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David Kirk on physical education and sport pedagogy: in dialogue with Steven Stolz (part 2)

Steven A. Stolz^a & David Kirk^{bc}

^a School of Education, La Trobe University, Melbourne VIC, Australia

^b School of Education, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

^c School of Human Movement Studies, University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD, Australia

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David Kirk on physical education and sport pedagogy: in dialogue with Steven Stolz (part 2)

Steven A. Stolz^{a*} and David Kirk^{b,c}

^a*School of Education, La Trobe University, Melbourne VIC, Australia;* ^b*School of Education, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK;* ^c*School of Human Movement Studies, University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD, Australia*

Forming the second of two articles, this dialogue revisits and explores the educational value of physical education as a means to stimulate further discussion about what physical education *is*, or as Kirk states within this interview, what do ‘we *want* physical education to be’. Although the theme of the second interview relates to the *educative purpose of physical education and sport pedagogy*, the dialogue concludes with some remarks about teaching as a profession and raises some serious concerns about physical education being ‘outsourced’ to external providers.

Keywords: physical education; educational value; instrumental and non-instrumental education; physical culture; profession(al); outsourcing physical education

Introduction

The nature and value of physical education within the literature (see for example Carr, 1979, 1983a, 1983b, 1997; McNamee, 1998, 2005; Parry, 1987, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c; Reid, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Stolz, 2013a, 2013b, 2014) have been an ongoing issue, particularly surrounding its so-called ‘educational value’. Indeed, the notion of ‘educational value’ presents a number of problems that are difficult to fully resolve because the claim that X is education or not education neglects the fact that the concept of education is located in a highly contested space (Carr, 2003b). Contributing to this confusion is a general misunderstanding between schooling and education that misconstrues schooling with a much wider range of purposes than a more narrow conception of education (Carr, 1995, 2010). Certainly, there is a tendency to view ‘schooling’ and ‘education’ as synonymous; however, schools exist in our society for a range of mixed reasons which may not necessarily be educational in the strict sense. In saying this, this does not diminish the fact that most parents want education in the sense of schooling to have a diverse array of aims and goals that may range from assisting young dependent adults into mature independent adults, be productive members of society, come to appreciate a broad range of culturally relevant activities – like sports and games – and so on. Likewise, we should not lose sight that any education that claims to develop the whole person necessarily involves physical education because the ‘whole person goes to school, not just the mind, but the thinking, feeling and acting facets of a person’ (Stolz, 2014, p. xxii).

*Corresponding author. Email: s.stolz@latrobe.edu.au

This dialogue revisits and explores the educational value of physical education as a means to stimulate further discussion about what physical education *is*, as Kirk states within this scholarly interview, what do ‘we *want* physical education to be’. Even though the theme of the second interview relates to the *educative purpose of physical education and sport pedagogy*, the dialogue discusses a wide range of topics that range from a suitable nomenclature of this field in higher education, teaching as a profession and concerns about physical education being ‘outsourced’ to external providers.

About the interview

About the interviewee

Professor David Kirk is currently Professor and Head of the School of Education at the University of Strathclyde (UK). His current research interests revolve around educational innovation, curriculum history and physical education and sport pedagogy. He is the founding editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* (Routledge) and editor of *Routledge Studies in Physical Education and Youth Sport*. He has held a diverse array of academic appointments, ranging from universities in England, Australia, Ireland and Belgium, and is currently Honorary Professor of Human Movement Studies at the University of Queensland (Australia). His most recent book *Physical Education Futures* (Routledge) was published in 2010. His next book, co-authored with Dr Kimberly Oliver, *Girls, Gender and Physical Education: An Activist Perspective* is due to be published by Routledge in 2015.

Purpose

The point and purpose of undertaking this scholarly interview was three-fold. These are as follows: first, to engage in a wide-ranging academic discussion with a leading international scholar in the area of physical education and sport pedagogy who is in a unique position to reflect upon 20 plus years within this discipline area; second, to both make a contribution to emerging discussions in the fields of curriculum reform and continue the ongoing discourse surrounding how best to secure the future of physical education and sport pedagogy in educational systems; and lastly, since Kirk’s latest book entitled *Physical Education Futures* has been in the public domain for a while, the first author submits it to substantial critique, and at the same time provides the interviewee a right of reply to this scrutiny in a way that normally does not happen in the course of everyday publication.

