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Learning to Teach Physical Education.

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Learning to teach physical education by Richard Tinning, David Kirk and John Evans, 1993, Prentice Hall, 180 pages (soft cover) \$27.95.

During the 1990's academics, researchers, policy makers, teachers, and sport administrators have been talking up a crisis in physical education. With the Senate Inquiry into Physical and Sport Education, State Education Department reviews of physical education in WA and Victoria and the advent of the national curriculum physical education has been foregrounded in a large number of educational settings. Tinning, Kirk and Evans have been able to capture the spirit of this crisis in their new book 'Learning to teach physical education'.

In contrast to many other physical education textbooks designed for the teaching of PE in primary schools 'Learning to teach physical education' scratches beneath the surface of current school practices. In almost all aspects the book challenges the current orthodoxy of Daily PE and then successfully goes beyond this challenge to alert readers to the problematic nature of physical education and the often forgotten issues that underlie the teaching of a vital part of the primary school curriculum. The book aims to empower teachers to "approach the subject pragmatically and flexibly and to look beyond existing practices to alternatives which may fall outside current aims and purposes" (p.46).

The orientation of the book is exemplified by the following quote in the section on the educational purposes of physical education.

...what makes human movement different from other kinds of movement is reflective consciousness, our ability as human beings to understand ourselves in relation to other people and things in the world, and to use this understanding to generate new knowledge and thus exert some degree of control over our individual and collective lives. (p.57).

Physical education in primary and secondary schools and in teacher education programs should challenge themselves to develop both an understanding of and an implementation strategy to support such a view of physical education. Incorporating the messages in 'Learning to teach physical education can facilitate this necessary process incorporating the messages in 'Learning to teach physical education'.

The 11 chapter book embraces much of the previously published work of the three authors who have been at the cutting edge of physical education inquiry in the last decade. It is very

pleasing that research and scholarship has driven this publication.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 provide an historical and contemporary context for the perceived status, scope and purpose of physical education in primary schools. Chapters 4 and 5 raise the 'prickly' issues related to the teaching of fitness education and sport in physical education. Many teachers and some teacher educators will gain little comfort from these chapters. Nevertheless the messages need to be heard.

Chapters 6 through 10 outline the issues of implementing quality PE lessons and programs. There is no cookbook approach offered and many in physical education will be chastened by the critique of ALT-PE. The authors have perhaps over emphasised the limitations of ALT-PE given that researchers in this area have communicated both the strengths and weaknesses of ALT-PE as a research tool and how the data needs to be triangulated with other sources of data, eg. teacher's intentions, student perceptions of effective teaching. I believe the pupil centred nature of ALT-PE is worth pursuing.

Chapter 9 focuses on evaluation practices which somewhat paradoxically relied on the reporting of fitness, skills and sporting behaviour, to show an example of 'good' evaluation practice. It is a pity that national curriculum terminology and recently released student outcome statements for the health and physical education learning area could not have been incorporated in this chapter. Books can never be completely up-to-date. The national profile promotes evaluation across strands and would have complimented the messages in this chapter very nicely.

Chapter 10 is a particular pleasing addition to such a book. The Chapter focuses on learning to teach on teaching practice and ongoing professional development issues. The emphasis on the reflective teacher and the possibilities of action research to support this process is a most pleasing aspect of the book.

Learning to teach physical education is presented in a readable manner with something of interest for all physical educators, even those who just want to flick through the pages (the graphics are fun). The book should be read by all teacher educators, involved in the preparation of primary and secondary school teachers, even our colleagues in mainstream education would see how PE has changed or can be changed. The dilemma that I and others are facing is whether this is the best book for pre-service teachers who have a one-off unit in

health and PE in their undergraduate preparation. It grapples with some issues that 18 and 19 year old students are very unprepared to tackle. But the book is clearly the best currently available in the field, it is based on research in Australian schools. As many of the teacher educators, who may choose to use the book, will find it difficult to embrace they may just be the best people to share the content with student teachers.

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