

Physical Education and Well-being: Global and Holistic Approaches to Child Health by Timothy Lynch¹ (2019)

Springer Nature, Gewerbestrasse, Switzerland, 215 pages. \$110.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-3-030-22265-9

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This article reviews Lynch's book, which aims at investigating and offering a comprehensive approach to the practice-based teaching of high-quality health, physical education, and well-being. The book is an excellent resource for educators, researchers, policymakers, and anyone interested in gaining fresh knowledge on contemporary childhood physical education, health, and well-being perspectives. Lynch notes that despite the importance of physical education, there is a gap in its practice, and its implementation needs to progress. Lynch (2019) adopts "education through movement" as the best approach to teaching health and physical education.

The book focuses on analyzing global approaches to physical education and well-being by comparing four global regions/countries: Australia, the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The results indicate that time was the biggest obstacle to health and physical education quality. American teachers indicated they needed more time to teach physical education and that incorporating health was a challenge. The author concluded that holistic physical education should be prioritized in schools because regular physical activity lessons can promote children's physical fitness, health, and well-being. For children to enjoy optimum well-being, the author suggests that the sociocultural approach should continue across all countries. It is also crucial that holistic health and physical education policies become strongly integrated into the curriculum in every school, and that community partnership should be embraced in physical education.

Keywords: Physical education, quality physical education, health, well-being.

Sports and physical education are offered as part of the school's core curriculum due to its overall advantage in the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of human beings, especially children, during their formative period. It is the only program offering chances to develop motor skills and improve one's physical and mental fitness. Lynch states that schools have long emphasized physical education as a vital component of the curriculum due to the overall benefits of learning through the physical dimension. However, education issues such as inadequate resources, a low level of teacher motivation, insufficient training, and a lack of enough and proper physical activity persist. "The prac-

tice gap that contemporary research demonstrates is that physical education implementation needs to move forward as opposed to educational policies (p.2)." This suggests that there is a mismatch between suggested physical education approaches and how they are implemented in schools. Rather than relying just on educational policies, this gap can be closed by taking initiatives to improve the quality and efficacy of physical education. "Research has revealed issues with physical education curriculum implementation in primary and elementary schools, and recommendations have been made for improving the physical component of learning for children to enable them to benefit from their long-term well-being

(p. 3)." It is important for schools to establish effective physical education activities and programs for children to develop the necessary physical abilities needed to live an active and healthy life. **These adjustments would help children develop their athletic skills and improve their health in the long run.**

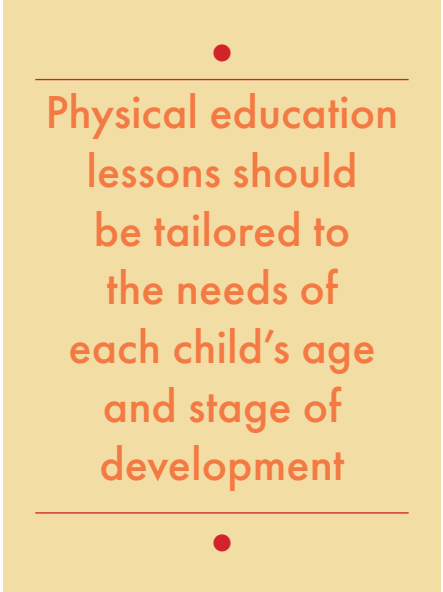
The book has fifteen chapters, nine appendices, and many references. The chapters comprehensively explain health, well-being, and physical education and the best approach to its delivery, beginning with what is obtainable in teaching physical education before and during the journey of improvement. Timothy Lynch uses evidence-based research, qualitative and quantitative data collected, and

practical experiences to validate the power of quality physical exercise and provide guidance for fostering whole-child well-being. Similarly, Barnett et al. (2013), Stirrup and Sandford (2019), and Saakslahiti and Duncombe (2019) also promote well-being through physical activity. As a physical education teacher who has been teaching for over two and a half decades, Lynch examines how teachers, schools, and leaders in the community can improve children's health by improving physical education. As a result, the book addresses many facets and layers of implementing high-quality physical education.

According to Lynch, physical education at the primary and secondary levels offers an inclusive learning experience that is part of the curriculum. An inclusive learning experience respects and accommodates the differences, needs, and interests of all students. In physical education, an inclusive approach to learning considers the ability and diverse background of learners in preparing lessons to support their emotional, cognitive, physical, and social growth. In this way, quality physical education lays the groundwork for a lifetime of sports and physical activity participation, as explained by the author. Physical education lessons should be tailored to the needs of each child's age and stage of development so that children and teens can learn the motor skills, cognitive skills, and social and emotional skills they need to live an active life (UNESCO, 2015). Lynch discusses the biological, behavioral, social, and sociocultural approaches used in health and physical education based on his experience as a physical education and health teacher. This review focuses on the sociocultural approach emphasized by the author. Over the years, Lynch has been aware of the need to help pre-service teachers, parents, policymakers, and generalist teachers understand children's

fundamental movement skills. The author's experiences and the expertise of other references in the field make the book a required read for teachers teaching physical education.