Methodology

The interviewer made contact with Kirk in July 2013 to see if he was prepared to participate in a series of interviews to investigate his views surrounding physical education and sport pedagogy. After agreeing to be interviewed for this research project, the initial interview took place just before he delivered the Fritz Duras Memorial Lecture at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE), University of Melbourne, in November 2013, with a follow-up interview a few days later at Monash University (Clayton campus). Two weeks before the scheduled

interview took place, Kirk was provided with a copy of the proposed interview questions with accompanying bibliography, so he could prepare for the semi-structured interview. The majority of the bibliography included some of Kirk's publications that related to the interview theme on *physical education-in-crisis discourse*. Each interview was digitally recorded and later transcribed into a workable manuscript for editing purposes. Once the first author took possession of the interview transcripts it quickly became apparent that there existed a number of ambiguities that required further verification, and so was forwarded onto Kirk to clarify particular statements. Upon receiving these corrections, the first author proceeded to edit the entire (initial and follow-up) interview into two separate articles for three reasons: (1) for the specific purposes of publication in suitable academic journals; (2) to align with the first interview theme of *physical education-in-crisis discourse*, and the second interview theme surrounding the *educative purpose of physical education and sport pedagogy*; and (3) what we considered to be of interest to the readership of the journal *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport & Physical Education*. When a final draft of each article was available it was submitted to the editor for double blind review. A number of minor amendments resulted and have since provided greater clarity on a number of concepts covered. Like its predecessor, this article aims to recapture – as much as possible – the natural dialogue that occurred between two people in a form that it is both engaging to the reader and generates further discussion and research in this area.

The interview

Steven Stolz (SS): Over the years I've reflected upon physical education within educational institutions and one thing that I find difficult to resolve fully in any cogent way is the so-called educational intent of physical education, particularly some of its practices. If physical education is truly physical education-as-sport-techniques (see for example Kirk, 2010), then what is the educational value of say, learning a volleyball serve for example?

David Kirk (DK): I think the simple answer is – there is no educative value of a volleyball serve in and of itself. It's got to be located in the game of volleyball and volleyball has to be understood as a practice within particular sporting cultures and that's what makes it meaningful – that's where the educational value comes from.

SS: Carr (1979, 1983a, 1983b, 1997), in some of his early work, would say the educational value would come through the practical knowledge that is learned from engaging within say, volleyball – and then I think he also talks about the cultural transmission through those practices – and that is just as important as say, numeracy and literacy.

DK: Sure – that's almost the same thing as asking what is the educational value of being able to do long division – well, in and of itself there isn't any – if it doesn't hold any meaning for the learner – they don't know how to use it outside the context of the mathematics lesson, there is no educational value. Somebody might argue that moving your limb through a particular movement has got intrinsic value – well it's got intrinsic value maybe in terms of neuro-muscular pathways and movement forms and flexibility and strength and so on – but that's not educational value. The

educational value comes from something that becomes personally significant within a cultural context.

SS: I probably should rephrase that – I don't lay awake at night worrying about it because I think I've successfully resolved some of that through my own research (see for example Stolz, 2014) – but I was interested in how you would respond to that as opposed to what I thought about it. If I could just challenge you on one point – if I take personal meaning from something – let's take a real extreme example – let's say I find personal meaning in hurting someone – and I'm really sadistic – does that then make that educational?

DK: P. S. Wilson in the 1970s and his book *Interest and Discipline in Education* (Wilson 1971) – his example was – let's say I enjoy sticking pins into cats – I'm very good at it, I'm very interested in it and I've become quite expert in torturing cats – well no – because then we take a position on these issues where we say there's a moral dimension to this – and this comes to the issue about cultural transmission and what we're interested in, in transmission, is things we find valuable as part of the heritage of our society. You can't dodge those sorts of judgements; if you live in a sadistic society where it's valued then your torture techniques might be celebrated. If you live in a warrior culture, where becoming a killing machine *is* actually valued, well then nobody is going to object in that context if you're actually very good at causing pain and suffering to your enemy or whatever. Thankfully that's not the culture we live in – we don't need to have any moral dilemma about justifying the example you gave because immediately we'd say we'd never condone that. So maybe, then you could find some other examples – for example, when does the pursuit of sporting excellence, which we condone because we are a society that thinks that becoming a high-performance sports person is actually a very good thing, when do we draw the line about saying – but using performance-enhancing drugs isn't acceptable. Or, when do we draw the line about saying employing a coach to help you with your training, isn't acceptable – as in the case of Harold Abrahams, Chariots of Fire in the 1920s.

