

Editorial: Advancing Quality Physical Education - Evolving Global Perspectives

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This forty-fifth volume of *International Sports Studies* concludes with a special focus in terms of topic and area of interest. The topic is a fundamental professional goal – the delivery of Quality Physical Education (QPE). The area is the world’s most populous continent - Asia. The genesis of this QPE project by a team assembled by the International Society for Comparative Physical Education and Sport (ISCPES) did not occur abruptly. Rather, it stemmed from an international series of developments and deliberate calls for reform within the global realm of physical education (PE). This editorial explores the evolutionary journey of the QPE initiative, tracing its roots back to the early 2000s. It highlights pivotal moments in this worldwide quest for enhanced educational standards and confirms the role of ISCPES as an active agent in curriculum development in this professional field.

International Initiatives and Reforms. In 2000, in response to increasing awareness of the threats to health and well-being related to increasing sedentary lifestyles, a clarion call for improving the quality of PE echoed worldwide as a means to incorporate health-related physical activity in many societies. In parallel with this, various educational reforms were initiated (Hardman & Marshall, 2000). The Taiwan Education Authority embraced the notion of integrated learning (Li, 2002), while Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were involved in the process of integrating health and PE into innovative curricula (ACARA, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2010; Council of Ministry Education, 1999). In Hong Kong SAR, the Education Bureau explored the concept of formal and informal learning (Curriculum Development Council, 2000). While in Europe, the attention shifted toward inclusive and daily PE (Kudláček et al., 2010; Resaland et al., 2011).

Quality Standards Advocacy. Around the same time in the United States, the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) underscored the necessity for Quality Physical Education standards, urging PE professionals to prioritise learning opportunities, structured and meaningful content, effective instruction, and conducive classroom environments. The interest on Quality in PE gained further traction at the Porto Nuevo Seminar in 2005 when UNESCO, in collaboration with other international organisations, developed the Quality Physical Education Guidelines. These guidelines provided a framework for policymakers, educators, and practitioners to enhance the QPE programs worldwide. They emphasised the need for improved learning conditions, curriculum design, and provision of a safe, healthy, and protective physical and social environment for learning.

In support of the NASPE standards, Le Masurier and Corbin (2006) articulated ten compelling reasons for adopting them. Building on the argument that PE is the only academic discipline that achieves educational goals primarily through physical activity, they asserted that only high-quality PE could provide teenagers with the self-management skills essential to being physically active throughout their lifespan. They further affirmed that, given the significant role of PE in forming the whole person, the call for a high-quality curriculum delivered by PE specialists becomes critical.

Evolution of the QPE Concept. Meanwhile, in 2006, Gudrun Doll-Tepper, then president of the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), propelled the QPE discourse through the agency of the Council's International Committee of Sport Pedagogy (ICSP). QPE consistently featured on the agenda of ICSP meetings, culminating in a pivotal decision during the 2009 Brisbane meeting of four international associations namely the International Society for Comparative Physical Education and Sport (ISCPES), International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW), International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA), and Federation Internationale d' Education Physique (FIEP) to initiate ongoing research into QPE. This monumental project was eventually coordinated by the international research team from ISCPES. In 2010, they formally launched a research project on QPE in schools to investigate essential components for developing QPE (Holzweg et al., 2013; D'Amico et al., 2014; Ho et al., 2016). This initiative eventually aligned with the ongoing work of UNESCO in crafting the "Quality Physical Education – Guidelines for Policy Makers" (McLennan & Thompson, 2015). The term "quality physical education" officially presented in the 2005 UNESCO documents became further articulated as "a planned, progressive, inclusive learning experience that forms part of the curriculum during the early years of primary and secondary education in the QPE guides for policymakers" in the 2015 Guidelines for Policy Makers. These guidelines also further advanced the agenda on inclusive learning to incorporate gender, disability, and minority groups and upheld the vision of building good QPE programmes through flexible curricula, good support from the environment and the community, and education for professional development.

The ISS Special Issue on QPE. Apart from acknowledging the continued commitment of the ISCPES international research team to the study and advocacy of QPE, this special issue contributes to the literature by tracing the development of a QPE measurement tool and its application to different samples of PE professionals across select Asian regions. Cognisant of similarities and differences in the interpretation and implementation of good curriculum design and innovative but effective teaching methods across nations in pursuit of QPE, the research team ventured to create an assessment tool that would facilitate systematic investigation of efforts to develop QPE. The resulting measure, the Global Index of Quality Physical Education (GIQPE), comprises 48 items across eight dimensions reflecting the key elements of QPE (*Skill Development and Bodily Awareness; Facilities and Norms in PE; Quality Teaching of PE; Plans for Feasibility and Accessibility of PE; Social Norms and Cultural Practices; Governmental Input for PE; Cognitive Skills Development; Habituated Behaviour in Physical Activities*). Before this initiative, measuring quality in PE inevitably involved entering a hypothetical and disputed realm, given the unavailability of validated instruments to assess the essential components of QPE. Hence, the development of the GIQPE represents an important step in advancing the discourse on QPE.

