

The future of health, wellbeing and physical education: optimising children's health through local and global community partnerships

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BOOK REVIEWS

The future of health, wellbeing and physical education: optimising children's health through local and global community partnerships, by Timothy Lynch, Springer, International Publishing AG Switzerland 2016, 174 pp., £45 (hardback), ISBN 978-3-319-31666-6

Timothy Lynch's work brings to the forefront the importance of partnership work for teacher education research and practice, and more specifically for the future of health, wellbeing and physical education. Drawing on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO 2015) and the International Civil Society Centre's building blocks for successful partnerships (2014), Lynch begins his narrative by positioning the thesis within the global, national and local contexts. This early contextualisation is an important decision by Lynch, as it signposts the relevance of the work beyond the context of the study, and opens the reader's mind up to the possibilities and opportunities for partnership that might lie within their own diverse contexts. It also highlights the transferability of the adopted approach into different contexts whilst simultaneously foregrounding partnership work in a local, national and global context.

The first two chapters of the text further highlight the importance of context in partnership work, by defining the context of partnership through location, stakeholder and time. The inclusion of time is an important consideration and encourages the reader to consider a number of significant factors that might otherwise be overlooked in embarking on partnership work. For example, the political climate at a specific moment and the impact of such climate on education, society and people is an important consideration (26), specifically in relation to ensuring the provision of resource for such work. Lynch highlights the entanglement of time and context, and entices the reader to think beyond the local context and into historical developments in both research and policy. He also highlights the relevance of the current political climate and political directions, and the importance of considering such issues when embarking on partnership work.

As the narrative unfolds, Lynch draws on the International Civil Society Centre's building blocks (2014) for successful partnerships, and the metaphor of 'a seed' to explain and unpack the incremental development of a suite of collaborative partnerships that were forged through one university setting (the Best Start Collaboration). Each element of the Best Start Collaboration that is presented in the book was centred around developing the health, wellbeing and physical education of children in the local community, whilst simultaneously enhancing the knowledge, skills and expertise of pre-service teachers (undergraduate university students) and adult community members. The community in which the collaboration was enacted was a low socio-economic area in regional Victoria, Australia, and the Best Start Collaboration involved a variety of stakeholders within this community coming together to support the health, wellbeing and physical education of local children.

It is important to note that, due to the low socio-economic status of families within the community, many of the local children might not have had access to opportunities for physical education pre-partnership. The partnerships that emerged through the Best Start Collaboration were explicitly focused on this notion and enhancing the physical education and health and wellbeing of local children, for instance *swimming and water safety*; *sports sessions* and *tennis coaching* (13).

As the collaboration grew and unfolded in practice, it became evident that local children were not the only beneficiaries of the partnership approach. Throughout the text, Lynch highlights the

importance of developing the health, wellbeing and physical education knowledge of pre-service teachers and adults within local communities, including the affordances for such learning that the partnership space offers. Such affordance highlighted by Lynch includes 'assisting in teacher confidence and competence, and subsequently promoting sustainability of children's health' (14), and also promoting an awareness 'of the essential role that "physical" and holistic health and wellbeing plays in the development of the child' within the wider community (154). Throughout the text, Lynch emphasises the opportunities that emerged for different stakeholders to foster community change, and to enhance the health, wellbeing and physical education of children through the multi-stakeholder partnership.

The notion of community change and enhancement is an important concept within the text, as it highlights the significance of holistic health, physical education and wellbeing for people and communities. It once again prompts the reader to view a local collaboration through the global lens and provides important insight into notions of sustainability and how sustainable practices around health, wellbeing and physical education might be developed and nurtured in contexts beyond the local. This affords the reader a mindfulness of a more-holistic embodiment of the importance of the work for the future global context – it provides a long-term narrative (a bigger picture).

As the narrative continues, Lynch walks the reader through the different phases of partnership work, including the different strategies that are drawn upon during each phase to develop and grow stakeholder relationships. Some of the strategies highlighted by Lynch include strategies to maintain the collaboration over time (such as optimising the resources available within the local community) (14), and strategies to overcome obstacles (such as the provision of a shared mission and different strategies to build a prolonged and sustained motivation between the different stakeholders) (140). Other concepts highlighted are centred around the significance of social relationships in nurturing physical education, health and wellbeing, including how they might emerge and be navigated in partnership work (90, 148).

The key tenet of the partnerships that are outlined in the text is to promote quality learning experiences in physical education, and as a result promote long-term health and wellbeing for children and adults (158). Lynch highlights how this can be achieved in practice by interweaving the journey threads of each of the partnership stakeholders. This interweaving affords an opportunity for the reader to think about partnership work from different perspectives, and highlights the various considerations that might need to be contemplated when embarking on such work. Again, it shifts thinking towards sustainability, and a focus on long-term achievements in a global context. The insight into partnership work that is afforded through the narrative provides a valuable contribution to the field of teacher education and to those planning on embarking on partnership work. The explicit focus on the local, national and global contexts that is maintained throughout the text ensures that such contributions are relevant to a diversity of people and context. In a world that is quickly growing in complexity, it makes a powerful contribution.

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