SS: For instance some people have better access to equipment and coaches, whereas some people from low SES (socio-economic status) areas don't necessarily have the same level of access to equipment and coaches.

DK: So there you've got moral dilemmas that are much more difficult to resolve. In an ideal world, if you happen to value social justice then you would say that we would prefer a situation where everybody had equal access to equipment and coaches so that we don't get situations where people can't compete or participate simply because they weren't born into the right social class grouping or family and so on. It's interesting, I was reading in the English newspaper, *The Guardian*, yesterday – and Boris Johnson, currently Mayor of London, who is an old Etonian, Bullingdon Club and so on – effectively saying we need greed in society because it's what motivates people, keeping up with the Joneses and envy, it's what keeps the economic cogs turning – so we need grammar schools and elitism to train the very best minds – completely ignoring all the evidence that the very best minds are the people who come from this social class group because they have all these privileges right from birth – and he's saying well we need scholarships for kids who are very

able from other social class groups – well, no, no, no, no – you’re missing the point completely.

SS: Yes – and in a sense this is what Carr wrote about because there’s a lot of things that are included in the school curriculum that are fine for the school but educationally they would probably not be included as something that would be educative. I don’t know if you’re familiar with some of David Carr’s earlier work, particularly his response to Andrew Reid (Carr, 1997). What are your thoughts on that?

DK: Well, I would take a different approach to this – rather than trying to debate the issues around practical knowledge and so on – it can only take us so far in resolving some of these issues – but there are more socio-historical frames of reference that you can take that show you that some of the stuff that was simply about moving your body in particular ways, the drilling and exercising – the educational benefit was that people would obey commands, that they would move in particular ways when they were told to – and it was not very far from the surface at all. And what we’re about here is the social regulation of bodies and therefore the social regulation of behaviour. Forget about the stuff that we would call education.

SS: Like R. S. Peters’ (1966) understanding of a traditional-liberal account of education – it’s a long way away from that isn’t it?

DK: Absolutely, in some respects, the notion of the ‘volleyball serve’ could be viewed as a continuity from the past – a focus on technique – the value in seeing technique as something valuable in itself, but in a completely different context which means that the meaning of the movement is no longer about social regulation of the body as such. But I’ve made this argument in *Schooling Bodies* (Kirk, 1998) in the last chapter where I use Foucault’s notions about social regulation, in terms of drilling and exercising, and the shift away from these ‘heavy, ponderous and meticulous’ forms of corporeal power towards a much more subtle form of control of the body, the internalisation of the locus of control and so on. You can still see game play in some respects as a form of social regulation because what happens *on* the playing field is often accepted to a point, but if I was to step outside those lines, I’d be done for assault. And one of the things that people get quite misled about with competitive games is that they miss the point that the 30 players on the field have all agreed to play by a particular set of rules. Jim Parry has written about this, and Bill Morgan too.

SS: Anything from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s from the philosophy of sport literature would have a fair bit say on this topic.

DK: Because they focus on fair play. I think that analytical philosophy helps you to clarify your thinking and to be clear about and to identify when an argument is actually.

SS: Fallacious.

DK: Yes, fallacious. But if you really want to understand some of the practical issues that come up in physical education, I really think social epistemology is the tack to take. I was reading a thing this morning – Doug Booth has written about different

approaches to history – and he was talking about reconstructionist, constructionist and deconstructionist – and I was thinking, where would I sit in all of that?

SS: And where would you?

DK: Well, I mean – the reconstructionists are the people who write history *as if* it is fact – so you capture the truth of what happens.

SS: Like a reporter – you’re just reporting it.

DK: You’re a neutral reporter and one version therefore is fact and that’s it. The constructionist still has some ‘faith’ that the data, the evidence, means something and can be used to make a particular case for something; understands also that there are different ‘spins’ you can put on this – you can look at anyone’s behaviour in different sorts of ways – so that’s the social constructionist – and then the deconstructionist is somebody who comes from the perspective there are multiple interpretations, fragments of information and so on, and – you can debate whether this is actually admissible evidence or not.

SS: It’s quite a slippery slide that last one because then you start getting into multiple realities and talk about what’s consciousness, what’s real and not real and ending up on a completely different path.

DK: I guess – as I’ve gone further into my career and as I was saying this morning – if we don’t get consensus on some things we’re actually wasting our time. So one of the things that has pre-occupied me recently is the fact that we still will not, in the UK, come to terms with the use of *kinesiology* as a way of talking about the field in higher education.