Chapters 1 and 2 present an overview of the significance of physical education in promoting the health and well-being of children around the world and explain various perspectives on the teaching of physical education and well-being, and lays the groundwork for the remaining chapters of the book. These two chapters explain the importance of health and physi-



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cal activity, perspectives on teaching health and physical education, and what children acquire through physical education, including cognitive, social, and psychomotor skills. Lynch notes that “through health and physical education, children establish a sense of self that aids in the development of satisfying interpersonal relationships as well as the knowledge, comprehension, and skills necessary to be resilient (p. 45).” Physical, psychological, social, and emotional well-being are among the benefits of physical education and physical activity, which are discussed from a holistic perspective in chapter 1. The

author contends that physical education and recreation can enhance children's social skills and interpersonal interactions, helping them feel more capable and confident, and giving them opportunities for enjoyment and creative expression.

Chapter 1 further discusses the role of teachers and policymakers in promoting physical education and activity. The author suggests teachers incorporate more movement into their lessons and provide a supportive environment for physical education. Policymakers can support physical activity and physical education programs in schools and provide safe and accessible spaces for children to be physically active. In Chapter 2, several viewpoints, including behavioral, psychological, biological, cognitive, psychoanalytic, and phenomenological approaches are discussed in relation to physical education, activity, and well-being by encouraging positive interactions and experiences in physical activity.

Approaches to health, well-being, and physical education are the major focus of Chapter 3. Lynch presents a sociocultural approach to health and physical education to explain and determine the best way to teach health and well-being in physical education classes. He uses the socio-ecological model to explain the sociocultural approach, which is a model that identifies interactions between individuals and their social, geographic, personal, and physical networks. He further explains that communities are ecological because they provide each other with the resources they need to survive while bringing people together. He argues that the sociocultural approach is “an inclusive approach that acknowledges that cultural factors influence health behavior and that health has spiritual, emotional, mental, social, and physical dimensions, as well as interactions between these dimensions” (p. 113).”

In Lynch's perspective, a sociocultural approach looks at all parts of life and ties the health and physical education lessons to the student's interests and surroundings. Students learn through movement, interactions with other people, and relationships. He considers the approach to be one that is capable of catering to the different needs of children in the school community and helping a child grow and become a whole person.

According to Lynch, due to the unique nature of physical education, all countries are required to adhere to the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program—CSPAP (CDC, 2013), which is the national framework for physical activity and physical education. The framework encourages physical activity and overall health through a whole-school strategy that includes physical education, classroom-based physical activity, and community collaborations. But in the United States, each state is responsible for setting its own educational standards and implementing its own curriculum. Lynch explains why the sociocultural approach should be implemented in schools for quality physical education. He believed that the sociocultural approach is different from some historical views that explained health as the absence of disease and affirmed physical health to a great extent. Based on this, the sociocultural approach was developed responsively to prevent the dominant control of the medical approach traditionally used in public health and the behavioral approach used in education. This means that the medical approach focused on individual interventions, whereas the behavioral method used reinforcement and punishment to change behavior. The socio-cultural perspective looks at broader social, cultural, and political issues that influence health and education results, moving beyond a restricted focus on individual

variables. The sociocultural approach connects the curriculum to the everyday interests of children. Lynch was of the opinion that social, perceptual-motor, and intellectual abilities as well as intelligence and imaginative skills can be developed through the sociocultural benefits of play.

The author explains that the sociocultural approach was embraced and developed as a policy within the Australian education context, providing stability and advocacy for the constructivist and critical approaches within education. The Australian national curriculum framework syllabus holds a sociocultural view that promotes equity, supportive environments, and social justice principles of diversity, which support the syllabus and inform curriculum design and delivery (Australian Government Department of Education, 2022). The strategy also acknowledges that a holistic approach to physical education is necessary because children are subject to a variety of economic, cultural, physical, social, environmental, and political constraints that affect their well-being. As the narrative unfolds, Lynch explains that whereas competition can be carried out comprehensively or inclusively, "belonging, being, and becoming" physically educated has not been achieved.

According to Lynch, the sociocultural approach can be demanding for teachers, particularly when they are not prepared mentally, emotionally, and physically (p. 117). The application of this approach in physical education gives room for quality physical education and demands quality implementation by qualified teachers. He used the work of Barnett et al. (2013) to establish that many children have limited fundamental movement skills at the start of secondary school and that playing games or engaging in sports when all children have the needed skills required for the game is not an inclusive

practice. He believed that such a practice should be investigated as it favors children who have had prior experience in playing the game over other children who have not. Lynch recommends that quality physical education should be implemented using a sociocultural approach. He, therefore, encourages educators to be creative when adopting this approach to implementing physical education as it offers continuous learning experiences for children.

