

Debates in Physical Education, edited by Susan Capel and Richard Blair (2nd Edition), London, Routledge, 2020. Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education.

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What am I reading?

The second edition of ‘Debates in Physical Education’ edited by Susan Capel and Richard Blair was published in 2020, seven years after the first edition. Similar to the first, this second edition provides a useful mapping of pedagogies of physical education in three key areas: learning, curriculum and teaching. The most dominant shift in this new edition is the increased focus on the evolving context(s) of physical education and important interdisciplinary links to related studies in technology, leisure and health. The increased focus on interdisciplinarity, curriculum innovations and practice-based inquiry will be of particular interest to Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education readers (CSHPE). Educators, researchers and students are likely to find a chapter which moves them to think differently about core debates and issues within the field of physical education at this current time. In particular, chapters entitled ‘physical education and school sport: is there a wider social role?’ or ‘what is the education in physical education?’ will perhaps have new meaning given the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Why “Debates in Physical Education”? Why now?

The first edition of this book was a suggested reading that I came across when studying as an undergraduate. At the time, it provided an accessible resource for me to grapple with different debates in the field of physical education (see Brown (2014) for a review of the first edition). Now as an early career academic, my reading of the second

edition coincides with a particular historical moment. The relevance of the debates raised in this book have taken on even more significance for me in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. As I write this, many are navigating the challenges and potentials of working from home, remote learning and/or revising curricula for the years ahead. Educators, researchers and students in the field are likely finding themselves questioning the future(s) of physical education as a subject and its potential to be adapted or tailored to the evolving needs of the current educational context. As a result, my own (and perhaps others) reading of this edited collection is a timely invitation to reconsider the temporality of debates in the field and how these debates may take on a different meaning, dependant on the broader contexts we find ourselves navigating.

Colleagues seeking to understand the key debates currently influencing physical education will find the chapters engaging, asking critical questions for reflection and suggestions for gaps in the field. Early career researchers and those studying physical education are likely to find this book particularly useful for contextualising their work. Indeed, by drawing on evidence and scholarship to explore these debates, the chapters challenge educators to think about their own practice, to consider how the debates intersect, overlap or challenge each other, and to consider their philosophical basis in terms of the purpose of physical education.

Chapter 1 by Kirk is a provocative entry point to the collection, which outlines the complexity of national policy and politics in terms of their influence on physical education curriculum and pedagogy. In doing so, Kirk offers some careful considerations and questions aimed towards educational futures for physical education. Building on this, in Chapter 5 Blair and Guildea explore concerns that have been spurred on more recently in debates regarding the rise of Joe Wicks and his label as the ‘nation’s physical education teacher’ in the UK. They ask readers to consider if “in the current, rapidly evolving social, cultural, political and

economic context, can adults who are not qualified physical education teachers make a positive and relevant contribution to the intentional physical education of children and young people, beyond schools...?” (p.70). In Chapter 7, Whitehead attends to broader debates surrounding the ‘E’ in physical education. An important contribution which builds upon a recent scholarship by Quennerstedt (2019) focused on salutogenic questions of health and the importance of reorienting debates in the field towards taking the ‘E’ in ‘physical education’ more seriously. In Chapter 8, Waring and Herold question the nature of knowledge in physical education. As with many of the other debates explored in the book, this chapter provides a useful resource for those who may like to know more about the contestations related to the nature and aims of physical education.

What am I most interested in?

Given my own research interests, the contributions specific to technology and pedagogical approaches to physical education were of particular interest to me (Sargent, 2018; Sargent & Casey, 2020). In particular, Chapter 18 by Kerner and Goodyear provides useful considerations for teachers in terms of social media, young people and fitness tracking devices. They urge readers to be conscious of the space outside of the classroom where young people are learning about their bodies, health and physical activity. The debates presented around lifestyle sports in Chapter 15 by Beaumont and Warburton (2020) are also of interest to me, and will no doubt instigate discussion amongst educators and researchers alike. The questions they raise in relation to how lifestyle sports can be fully embedded into contemporary school PE curriculum are compelling.

New orientations for inquiry

Overall, this edition acts a springboard for engaging with further questions and debates in CSHPE. The book is structured in a way that allows readers to dip in and out of the different

chapters depending on their areas of interest. As Capel and Blair write in the introduction “the book intentionally raises more questions than provides answers”. As such, it remains up to the reader and the broader field to consider these debates within their own contexts, to question their own positioning in these debates and to interrogate their responses through new forms of inquiry in CSHPE.

Brown, T. (2014). Debates in Physical Education. *Sport Education and Society*, 19(7), 966-971.

Quennerstedt, M. (2019). Healthying physical education – on the possibility of learning health. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 24(1), 1-15.

Sargent, J., & Casey, A. (2020) Flipped learning, pedagogy and digital technology: Establishing consistent practice to optimise lesson time. *European Physical Education Review*, 26 (1), 70-84.

Sargent, J (2018). Digital technologies and learning in physical education: pedagogical cases, *Sport, Education and Society*, 23 (1), 108-110.