SS: Would you prefer that term?

DK: Well reluctantly now, yes I would – the reason being, the North Americans, after 30 years of debate, have finally reached a consensus – they have finally agreed to call the field Kinesiology and departments are called Kinesiology, the National Academy is called Kinesiology – I would prefer Physical Cultural Studies, following Alan Ingham (see for example Ingham, 1997). But I’m sorry, the boat has sailed, and I’m still trying to persuade my colleagues there is no value in us having 40 different names for the field; no value whatsoever.

SS: It just adds to that confusion. For instance, to an outsider looking in they often comment on all the different names used for the field. So you’re right, there’s an appearance that there’s a lack of consensus, from the outside, and from an inside perspective there is an element of – why can’t we even get consensus on what we’re called?

DK: So on one level, I guess what I would be saying is – the sorts of interpretations we might make from history if we’re using a social-epistemological approach – I think some degree of consensus is absolutely crucial – but I reserve the right to be critical when things are clearly not working, when the consensus is wrong, when it’s an orthodoxy, when it becomes institutionalised, when it becomes hegemonic – ‘women are inferior’ – we had a consensus on that – but we want to say – no hang on a second – that is actually not appropriate.

SS: Aren't you concerned that the use of the term 'kinesiology' with its strong scientific underpinnings may exert a form of cultural hegemony in the debate?

DK: Yes – I think that's been one of the big fears – and where does pedagogy sit in that? If you look at the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) – it is physiology, biomechanics.

SS: Sport psychology.

DK: Sport psychology is in there, sociology's in there, but no pedagogy – so yes, that is a real danger.

SS: I couldn't see them having a seat at the table necessarily because those people who already have seats at the table would never anticipate including them.

DK: Yes, and philosophy and history would also be excluded and the humanities generally would be in a bit of a difficult situation.

SS: So in a way we have an automatic demarcation of knowledge don't we? From an epistemological perspective we privilege certain things over others, particularly bodies of knowledge.

DK: And the difficulty comes when we get people who become leaders in a particular field who refuse to accept this – so they've reached a consensus and the consensus is humanities belong somewhere else and not in kinesiology – so clearly there are dangers with all of that. So I think that while you can say consensus is crucially important, we need to have some level of agreement about how we're interpreting Fritz Duras, how we're interpreting particular concepts and constructs and curricula, and at the same time we must have that willingness to listen to critical voices.

SS: I would agree that there needs to be consensus, but how do you see that this could possibly be brought about – other than advocacy?

DK: Well it depends on the specific case – if we're talking about the Australian Curriculum, as we were this morning, then I think that the professional learning stuff is absolutely crucially important. You could also have structures in place and I think the Queensland Senior Physical Education model is a good one – and it's not the *only* way to do these sorts of things, but what it does is put teachers in a position where they are making peer judgements about curricula.

SS: I'm still interested in your thoughts about educational value. In a sense, my original question is problematic because as soon as you start talking about the 'value' of something you've lost the point, and you automatically start to 'privilege' certain things over another and that's one of the problems I've always had, particularly with R. S. Peters – when he starts talking about worthwhile activities – straight-away he's privileging the intrinsic over extrinsic, he's demarcating bodies of knowledge in an instrumental type of way – he has an understanding of education which is non-instrumental – and in a way, I understand the context of where that came from and I can understand that when people start talking about 'education' they have a particular focus on it being instrumental, hence the emphasis on numeracy and literacy, *because* school is just one pathway for you to enter your

vocation, whatever that may be – and that’s another reason why I sometimes struggle with some of the arguments put forward surrounding the educational value of physical education because if I don’t end up becoming a professional athlete or if I’m not a sports administrator, and I don’t work in the sports domain anymore, then those skills that I’ve learned – people could quite easily say, I’m not going to use those skills, I don’t want those skills – so what’s the point of physical education? So the two notions of education as instrumental – that leads to something vocational – that you ‘become’ something and education has helped you ‘get’ there, and, the other one as non-instrumental – if you like a version of R. S. Peters’ transcendental account of education with a strong cognitive focus on the development of the intellect amongst other things can transform someone into becoming a certain sort of person – whether that’s a teacher or an academic, or something like that (see for example, Stolz, 2015). To me, I’ve always seen a ‘disconnect’ between what we’re about in physical education and what I see as ‘fundamental drivers’ in education. So what are your thoughts on this, particularly the educational value of physical education?

