of schooling which exists in many Anglophone countries at this time and where settled forms of curriculum provision are subject to change (Bekisizwe &

Lubienski, 2017). However, one general limitation of Dewey's canon of work is that there is too 'little emphasis on institutional analysis - on what sorts of institutions are required for a flourishing democracy' (Bernstein, 2010, p. 87).

As such, we see this special issue as a timely opportunity for interested educators, academics and policy stakeholders to engage in a robust review of the potentialities of HPE, especially in relation to the professional boundaries and change agendas which might shape future curriculum developments and ideas for institutional reform. The special issue covers national contexts where increased privatised arrangements influence provision (Sperka & Enright, 2019) and by contrast the Scottish context where the Scottish Government (2016, p.1) remains committed to a comprehensive model of schooling as 'evidence shows that co-operation and collaboration, not competition or marketization drives improvement.' Moreover, as Murphy, Croxford, Howieson, & Raffe (2015) note, the three underpinning values of comprehensive schooling - fraternity, liberty and equality remain consistent with many aspects of Scottish democratic life. Dewey also references these very same values and in particular the importance of their connectedness: 'Fraternity, liberty and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions. Their separate assertion leads to mushy sentimentalism or else to extravagant and fanatical violence which in the end defeats its own aims' (Dewey, 1927/1984, p. 329). However, while the championing of students autonomy (liberty) and equality of value alongside the need for the school communities to focus on relationships and shared identity (fraternity) has sustained comprehensive schooling for over half a century, this is not a settled matter. For example, Paterson (2014) considers that a recent diminution of the academic tradition in education is evident through a downgrading of subject knowledge in learning and teaching and a lack of academic depth in teacher education programmes. These factors Paterson (2014) argues, limit Scotland's capacity to promote social mobility and economic development. Thus, even when schooling ideals seems stable, precarity is rarely far away and therefore engaging with instability is necessary in this special issue in order to critically review how practical gains can be realised. For as Fesmire (2015, p. 44) notes, a 'philosophy that sidelines precariousness … or … that shrugs of the hard work of inquiry altogether, attains neither the cognitive nor the practical ends befitting the love of wisdom.'

The planning for the special issue took place during the middle part of 2019 with publication set for the early part of 2021. Straddling the intervening 21 months, was the COVID-19 pandemic which in profound ways influenced social and economic perceptions about health and wealth related thinking. Most educational services have been affected by the COVID-19 broadside and the detailed specifics of what this might mean for the enactment of HPE are not something we underestimate. We recognise that in the short term, many practitioners in schools and Higher Education will be absorbed in operational thinking about how HPE can function safely so that students can continue to share in meaningful and progressive learning experiences. Overtime however the anticipation is that a wider lens on conceptual and professional matters will continue to shape deliberations about the nature and purposes of HPE. In this regard, the perspective taken forward in this special issue is a pro-active 'glass half full' one, based on the capacity such thinking may have for evaluating how professionals can constructively work within reset professional boundaries and for engaging with productive change agendas in HPE. Utilising Dewey can we argue benefit this approach and is already underway in related ways in the context of Higher Education. Ralston (2020), for example, has drawn on Deweyan notions on vocational thinking from a century ago (Dewey, 1914), in order to highlight how a broader focus on developing curiosity, inquiry and a knowledge of social problems needs emphasised at a time when there is a rush in many places to shorten undergraduate degrees and to make them more efficient and profitable in the process. In an HPE context, Dewey and Dewey (1915/1980) when citing positive examples of Schools of Tomorrow highlighted how the false dualism of

separating the mind and body is unhelpful when holistic child development is aspired towards. Dewey and Dewey (1915/1980 commented that:

> … physical growth is not identical with mental growth but the two coincide in time, and normally the latter is impossible without the former. If we have reference for childhood, our first specific rule is to make sure of a healthy bodily development. Even apart from its intrinsic value as a source of efficient action and of happiness, the proper development of the mind directly depends upon the proper use of the muscles and the senses. (p. 214)

