

Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education and Sport

Second edition

Gary Stidder and Sid Hayes (eds)

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11 figures

3 tables

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Some years ago I heard an explanation of the difference between equality and equity, whereby one imagines a metaphorical running track with a number of runners lined up for a race. We can see equality as giving all those runners a fair start in the race: all line up on their marks and set off at the same time. Equity, however, acknowledges that during the course of that race, some runners may be advantaged or disadvantaged: there may be hurdles in the way of some, or a travelator to help others along. That is, equality of opportunity at the start fails to note the differing experiences of runners, once they are underway, that might affect their ability to reach the finish line. Equity is then a commitment not to a fair start, but a fair finish. That might mean different starting points for different runners. This sporting analogy is appropriate when considering varying difficulties or privileges that shape young people's experiences within physical education and youth sport. *Equity and Inclusion in Physical Education and Sport* argues that this is highly valuable if positive experiences are to be had by all young people, created by teachers with "a more empathetic approach to learning and teaching" (pg. 11).

The starting point for this second edition is in framing concerns with young people's inclusion in increasingly competitive sport-driven physical education; something the opening chapter theorizes is exclusionary for those who are not "good" at it. Writing three years into the UK Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government (formed in May 2010), editors Gary Stidder and Sid Hayes situate the analysis among contemporary English education and sport policies. The book has considerable value for practitioners, students and researchers wishing for a clear introduction to the field.

Stidder and Hayes' volume outlines a number of issues for equitable practice in secondary school physical education, including gender, ethnicity, special educational needs, class and sexuality (while acknowledging that these are not stand alone categories). In this text, equity means fairness and respect, removing oppression and discrimination from the classroom. Inclusion is defined as valuing all children's values, attitudes and wellbeing equally while

providing a relevant curriculum regardless of ability. I concentrate here on a few chapters which may be of specific interest to *APAQ* readers.

Chapter 2 is an extended reflection by Stidder on his experiences as a pre- and in-service PE teacher, focusing on the eye-opening experiences of adapted and coed PE that he observed as the norm in the USA, questioning why similar approaches are not standard in the UK. Perhaps it is the unwavering quest by the Coalition government for elite sport achievement which prevents adapted and non-traditional games from being found in more than “pockets” of PE. This chapter sets the tone for the remainder of the book, with each chapter offering a personal reflection by the author(s).

Chapter 3 looks at strategies for personalized learning, as a key element of inclusive practice, highlighting that planning for a variety of teaching and learning styles is crucial. The chapter also acknowledges that pupils' ownership of their learning, decision-making, and voice are vital elements of differentiation. Chapter 4 considers inclusion for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), again noting the importance of differentiated, personalized learning plus understanding that inclusion for pupils with SEND is not a “bolt on” to mainstream provision. It makes suggestions for good practice with examples of activities or adaptations and how both non-disability and disability sports might be included in the curriculum, although makes no mention of potential exclusionary practice among pupils and the impact that being different might have on, say, bullying or discrimination within the classroom. Responsibility is with teachers for changing practice but it is a significant omission here that negotiating social relations is not addressed as a further concern for teachers in the classroom.

Chapters 5 to 11 focus in turn on the gender regime, transphobia and homophobia, sport for peace, racial stereotypes, social class, examination PE, and policy for participation. Emphasis is on highlighting for teachers the problems with traditional practice, calling for critical reflection on the self and on dominant approaches. Initial teacher education also comes in for scrutiny as it is recognized as insufficiently preparing teachers for diverse learners and contemporary youth cultures. The book culminates in a chapter on health and alternative activities, again laying blame for physical activity disengagement at the door of competitive sports. The chapter bases the future of PE in lifestyle sports, argued to offer greater motivation for lifelong activity, or simply helping to avoid young people being put off by unenjoyable or traumatic experiences. This turn to alternative activities is situated within curriculum requirements in England. However, while the authors of this chapter note that developing a curriculum needs to be based on what young people want, there is little reference to the growing research in this area that can inform us to some extent what, indeed, young people are saying about PE. Where reference might be made here to adapted or modified activities, so that some semblance of the admittedly popular football codes, cricket, netball, and hockey might remain a part of PE experiences, this is absent. Earlier on, however, chapter 9 on social class offers a particularly engaging analysis of the broader issues of opportunity, embodiment, and social structure that affect possibilities for addressing class (in combination with other identities) in PE, sport and health. These are enduring concerns that

may not be amended by practitioners' reflection and a new curriculum alone.

Nevertheless, this is a go-to text on inclusion issues in PE and youth sport, with some valuable suggestions for practice and sufficient consideration of the causes and effects of exclusion and social injustice in PE. It offers some assistance for students in locating literature that can give more detailed insights into research and theory on these issues. Each chapter stands alone but may be best read as a whole in order to avoid single issue thinking, for the solutions to the problems raised here will need more than that. It can also offer practitioners a reference point for (re)considering factors in disengagement, equity and diversity. The argument is strong, that these are vital considerations for inclusive, successful PE experiences.