DK: The problem or difficulty with ‘instrumental’ arguments such as playing games and sports as a good form of moral education is that someone comes along and says – no actually, you don’t need to play games and sport; you’d be much better putting people through forms of political debate, learning English or whatever – and that’s your difficulty, there’s always a danger that somebody’s going to come along and say there are actually better ways to do moral education than what you’re suggesting – so if you hang your hat entirely on the instrumental, you’re in trouble. Having said that, I don’t see any problem with people saying – this is a good way to learn some aspects of fair play and good behaviour and being a good loser and being a good winner and so on. It’s a good way to do it; it’s not the only way to do it. So that’s your instrumental arguments – and I don’t see that there’s a problem with saying that’s somehow ‘non-educational’ or of little educational value.

SS: There is also the notion that everything can’t be educational – it’s also acknowledgement in that – not everything that you do within a school is going to be educational.

DK: No because schooling is a process of social regulation and we need socially regulated people if they’re going to fit into society. I mean this is a dilemma that primary school teachers in the UK face every day – we need social regulation; we can’t do without it; people have to be able to learn to behave in social contexts – *schooling* is an important part of the process that goes on in schools – and to a large extent it’s a major justification for having schools in the form they are – and maybe we shouldn’t get so hung up on the thing that schools have got to be educational.

SS: Certainly, not all the time – and so I would agree with that. Indeed, just think about the logic behind that. Can you be learning all the time? Of course not!

DK: And then take primary, secondary and tertiary education – which is the more ‘educational’? – well you might want to argue that you do get into higher forms of learning when you get into higher education – so one of the things that you do when you train to be a philosopher – you’re trained to think in particular ways – at one level, yes, you are empowered because you can now do things that other people

cannot do – I remember going along to – when my wife was pregnant and we did the ultrasound – and the radiologist said – oh you can see the nose and the ear – and I’m looking at this damn screen and I can’t see anything – but he’s trained to see that; he’s trained to look – but, what you also do at the same time is you simultaneously *delimit* other ways of thinking about what you’re seeing – and the analogies are often made to music – I don’t know if it was Menuhin or somebody else. I think it was Grappelli. He said he needed the classical education first, the formal ability to play the violin technically at a very high level, before he could learn to play jazz – that was his argument. Now you might dispute that but he said he needed *technique before he could then improvise* and do different sorts of things. But then we see jazz guitarists who have never had any formal training and they play wonderful jazz music. So – it’s interesting – and the same arguments come back to games playing – and Alan Launder – *Play Practice* (Launder, 2001) is his book. In a conversation with him I was saying drills are a waste of time in rugby – and he said – well, actually, for beginners you’re right. The best people to drill in rugby are experienced players. And I responded by asking: Why is that? He said, because they have already learned all the cues that help them to drill a particular form of behaviour as they understand the context already. Don’t use them with beginners because they don’t have the contextual information and they will never learn the contextual information through the drill. The other thing he told me was guys who play high-level professional soccer – I mean some can pass the ball 60 or 70 metres with pinpoint accuracy. The tactical possibilities that are open to them are *not* open to kids who can barely pass the ball 5 or 10 metres accurately.

SS: Very interesting. Carr in particular talks about instrumental and non-instrumental forms of education and really R. S. Peters’ understanding of the transcendental elements of education are non-instrumental – that I enjoy the capacity of reading because I engage with new ideas, and it broadens my mind and I make new connections with different ideas – and then there’s the instrumental part – where I will learn skills so that I can then become a plumber, builder and so on, for example.

DK: I was actually putting a kind of a different spin on my earlier example. I believe that there are some things that you might do – and the ability to read is an interesting one – because that’s a skill that you have to learn and it can open up the world because of literature. I would argue that that’s mostly not what we mean and not what Peters meant when he talked about an education that involved philosophy and science – because what those disciplines do is to train you to think in particular sorts of ways – and that simultaneously opens up, empowers you in certain ways but at the same time, and here’s the irony, it delimits your ability to think *beyond* because it takes an exceptional individual who has been trained to think in a particular way. So here’s the contradiction in Peters’ argument – his transcendental argument was that when you study these disciplines you are actually acting as a rational person – it’s one and the same thing to say that when you study philosophy that you are developing the rational mind – it’s a circular, transcendental argument.

SS: Philosophy in itself has become a highly specialised field where it has its own language, and so you have to be immersed and inculcated into it to fully understand the arguments sometimes because the arguments can be quite technical. But you’re

right, you have to be inculcated within that tradition – but to think outside of that is even harder – and there are so few individuals in the world who can do that.