Yet, we still find in the recent history of HPE either/or distinctions influencing conceptual considerations. Consider, for example, Barrow's (2008) point that:

> Faced with limited resources, for example, a case might be made for appointing a history teacher rather than a physical education teacher. For it is at least arguable that in practice most children will not receive an education without the formal apparatus of schooling, whereas bodily fitness, participation in sport and the like could be relatively easily attained and maintained without a school system. (pp. 274-275)

We recognise that Barrow (2008) is being discursive in framing arguments in relation to the education of the body. That said the above quote emphasises the risks associated with dualist (either/or) thinking and of the need for HPE professionals to continue to make the positive case for the body and the mind to flourish together in education as you necessarily need one to gain the other. This is in marked preference to being reactive in trying to protect the curriculum prominence HPE currently has relative to other subjects; a 'glass half empty' approach which can result in post Covid-19 reductive arguments for the maintenance of the status quo at a time when change in both the vision and practice of HPE in relation to wellbeing more widely may well be needed.

As such, the papers in this special issue aim to engage with the precarious nature of HPE in current times and with the multiple considerations academics, policy stakeholders, teacher educators and teachers face when reviewing issues associated with professional boundaries and change agendas in schools. These issues have clear implications for policy and practice as they impact on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment across the ages and stages of schooling. The papers are based on theoretical and empirical work and aspire to critically engage with a range of professional perspectives that are pivotal for enhancing learning and teaching and for informing analytical discussions about the potentialities we perceive to exist for HPE in the future. The first four papers in the special issue focus on general matters relating to teachers' expertise, curriculum development and enactment and accountability expectations. Thereafter, the latter four papers focus on more specific issues, such as the future place of HPE in relation to social and emotional learning, physical literacy and healthy lifestyles.

Teachers' expertise, curriculum development and enactment role and accountability expectations
As noted earlier, change agendas in HPE are often situated within wider neoliberal contexts that consider the subject area as ripe for privatised reforms with various stakeholders, agencies and businesses perceiving there to be benefits in partnering with schools (Macdonald, Johnson & Lingard, 2020). This raises questions about the supply and demand for experts and expertise in HPE and of who can provide such expertise: existing teachers or some other provider. These matters which are crucial in shaping and defining the potentialities and boundaries of those involved in HPE and in their paper, *'Experts, expertise, and health and physical education teaching: A scoping review of conceptualisations',* Benjamin Williams and Jessica Lee, examine what is meant by 'expert' and 'expertise' in HPE. The authors utilise a scoping review

framework covering 72 articles that focussed on the relationality, materiality, and performativity of experts and/or expertise. Through deploying a material-semiotic approach, whereby analytic tools and sensibilities can generate and capture the web of relations, the authors found that ontologically the three most prominent interrelated dimensions of experts and expertise within definitions and descriptions of HPE teaching were psychological, social and networking. Among many pertinent issues discussed, the authors highlight the complexities of teaching and the need for researchers to exercise care when conceptualising experts and expertise in ways that create a narrow impression that teachers should be capable of adapting themselves to changing circumstances. This, the authors note, is different from a networked overview which takes into account matters such as knowledge brokering which is often central to new neoliberal educational contexts. In taken forward such a perspective the authors conclude with the view that related educational research needs to become more in tune with the relationality, materiality, and performativity of experts and expertise and to lessen our past reliance on static, shallow and taken-for granted understandings of these entities.

In the paper, *'The Personal Visions of Physical Education Student Teachers: Putting the Education at the Heart of Physical Education'* Mike Jess, Paul MacMillan, Nicola Carse and Karen Munro also engage with matters associated with neo-liberal policy influences on physical education. Specifically, the authors argue that 'curriculum voice' of teachers should contribute to longer term global arguments which highlight the holistic importance and educational centrality of the body for revised whole school aims. This 'shifting perspective' can bolster the future credentials of physical education. In ways which are redolent of Williams and Lee's concerns over a narrow impression of teachers' capabilities informing constructs of experts and expertise, Jess et al. emphasise the complex ecological interplay between: the individual level in terms of teachers vision, motivation, understanding, and practice; the school community level in terms of the synergistic exchange between teacher and the whole school vision; and the policy/resource level in terms of curriculum policies and how they are negotiated between the individual, community, and policy levels.

