
SUMMARIZATION OF BEST PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL LITERACY WITHIN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

1. Physical literacy research, practice and policy in Europe

An international study (Carl et al., 2023) comprehensively assessed and compared the implementation of physical literacy in research, policy and practice across the European continent and found a heterogeneous physical literacy situation in Europe. The implementation state was strongly linked to conceptual discussion (e.g., existence of competing approaches), linguistic issues (e.g., translations) and country-specific traditions. Despite growing scholarly attention, physical literacy hesitantly permeates practice and policy in most European countries. Nevertheless, the experts largely anticipate increasing popularity of physical literacy for the future. Despite the heterogeneous situation across Europe, the analysis uncovered similarities among the countries such as the presence of established yet not identical concepts. Research should intensify academic activities (conceptual-linguistic elaborations, empirical work) before physical literacy may gain further access into practical and political spheres in the long term (Carl et al., 2023).

2. Physical literacy research, practice and policy in the United Kingdom

In England, the research in physical literacy first focused on establishing the philosophical basis of physical literacy and advocacy. Then there was further development of understanding related to intentionality, embodiment and flourishing. Recently, physical literacy research in England focuses on assessment or charting progress. With regard to practice and policy, the International Physical Literacy Association was established in 2014. Also, the House of Lords report "A national plan for sport, health and wellbeing" highlighted the importance of physical literacy as a focus for PE in schools and for all ages and backgrounds. Furthermore, Youth Sport Trust fully supports the focus on physical literacy in schools. Sport England indicates that the elements of physical literacy provide clear evidence in relation to their influence on children's attitudes towards valuing and engaging in physical activity. However, there is no explicit reference to physical literacy in England National Curriculum (Carl et al., 2023).

In Scotland, there is further research on understanding 'literacy' within physical literacy and a continued development of a communication strategy. Scotland carries out physical literacy assessments in a regional weight management programme and in the annual school's physical activity survey. In addition, Public Health Scotland awarded a grant to test and deliver a new 2-h module to promote physical activity using a physical literacy lens (in collaboration with Sport Scotland and education specialists). Regarding practice and policy in Scotland, a physical literacy national workshop was delivered in partnership with the IPLA, the Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland in 2019. Physical literacy is included in the new National Physical Activity Referral Standards and mentioned in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA, 2021) in the context of the positive contribution of physical activity and sport to Scotland.

In collaboration with the IPLA and Sport Scotland regions also provide training for health care staff, clinical and leisure staff, early years practitioners, teacher students and parents. However, there is no explicit reference to physical literacy in Scotland National Curriculum (Carl et al., 2023).

In Wales, physical literacy has mainly focused on the early years and primary school aged children. Research has focused on professional development programmes to enhance primary school teachers' knowledge and operationalisation of physical literacy. Further research adopted an appreciative inquiry between different sporting organisations to promote physical literacy. Wales Academy for Health and Physical Literacy mainly focuses on developing childrens' motor skills in the Foundation Phase (ages 3-7) to support physical literacy. Moreover, physical literacy was implemented (especially the physical domain) in the Dragon Challenge and the Sport Wales' School Sport Survey. Regarding practice and policy in Wales, legislative action has underlined the importance of physical activity and health behaviours in children and youth through the "Well-being of Future Generations Act" (2015). Also, the Schools and Physical Activity Task and Finish Group report (2013) was a key driver for the policy focus on physical literacy. Sport Wales released educative materials (a physical literacy video and a 'journey through life' illustration) and fully adopted the IPLA definition. Sport Wales invested 1.78 million pounds in 2014 to develop the physical literacy agenda through the 'Physical Literacy Programme for Schools' (2014-2017). Sport Wales also focuses on physical literacy in the community by employing physical literacy consultants to work with National Governing Bodies (2018-present). Finally, the Curriculum for Wales (2022) a.d. Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience has been informed by core principles of the physical literacy concept, though no explicit reference to physical literacy can be found in the Curriculum for Wales (2019) (Carl et al., 2023).