In the first article, *Quality Physical Education (QPE) Measurement Tool Development*, the authors describe the meticulous and drawn-out process of constructing and validating the GIQPE, which consists of several phases that span the years 2010 to 2018. Informed by the core precepts derived from the documents "Quality Physical Education from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education" (NASPE, 2004), UNESCO Report on Quality Physical Education (UNESCO, 2005), International Position Statement on Physical Education (ICSSPE, 2010), and supplemented by the additional

ideas shared in Preliminary work on International Benchmarks for Physical Education Systems (ICSSPE, 2012), the instrument incorporates an internationally developed consensus of the essential components of QPE. It thus advances the cause of QPE development by offering a reliable and valid measurement with suitable psychometric properties to facilitate continuing knowledge generation. The process of validating the tool as appropriate for examining the QPE development in a country is reported in the following six studies in this volume.

In the second article, *Understanding Quality Physical Education from the Perspective of Asian PE Professionals*, nearly 2,200 physical education professionals from 25 Asian cities across several nations and territories responded to the GIQPE measurement tool. As frontliners carrying out government initiatives to develop QPE, they are at a good vantage point to witness the alignment or misalignment between policy and implementation. As such, their contextualised responses to the GIQPE provide valuable feedback on the status of ongoing programs and activities vis-à-vis declared principles, guidelines, and strategic plans, informing local and national authorities on priority areas for QPE development across these Asian cities.

In the third article, *Voices from PE Professionals in Mindanao: Expectations Underlying Quality Physical Education Development*, the researchers recruited 558 participants from six cities of Mindanao (i.e., Southern Philippines) to assess the eight dimensions of QPE development in the area and discuss their understanding of QPE on the ground in contrast to the local policies on the development of PE. Given the longstanding socio-political challenges in Mindanao that served as context, sustainable peace against conflicts, sufficient budget infusion for PE, and efficient governance of local governments were identified as the three vital issues that require local and national attention when promoting QPE in this region of the Philippines.

In the fourth article, *Socioeconomic Factors and Perceptual Gaps in Quality Physical Education in Japan*, the researchers invited 221 PE teachers from Tokyo and Hiroshima to participate in the study and respond to the GIQPE measurement tool. In discussing the study results, the authors highlight on the limited success of QPE in Japan and attribute this to the socioeconomic barriers of a masculinity culture, gender stereotyping, and differences in economic situation between cities.

In the fifth article, *The Perception of Quality Physical Education in China*, 437 PE professionals from six administrative divisions across 30 provinces of Mainland China completed the GIQPE questionnaire. The authors examine the variations in respondent perceptions across administrative divisions, emphasise the need to improve cognitive functioning strategies, and address QPE development disparities in China through the application of management models that focus on provision of resources for efficient conversion of inputs to performance outputs (Mayhew, 1987) and intentional interventions for strategic structural change and development (OECD, 2013).

In the sixth article, *Quality Physical Education Perceptions among PE Professionals: An Exploratory Factor Analysis*, the authors administered the GIQPE to 335 PE professionals from four cities in Iran. Performing seven exploratory factor analyses (EFA) on the GIQPE dimensions, they identified the statements that best describe the quality aspects of PE, as retained across the following 7 dimensions: *Skill Development and Bodily Awareness, Facilities and Norms in PE, Quality Teaching of physical PE, Social Norms and Cultural Practice, Cognitive Skill Development, Habituated Behaviour in Physical Activities, and Governmental Input for PE*. Almost all items were verified as potential indicators of QPE except for two. Noteworthy was the emergence of gender as an essential

demographic variable, with Iranian female PE professionals perceiving the QPE items as significantly more important than their male counterparts. On all the dimensions, responses of female professionals reported higher mean values than their male counterparts. This finding implies that they attribute greater importance to QPE than the male PE professionals, alerting local and national authorities on gender-informed initiatives. While the research validates the psychometric properties of the GIQPE, the authors recommend applying the measurement tool with cultural sensitivity and advise users to exercise caution against broad generalizations.

Finally, in the seventh article, *From Decentralised to Centralised Education: Consequences for Quality Physical Education in Macao SAR*, the authors presented results from responses of 84 PE professionals, reflecting their perceptions of the developments in PE in their region. The authors situate QPE development within the historical development of decentralised to centralised education, identify a solid legislative effort to improve the quality of PE that translates into action, and propose a balanced policy implementation strategy that considers the PE professionals' various perspectives in promoting authentic development in QPE.

While acknowledging the intrinsic benefits of PE for students holistic growth, we hope the readers appreciate this Special Issue that focuses on select Asian perspectives on QPE. These papers delve into micro-investigations, providing insights into diverse challenges and potential strategies for QPE development in the region. As we examine the current publication on QPE in Asia, it becomes evident that the journey towards QPE is complex and multifaceted. Considering the diverse perspectives presented in this collection, we aim to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of QPE development and stimulate further discourse on this critical educational frontier.

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