As part of a longitudinal project, Jess et al.'s initial focus was on final year student teachers completing an undergraduate degree in physical education in Scotland. Using ecological concepts, the authors analysed 20 student essays which sought to describe personal visions for physical education, the experiences which had most influenced their vision; and the professional development plan for the enactment of their vision in their early career. Following detailed analysis of the essays four overarching visions were evident: promoting lifelong physical activity; engaging pupils in holistic learning experiences that link to cognitive, physical, social and emotional domains; providing inclusive opportunities for all pupils to succeed; and adaptive practices whereby curriculum and pedagogy are continually revised to suit the needs and interests of pupils. Underpinning these diverse student visions were a variety of theoretical constructs including: health related (salutogenic) thinking; meaningfulness; physical literacy; self-determination theory; masculinity theory; complexity theory; and talent development theory. Taken together the analysis of findings highlighted how student's visions were educationally-focussed, theoretically-informed and futures-looking, while at the same time influenced by a wide range of nested ecological factors from their past and present engagement in physical education; not all of which were positive. Such findings highlight that students did possess the capability to think and to focus in the future on a broader holistic, inclusive and lifelong learning remit for physical education. That said there was less evidence of students engaging with some of the 'bigger picture' radical 'activist' visions possible for physical education at this stage. Overall, the paper raises many intriguing issues which derive from a range of personal and bespoke student teacher visions for physical education; student visions which may influence the 'curriculum voice' of physical education in the neo-liberal influenced years to come.

In their paper on *'Teacher agency in enacting physical education in a period of curriculum change and reform in Ireland'*, Dylan Scanlon, Ann MacPhail & Antonio Calderon draw from the concept of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) and teacher agency (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2016), as well as figurational sociology (Elias, 1978) to explore the extent to which agency plays a role in one teacher's experience of enacting a new school subject i.e. the Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE). This is a high stakes examinable subject in secondary schools for 16-18 year old students. Through a three tier episodic reporting of multiple interviews, the nature of the complex interdependent relationships underpinning teacher agency were analysed and further evaluated in terms of how best to support teachers in achieving agency. The challenge for the teacher concerned is immediately apparent; LCPE is made up of 128 learning outcomes to be covered over a two-year course. This raises questions about the quality of the curriculum writing on hand; perhaps the newness of the subject has made it difficult for policy makers to produce a more incisive 'less is more' approach. Navigating a school specific route through a forest of outcomes in a high stakes examination context clearly requires considerable expertise and support if curriculum intentions are to be turned into meaningful lessons and the achievement of outcomes.

Evidence from the inductive and deductive analyses of the 19 semi-structured reflective-based interviews that explored how LCPE was taught and assessed, Brendan (the single case study teacher) encountered a number of challenges. In the first episode, we find Brendan responding to the perceived difficulties students were having in engaging with some areas of content. Brendan took active decisions to rearrange the timelines for areas of course coverage only to find out later that such flexibility while promised in policy guidelines did not dovetail with the professional support available and the timelines for completing the formal assessment arrangements. This necessarily constrained Brendan's sense of agency and highlights the complexities that existed in the way LCPE policy was planned and announced. In episode two, Brendan again faces difficulty; this time in getting sufficient student support for the ambitious but relatively untested learner centred pedagogical approaches he is encouraged to deploy. These meet with some resistance from students who are concerned over their effectiveness. In the final episode we find Brendan grappling with the contextual demands of trying to engage with aspects of a flipped classroom approach and a heightened use of digital technologies when teaching in an outdoor learning environment. Here the authors helpfully produce a figuration to capture the combination of interdependent relationships that influence learning contexts. This is new and welcome. The authors conclude by making encouraging points about the value of teachers working as part of communities of learners. This by itself though will not be enough with the authors arguing that collaborative thinking (involving multiple stakeholders) along with discussion and action is needed when redesigning physical education provision. This is a familiar cry and one which appears pivotal to the confusing and outcomes-led course that is LCPE. In this respect, there is a crucial need consider the importance of the authors' second concluding point, namely by further considering how a mix of conceptual and empirical research can engage with a possibilities agenda that enables teachers to have more control over how they function in a high-stakes HPE examination context.