DK: Yes – I’ve just been reading Richard Rorty’s (1999) book *Philosophy and Social Hope* – and to be able to carry through an argument in the way that he does is actually really very interesting – I don’t think like that; I haven’t been trained to think like that – but of course it also sets some limits on what he is able to do. He can use this very powerful machine that he’s got but he can’t do some other things, and so I think that’s a point that’s often missed around this whole instrumental versus non-instrumental education.

SS: As you know, instrumental and non-instrumental forms of education found in the literature around the 1970s and 1980s came to be challenged through the post-modernism and post-structuralism movements in education. Indeed, this movement surrounding what it means to *know* something from the 1990s onwards has really given scope for physical education to have a place at the table because it’s not about development just in the cognitive domain to the exclusion of everything else.

DK: Well, Rorty’s answer to exactly that question – ‘what does it mean to know something?’ – is *what we agree to be so* – that’s the pragmatist answer – and I think that is really interesting because that is about consensus building, *but* it is also open to manipulation.

SS: Very much so because if you have someone who has the power of rhetoric you can easily shift that.

DK: And maybe it’s not just about rhetoric – *it’s the ability to silence some people and allow other people to speak* – I think we should recognise this – but nevertheless, he says there’s nothing that is a truth beyond the commonplace of – you know, I put my hand on this (table) and it doesn’t go through, therefore it’s *there*. For the philosopher, these are not the important or interesting questions – they maybe for a scientist or a manufacturer of tables.

SS: We were talking about practices before (see Part 1 of interview dialogue in the previous edition of this Journal) – and I was talking about ‘internal goods’ – part of the confusion is around what the goods *are* in physical education. We can’t get consensus and that’s interesting in itself because, from that perspective, I would have to agree because a lot of the confusion surrounds what those goods are. You know Mike McNamee (1998, 2005) talks about physical education taking the form of ‘mixed goods’ – he takes a very Platonic point of view on that, but it can be anything we want it to be.

DK: Kathy Amour asks this same question: Who does physical education outside school? Do you know anybody who practices physical education as a leisure pursuit?

SS: The skills that I learned within physical education – practical skills if you like – if I’m not a ‘weekend warrior’ when am I ever going to use those skills?

DK: So when you come round to starting to understand that the way we practice physical education at this point in time is a ‘situated practice’ and it’s actually situated in the school, and it makes no sense beyond the context of the school, or

very little sense. So we need different kinds of practices in physical education that *do* connect into life beyond the school. This is where this concept of valuing the physically active life becomes really, really interesting because it gives you freedom to do things we don't do currently; to foreground things that we don't foreground currently; it gives you licence to say that 45-minute periods three times a week is not the way to do physical education – we can't do it because we're trying to help kids to learn to value the 'physically active life' and so it means that we're going to have to take them into contexts where sometimes they need 90 minutes, sometimes they need half a day, sometimes they can do it in 20 minutes. It gives you licence to begin to argue for different ways of organising learning experiences – and I think that is what we're crippled by at this point in time – and this is one of the things I started to understand when I came across the situated learning literature – and I'd been looking at the historical context of the continuities and discontinuities from the past – what we've got is a situated practice that only makes sense in schools – and we wouldn't do any of that in another context – that's why I always laugh when I go to the rugby club and I'm watching kids being coached and they're doing drills because that's what they learned in the school context and it's *so* inappropriate in the club context..

SS: The notion of a 'physically active life' has some potential because it's broad enough that you can build things within it – and so I can definitely see where you are going with that, but my concern revolves around what it actually means. I'm also concerned that there is a form of replication of the socially constructed body in terms of the culture which, at different points of time, has resulted in different understandings of what that might look like, so who's to say it won't be a replication of sorts?

DK: Take Sport Education as an example. I've argued that Sport Education is an educationally valuable experience for kids because sport is a hugely important set of physical cultural practices, and it is important from the point of view of cultural transmission, valuing our heritage and so on – for kids to experience – to get an authentic experience of what it means to play sport, be part of a team, to play for a season and so on. Dawn Penney has argued that sport isn't practised like that particularly if you go the local sports club. Yes, they do seasons but they haven't got kids in roles; they haven't got kids making decisions, like in a sports council about the rules of the game or whatever – and so, I accept that criticism – that what you're talking about in Sport Education in terms of the Siedentop's (1994) model, is a pretty selective value judgement on those aspects of sport as a cultural practice that you want kids to experience. So the emphasis is on fair play; the emphasis is on a particular notion of sport. And yes, it may not resonate with kids' experiences of sport when they see some spoilt soccer player spitting in the face of the referee, or whatever. So, I accept that inevitably you're going to have some level of disjunction between the whole of physical culture and the hugely amorphous ways in which sport is practised and the particular selective take you've got on that practice in a school context. So health-based physical education – where you're explicitly valuing the physically active life, or the healthy lifestyle to take a broader take on it, as Dawn Penney suggested this morning, – even then there would be controversy about how we should stay healthy – what we should be eating or not eating, the best ways to exercise and so on.

