

Book Reviews

Physical Education – Picking Up the Baton

M. Thorburn & S. Gray

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‘Physical Education – Picking Up the Baton’ is the 27th publication in the Policy and Practice in Education series. This book targets a specialist audience and is divided into five chapters, each with its own synopsis and summary. The structure is straight forward, and from a historical perspective, looks at the period from the 1970s onwards. More recent references to Curriculum for Excellence, Health and Wellbeing and Sport and Physical Activity are useful.

The authors focus on three central themes: Policy in Physical Education; Pedagogy in Physical Education; and Professionalism in Physical Education. Some of the issues addressed have been raised and discussed previously by other interested parties – examination and certification in Physical Education is one example. These are revisited from an up-to-date perspective in this book. However, it is when the authors begin to look at the future direction of Physical Education that the reader senses something a little different and that this is the subject of some debate amongst those in the profession. In particular, Initial Teacher Education programmes and the type of candidate entering teacher education are discussed, encouraging the reader to consider whether beginner Physical Education teachers require a broader knowledge and expertise base (in line with Curriculum for Excellence) rather than an impressive sports background. Another debate is the number of different activities offered to both students in training and pupils in schools – it can be argued that this “sampling of activities” produces marginal learning gains. A suggested solution to this may be greater differentiation in Teacher Education programmes, continuing into the

Professional Development offered to beginner teachers throughout their induction period and beyond. In addition, better links between students, beginner teachers and teacher mentors is seen as an important development. The authors also acknowledge the potential for the Scottish Teachers for a New Era initiative (STNE), based at the University of Aberdeen, to inform and influence future arrangements for teacher training programmes in these areas.

With my own background in primary Physical Education, it was pleasing to read the authors' encouragement for the increased provision of primary Physical Education in order to meet the Scottish Government recommendations of two hours of quality Physical Education per week for all children, and consideration of the implications this has for the training of all teachers. As young children require exposure to developmentally appropriate Physical Education programmes, this therefore becomes the responsibility of all, not just specialist Physical Education teachers.

In conclusion, this easy to read book suggests three themes for change in relation to the future of Physical Education in Scotland within the context of Curriculum for Excellence – policy direction, learning and teaching and professionalism – all that needs to happen is that “the baton for change is picked up and securely grasped”.