Health and physical education in relation to social and emotional learning, physical literacy and healthy lifestyles

In the paper, *'Understanding the interpretation and implementation of social and emotional learning in physical education',* Paul Wright, Shirley Gray and Kevin Richards investigate the empirical extent to which social and emotional learning competencies such as self-management

and relationship skills are associated with positive outcomes for youth. As little previous research has examined this relationship in a physical education context, the paper through drawing upon occupational socialization theory, assesses how secondary teachers interpret and implement this aspect of the Scottish national curriculum. Occupational socialization theory was considered a relevant theoretical framework to underpin the data collected as this theory has previously proved useful for understanding how teachers interpret pedagogical advice and why teachers may show resistance towards incorporating aspects of social and emotional learning in their teaching of physical education. This seems a wise move, given that Scottish teachers have received relatively modest advice of how enhanced social and emotional learning competencies might lead to positive outcomes for youth. Instead, teachers are encouraged to use their autonomy to devise school specific imaginative examples of integrated learning.

In this mixed methods study data was collected from 14 semi-structured teacher interviews, a single focus group with eight pupils from each school and 23 systematic observations of lessons Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed using constant comparison and thematic analysis in a context where quantitative systematic observations triangulated qualitative findings. Findings revealed that the curriculum is interpreted at several levels and that this is driven largely by teachers' background experience and organizational influences. In line with the Jess et al paper, the authors found that teachers were generally well disposed to trying to advance a holistic and education centered version of physical education that naturally dovetailed with many aspects of social and emotional learning. A comprehensive and diverse range of practices were involved in taking forward these intentions forward e.g. focusing on creating a positive learning environment and implicit and reactive teaching approaches. Notably however there was teacher unease over lack appropriate provisions for teacher reskilling and professional development; factors which may stymy efforts to confirm practice gains. In this respect, the study adds to those in the HPE field which highlight the challenges teachers often face when interpreting new arrangements when they have minimal involvement in the curriculum development process. The impressive width and depth of the analysis and review in the paper helps lay the conceptual and methodological foundation for future studies to examine how greater learning transfer between social and emotional learning and physical education can occur in mainstream education.

In the paper, *'The promoting active lifestyles (PAL) project: A principle-based approach to pedagogical change',* Jo Harris, Lorraine Cale and Oliver Hooper, describe the development of a fostering physical activity in schools project. While the authors highlight the positive effect that high-quality physical activity promoting programmes can have on the health behaviours of young people they are also alert to the challenges taking on public health outcomes present for schools. This context informs the research framework which aims to guide and enhance the health-related philosophies and pedagogies of 32 volunteer physical education pre-service and in-service teachers, 22 of whom engaged in the project for a full 4 years. The teachers took part in a series of professional learning activities to co-develop principles that would guide their physical activity promotion and inform their everyday teaching. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered to explore the participants' experiences.

One of the main outcomes was the development of 20 principles for physical activity promotion 10 at whole-school level and 10 at the curriculum level. In commenting on the principles, while these were described by participants as practical and manageable, the subject principles were most frequently selected relative to the whole-school principles' due largely to the participants' relative inexperience. Despite the novel gains of the project, findings also raise the spectre of just how demanding it can prove for young teachers to engage with pedagogical practices which emphasis the links between promoting active lifestyles relative to the achievement of wider

whole school aims. Thus, in terms of the potentialities of achieving a wider range of physical education aims, it is evident that supporting teachers beyond becoming teachers is necessary.