SS: How do you reconcile the fact that the BMI (body mass index) calculator is a blunt instrument that tells many people that they are obese when they are in fact quite healthy? Unfortunately, this leads to the problem where people perceive that there must be something wrong with them.

DK: But then as Dawn Penney is pointing out, you know there are advances in science around gene profiling – epigenetics is the next big thing around how the environment impacts on shutting down some genes and activating other genes. If science can manipulate that for particular individuals all of a sudden we're into a completely different context.

SS: It worries me ethically.

DK: Absolutely, but that's what we're facing, in the future, with that and digital technology. I was talking to Geoff Emmel earlier and he was at a session where someone was lying on the floor and they had contact lenses in and they are given the sensation of sky-diving. And these technologies are already here – and I keep saying to my students, imagine you've got a little processing chip that they put under your skin behind your ear – and it gives you a visual display about what exercises you should be doing at any particular point in time, and it gives you a readout of your blood pressure amongst other bio-data. So, I just think that whole question of forms of school knowledge, forms of physical culture, is a constant in any curriculum development process and it's something we actually need to be keeping abreast of all the time and looking carefully at (see for example Kirk, 1999, 2010). In terms of cultural relevance, we've got to actually be able to help kids to ask questions about cultural transmission and reproduction. If they are going to be consumers of sport as a product, can they make discerning judgements about getting value for money? If we're going to have industries that send out messages that are oppressive to girls about body shape and size, can we equip girls with the skills to deconstruct those messages, to understand how the exaggerated 'Barbie Doll' is not humanly possible?

SS: I think it's important that there are discussions about what physical education is. I see these debates as vital because it shows that our tradition is alive and healthy, but I always ask the question: *Are* we alive and healthy? I think it's important that we have discussions about what physical education *is*, but are the discussions we're having showing that we're vital and healthy and in good shape as a tradition?

DK: And do they make any difference to what we do in practice? I actually think the question should be different. It's not what *is* physical education? – it's what do we *want* physical education to be? – I think that's the question.

SS: What do you consider to be good practice in physical education? Just like doctors and nurses have ongoing discussions about what it means to be a good practitioner like in any profession, and I consider teachers to be within a profession.

DK: Actually, I was going to question you on your use of that term – profession – specifically in relation to physical education – it's a phrase I don't use and part of my reason for doing that is to actually try to get a break from – I think it was from a specific time in history when people talked about physical education as a profession.

SS: I use it deliberately because I want teachers to be put it in the same class as doctors, nurses, lawyers and so on. In a sense, part of doing a teaching degree, such as a Bachelor of Education or a Master of Teaching, is about entering into a profession that requires the teacher coming to know a particular body of knowledge which they intend to teach. I do realise that some see teaching as a vocation or calling, however, I want teachers to be seen as a profession on par with doctors, lawyers and so on.

DK: But I think the interesting thing is – and this is trying to situate the use of the term – I hear people talk about the medical profession, but I don't know whether they would use that term to refer to themselves so much. I think where the term started to be used widely – when you look at this historically – was at that time of the emergence of the shift from diplomas to degrees, the thing about being taken seriously

SS: My use is definitely intentional. David Carr's (2003a) book entitled *Making Sense of Education* has an excellent chapter – I think it is Chapter 3 – where he discusses whether teaching is a profession. His discussion outlines arguments for and against teaching being a profession. In a sense, I tend to agree with Carr that if we want to be seen as professionals we have to start using the terminology, and second, I think teachers can justify the use of the term 'professional' because of the level of qualifications obtained by some teachers – bachelor degrees or post-doc qualifications – and so there are elements where if we wanted to make those arguments we could rightly do so. Of course, I'm cognisant that some see teaching as a vocation or even a calling, but this is debate for another day.