The focus of chapters 6 and 7 is the physical education program's underlying principles and the development of the physical dimension of health, which further clarified the overall concept of a quality physical education program, that is, to help children develop the necessary skills, aspiration, and knowledge to enjoy physical education and activity. Some of the components of a quality physical education program include content standards, emphasizing right learning, asserting correct learning rather than outcome, and being students-centered and developmentally appropriate, with motor skills forming the basis of the program, the teaching of management skills, and promoting self-discipline. According to Lynch, the following are some of the factors to be considered in



quality physical education: educators' expertise in fundamental movement skills and knowledge of an inclusive sociocultural approach, children's health and well-being, and opportunities for children to master fundamental movement skills before age seven.

According to the author, the greatest barrier to adopting health and physical education was a lack of time. Many teachers in the United States claimed that they required more time to adequately teach physical education and that incorporating health into physical education was challenging. Because of effective Initial



Teacher Education (ITE) programs and frequent physical education courses, the United Kingdom was the only country where instructors were knowledgeable and qualified to teach health and physical education. Teachers in the United Kingdom employed a sociocultural approach into promoting social justice and equity principles while also creating a supportive learning environment that recognized pupils' diversity and skills. Lynch stated that the curriculum was well-planned, structured, and implemented such that there was adequate equipment for teaching health and

physical education, and that insufficient space was handled through a long-term partnership with the community. In Australia, activities were designed to engage all pupils, and the implementation promoted spiritual connectedness among children.

Lynch's work aligns with the work of some researchers in the field of physical education on themes like physical activities in the early years, as expressed in Stirrup and Sandford's (2019) and Saakslanti and Duncombe's (2019) international approaches to physical development. The purpose of Lynch's book is to determine the most effective way or approach for teaching health and physical education and to demonstrate how it could benefit the overall development of children. The author concludes that there are many approaches to the teaching of HPE, such as biological, behavioral, social, and sociocultural. All these approaches have a place in schools and in the teaching of HPE, and there should be a balance among those approaches. Educators should broaden their knowledge about these approaches to education that relate to constructivism, behaviorism, and the critical approach.

I believe that there is no best way or best method of teaching. Choosing a method depends on the types of students you are teaching and the objectives you intend to achieve. Physical educators need to employ a holistic approach to physical education and collaborate with community partners to promote children's health and well-being while also improving their teaching practices to enhance student outcomes. Community collaborations can provide physical education programs with resources and assistance as well as opportunities for children to engage in physical activity outside of school. To encourage physical activity and general health in children, physical educators should collaborate

with community organizations and healthcare practitioners.

The book offers insight into the importance of community partnerships, the influence of physical activities on mental health, and cultural differences in children's behavior towards physical activity. The book examines the state of health and physical education and teacher preparation programs in nations like Australia, the Middle East, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The book also identified the primary issue with the implementation of enhancing health and physical education in relation to education policymakers and school administrators. In my opinion, the book addresses a wide range of issues pertaining to physical education, children's health, and strategies for promoting healthy living. It explains the relationships between physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development and it highlights the significance of a holistic approach to children's health and well-being.

However, there are some important limitations to note. The first limitation of the book is the high cost of the book which may hinder educators, especially teachers, from accessing it except through a library, which delays access. Another limitation was that it focuses on global approaches to physical education and well-being in only four regions/countries, which may not enable conclusions and recommendations to be applicable or generalizable to other countries of the world. In addition, the findings were spread from Chapter 11 through Chapter 15, which makes it lengthy and can be overwhelming for the readers. Such excessive length can lessen the book's overall impact and make it less fascinating to read. Providing a clear and concise summary of the findings would help readers quickly understand the points and locate the information needed from the results.

Teachers are crucial in encouraging physical education and overall health. They should be prepared with the required knowledge and abilities that encourage healthy lives and trained to deliver quality physical education programs that cater to diverse learners. It is important for communities, families, and schools to work together to promote physical education and overall health. Schools should collaborate with parents, community groups, and local governments to develop a welcoming environment that encourages active learning and healthy lifestyles. Lynch's book delves into the relevance of physical education and well-being for children, highlighting the necessity for a comprehensive approach to promoting healthy lives. The book covers a wide range of themes, including the benefits of physical activity, the role of schools and the community in encouraging physical education and health, and ways for enhancing children's general well-being. It also explores the cultural and societal elements that influence children's attitudes and behaviors toward physical activity and health. In summary, the book can be an excellent resource for educators, researchers, policymakers, and anyone interested in gaining fresh knowledge of contemporary childhood physical education, health, and well-being perspectives.

¹Timothy Lynch is a senior fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK Professional Standards Framework), the deputy head of a junior school at the British International School in Cairo, and a UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab (IPL) expert on education. For more than 25 years, he has taught health and physical education. His areas of research interest include lifetime wellness and well-being, pedagogy and effective teaching methods, health and physical education, curriculum reform, and enhancing learning through physical education.

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