In the paper, *'Grappling with Complex Ideas: Physical Education, Physical Literacy, Physical Activity, Sport, and Play in one Professional Learning Initiative',* Kirsten Petrie, Clive Pope and Darren Powell draw attention, and problematise the multiple and varied theories, terms and concepts used to describe and understand physical education and other movement contexts. They suggest that, rather than help teachers make sense of what and how physical education should be delivered the array of concepts available creates confusion and ambiguity. The authors draw upon attempts in New Zealand to address this problem by developing a programme for teachers that seeks to unify sport, physical education and other movement contexts. This is supported primarily by underpinning the programme with Whitehead's (2010) concept of physical literacy and financially by an eight-million dollar, school-based programme to enhance young peoples' multiple types of activity experiences. The programme is serviced by a lead curriculum facilitator, physical education mentors and activators. It is presented as a customisable, needs based initiative developed and enacted jointly by the Play.sport workforce, schools and their communities. The purpose of this paper is to understand how the Play.sport employees grappled with the various complex meanings and agendas as they delivered the programme over the first two years. An important element of the initiative was that it was supported by academics as part of a Collaborative Practitioner Research programme. This meant that space was provided to explore, problematise and improve understanding and enactment. Data collection and analysis took place over this initial two-year period. These processes were interactive and cyclical and took account of local history, culture and context

Findings revealed that one of the most popular topics of conversation was the ambiguity around the name Play.sport. The purpose of the name was not clear, but it seemed to reinforce the idea that the main aim of the workforce was to promote sport. Another issue was that the workforce had minimal time to develop on their own or with others a shared understanding of the key concepts that underpinned this initiative. In this respect, the study contains a similar message to the Wright et al. paper, on the adverse challenges teachers can face when beset by lack of time and minimal involvement in sharing intentions about curriculum intentions and the associated development process. Moreover, in the Petrie et al. study, the workforce highlighted the challenges they faced when their vision for the programme was in contrast to the perceptions and expectations of other teachers they worked with. This was evident when schools resisted attempts to challenge the dominance of sport and embed the physical literacy approach. The authors conclude by suggesting that time should be factored into the development and enactment of any new initiate to allow all involved too negotiate a shared understanding of different concepts and ideas and how they can be conceived within a programme of change. Petrie et al. are not calling for a singular definition, but rather to support teachers to recognise and respond to various meanings, and the ways in which they might operate both against and with each other. In doing so, the authors emphasise the need for all stakeholders to work together to collaboratively disentangle complex concepts. This is especially important for teachers when they are directly involved in change agendas.

In the paper, *A transformative learning journey of a teacher educator in enacting an activist approach in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE)*, Carla Lugetti and Kim Oliver take us on a learning journey which highlights the struggles PETE educators face in their attempts to engage their students in critical pedagogies. More specifically, it takes us on the lead author's learning journey, revealing how she comes to embody activist pedagogies that seek to challenge and change power relations in education. In doing so, the lead authors highlights that one of the biggest challenges faced to-date is teaching socially-just, critical pedagogies in a neoliberal

context. The auto-ethnographic account takes us from childhood experiences in Brazil through school, university, and then their career as a PETE educator. A critical point in this journey is when she meets Kate, her mentor and an expert in the activist approach. In the eight years they have known each other, they meet regularly to have critical discussions and to reflect upon the challenges and benefits of the activist approach. To focus their writing for this paper, they organised meetings specifically to discuss the lead author's learning trajectory towards teaching the activist approach in PETE.