DK: I think that when you use the term in relation to teachers as a whole and particularly when teachers are going through a process that Doune Macdonald (see for example Macdonald, 1995, 1999; Macdonald & Tinning, 1995) calls 'proletarianization', I can see that there's an argument for using the term. I just find it curious that people still use it in relation to physical education specifically. I hear coaches using the term 'coaching profession' and I think to myself, if you really *were* a profession, you wouldn't have to be telling people that you were, but that's more in the physical education context. In the wider context of teaching, there are serious issues there with the professional status of teachers actually under threat.

SS: I would agree that it's under threat on so many different levels.

In Australia, for example, the Federal Minister for Education wants to improve the quality of teacher education by attracting the best and brightest as a means to improve student outcomes, particularly on the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) world rankings. It is not that I have problem with improving the quality of teacher education or even teaching, but to be honest, I'm not too sure how he's going to do this at this particular point in time because he hasn't fully revealed all his cards yet. I'm also quite sceptical about the use of PISA as means of demonstrating teacher quality. I could keep going. At the moment, there is talk about raising the ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank) score for teaching courses or even an entrance type exam. Of course this is all talk, whether that actually comes about, I don't know.

I also think there are a lot of direct and indirect threats facing physical education. For instance, I see a lot of physical education programme being 'outsourced' within

schools, particularly in the primary sector. AFL (Australian Football League) or Cricket Victoria will come in and run the programmes for you, basically for free. As a result, if you really wanted to, you could ‘outsource’ your whole programme to the point that the physical education teacher basically becomes a coordinator or a sports administrator. This is a trend that really concerns me. In a way I don’t blame the different sporting bodies because they’re just trying to get their ‘brand or product’ imprinted on kids’ minds from a young age, and they don’t care if you play or not. If you play, that’s great, but if you don’t, well they’ve got you as a spectator, you’ll buy their products, you’ll become members of different teams and so on. The commodification of sport in physical education is a real concern. I think there is a recently published paper in your journal (*Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*) that addresses this topic by Doune Macdonald (see for example Williams, Hay, & Macdonald, 2011).

DK: I think she wrote this with one of her PhD students. We’ve actually just got an ARC (Australian Research Council) grant to do a study on this internationally, the UK, Hong Kong, Australia, Brazil and the USA on the whole issue of outsourcing, skills and resources.

SS: It’s a trend that really concerns me.

DK: Some of the problems range from: Do you know what you’re buying? Is the quality any good? Are these people qualified to do this? Can it work? Do you have a coherent programme where everybody’s singing from the same hymn sheet?

SS: These are all very valid, but to me I would say that ‘outsourcing’ is devoid of *all* educational intent because that’s not their intent at all and so that’s what worries me the most. At least with physical education programmes – although it’s debatable what the *educative purpose of physical education* may be – at least the educational intention is there and that’s a foundation for a lot of the things that physical education teachers claim to do.

DK: Well, as you say, that’s debatable, but I think this is the real pressing danger at this point in time, particularly if you can buy in the services a lot cheaper than what it takes to pay a physical education specialist. So it begs the question: Why would you pay a physical education specialist?

SS: Especially if they can bring in the equipment as well.

DK: And they can do what seems to be a better job. So I don’t think there’s any room for complacency at all.

SS: Potentially, we’ll end up with a possible future, where you just have one sports coordinator or administrator to coordinate the whole physical education programme who essentially does no teaching.

DK: If you’re lucky! That’s what Doune Macdonald said this morning – not in so many words but she was saying, if you’re a health and physical education curriculum leader, you might not actually teach some of this stuff, but you’re the person who’ll be bringing in or using the services of other teachers in the school.

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Notes on contributors

Steven A. Stolz, PhD, is an early career researcher and lecturer in education from La Trobe University, Australia. He is the past recipient of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia (PESA) doctoral scholarship in 2011, the Faculty of Education emerging researcher award in 2013, and the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) early career researcher award in 2015. Just recently he accepted an invitation to be a visiting scholar at the University of Stirling (UK) in 2014. He has a diverse array of interests; however, at the moment his current research interests mainly revolve around the application of philosophical ideas in education.

David Kirk is currently Professor and Head of the School of Education at the University of Strathclyde. He is an educational researcher with teaching and research interests in educational innovation, curriculum history and physical education and sport pedagogy. David is founding editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* (Routledge) and editor of *Routledge Studies in Physical Education and Youth Sport*. His most recent book, co-authored with Dr Kimberly Oliver, *Girls, Gender and Physical Education: An Activist Perspective*, is published by Routledge in 2015.

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