They begin the journey in Brazil, offering detail about the childhood experiences of the lead author that strongly influence her commitment to social change. They then then take us through the lead author's time as a PETE educator in the US and in Brazil. While both contexts presented challenges, they offered different opportunities to embed the activist approach in her university-based teaching and with young people in schools and community sport. She learns the value of collaborative learning, reflection, understanding and negotiating identities, and exploring how they are implicated in the decisions that teachers make. The journey ends in Australia, where she attempts to embed the activist approach in one of her courses, encouraging her students to listen and respond to the voices of the children. This proves to be extremely challenging in a context where her students have embodied neoliberal ideals, influencing their responses and their behaviours during the course. Furthermore, the courses in this university are short and intensive, which does not provide the necessary space for discussion, critique, identity formation and transformation. What this means for her remains uncertain. However, she does not relinquish her efforts and, with support from Kate, she continues to look for new ways of working so that she and her students continue to grow. Overall, the paper highlights the challenges of engaging with transformative practices and the influence of context on the ways in which curriculum spaces are negotiated. However, central to this paper, is the authors' commitment to social change, their embodiment of the activist approach and their belief that physical education has the potential to contribute to fairer, more equal society.

In the final, part critical, part interpretive paper, *'Health Oriented "Bildung" or an Obligation to a Healthy Lifestyle? A Critical Analysis of Current PE Curricula in Germany',* Sebastian Ruin & Günter Stibbe offer through their qualitative content analysis with deductively derived categories, a perceptive and interesting insight into how HPE curriculum are conceptualised in three of the sixteen federal states in Germany. Their paper highlights the tension between the traditional concept of Bildung, where self-cultivation and self-reflection are highly valued and neoliberal educational practises that emphasise a need for accountability measures and assessments of learning. Thus, while Bildung through its emphasis on self-development, growth and self-determination reflects the broader goals of education, neoliberal practices associated with meeting targets and raising attainment may constrain this ambition. The critically analysis completed enabled comparisons between three states while also allowing the authors to explore each curriculum to determine the extent to which HPE is understood in the sense of 'Bildung'. It also enabled the authors to consider federal and national imperatives in HPE as Germany like many other countries is perplexed by problems of sedentary behaviour and increasing levels of youth obesity. This raises the prospect of national viz. federal tensions in terms of the extent to which health and social concerns can be improved.

The authors found that HPE was predominantly conceptualised in biomedical language, where learning was conceived in preventative 'how to be healthy' terms. Thus, curriculum and experiences were less anchored in Bildung and governed instead by scientific principles of training, where students participated in physical activity in order to understand their health benefits. However, atypically in one of the three states a more subjective-driven position was taken, where greater recognition was afforded to the importance of personal wellbeing and

socially constructed ideas about the body. Yet, even here these potentially empowering developments were minimally reflected in the standardised measures of competence expected. The authors consider that this biomedical and objectivising understanding of HPE is informed by neoliberal ideals and where teachers' practice is reduced to providing young people with opportunities to engage in 'normalising' health activities in order to ensure their positive contribution to society. The idea that young people might consider health more critically and more personally is limited. Therefore, the ultimate goals of Bildung, to promote growth and maturity 'fall by the wayside'. The authors also highlight the practical challenges faced by teachers, where teachers often need to navigate a route between the contradictory messages about what and how to teach all within a context of accountability that guides and limits how HPE is understood and experienced by students in schools. In addition, the authors urge teachers and academics to engage in critical reflections about the impact these pressures might have on HPE, and encourage us towards considering a theory of Bildung that might increase the potentialities for HPE in the years ahead.

Conclusion

This special issue has reviewed current potentialities there may well be for HPE in mainstream education. To support this perspective, a mix of conceptual and empirical papers have engaged with matters associated with teachers' expertise and their ability to enact change during a time of increased accountability, as well as the evolving subject matter of HPE in relation to social and emotional learning, physical literacy and healthy lifestyles. Amidst these discussions of professional boundaries and managing change agendas, the contribution of John Dewey to educational theorizing has been emphasised due to Dewey's lifelong interest in the constructive role the state can plan in promoting cooperative-based social thinking and pursuing shared moral purposes (Westbrook, 1991).

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