3. Physical literacy research, practice and policy in the United States

In the US, the construct of physical literacy was brought to the forefront in the 1990's by Margaret Whitehead with renewed interest and focus. Since then, there has been significant activity, discussion and debate as well as exchange and review of information regarding the value and position of the construct within different sectors. The progress made to date related to physical literacy in the United States has been very evident, most notably in the sectors of education and sport with several organisations that are active and successful in promoting and implementing physical literacy concepts (Roetert, 2019).

Regarding physical literacy research in the United States, concepts such as health, education, activity, school, development, life, competence and knowledge have been strongly related to physical literacy. Most reviewed studies operationalized the physical literacy construct, applied physical literacy elements to various health and educational contexts, provided overviews and assessments of curricula and programme interventions or delineated between definitions and understandings of physical literacy. Constructive debate continues over the meaning, purpose and outcomes of physical literacy allowing future research endeavors to bridge existing philosophical and pragmatic perspectives by testing new evidence-based interventions (Bopp, Vadeboncoeur, Roetert, Stollefson, 2022).

4. Physical literacy research, practice and policy in Canada

Since the introduction of the concept over 20 years ago, physical literacy has been gaining in popularity within many Western physical education and sport contexts. This is particularly true in Canada where physical literacy has been embraced by two of the nation's most notable national physical education and sport organizations, Physical and Health Education Canada and Canadian Sport for Life. As physical literacy has been generating interest and action by these entities, they, and others, have been quick to seek methods to measure it. However, despite the promises and possibilities of resources, initiatives, programs, Canada's most accessible physical literacy assessment instruments are wanting for focus and direct contemplation. The instruments differ in their ease of use and usefulness, some are lacking, markedly, with respect to trustworthiness and some fail to capture physical literacy (Robinson and Randall, 2017). Many sectors and organisations in Canada are embracing PL in their programs, policies and research: however, the use of inconsistent definitions and conceptualizations of physical literacy has been identified by stakeholders as hindering promotion and advancement efforts. Canada's Physical Literacy Consensus Statement was launched in 2015 at the International Physical Literacy Conference in Vancouver. To further promote the Consensus Statement, the Sport for Life Society developed and simultaneously released the "Vancouver Declaration" which contained additional guidance on physical literacy. Both the Consensus Statement and the Declaration endorsed IPLA's definition of physical literacy, namely "the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life". Sector partners hope that the Consensus Statement with its standardized definition brings greater harmony, synergy and consistency to physical literacy efforts in Canada and internationally. Going forward, the impact of this initiative and the more distal goal of increasing habitual physical activity levels should be assessed (Tremblay et al., 2018).

5. Physical literacy, research, practice and policy in Australia

Australia was a relatively late arrival to the physical literacy scene but has made rapid advances in recognizing, operationalising and advancing physical literacy. Five thriving research groups and many local sporting and education initiatives converged with a national policy framework that recognized and promoted physical literacy, leading to synergies, collaborations and a shared language that galvanised efforts in promoting physical literacy. From here onwards, the federal (national) government requested Australia-specific defining statements, standard documents and materials to be developed. While in the making for implementation, the processes, reflections and outcomes hold relevance for those developing physical literacy strategies in other contexts. Most notably, the Australian materials were developed to be non-prescriptive and not a 'finished product'. Rather, materials were developed to engage all users and help them find their own perspective on physical literacy. This philosophy may be useful in contexts far beyond Australia (Keegan, Dudley and Barnett, 2019).

Sport Australia released the Australia Physical Literacy Framework (APLF) in 2019 to advance a national agenda for physical literacy and specifically, clarify and promote the development of physical literacy in Australian sport and education realms. For teachers, this policy initiatives followed a period of curriculum development guided by the Australian Curriculum for Health and Physical Education (AC: HPE). The AC: HPE makes no explicit reference to physical literacy but nevertheless seeks to support young people to lead active healthy lives. HPE teachers are now challenged to navigate the divide between the APLF and the AC: HPE and find ways to appropriately integrate the AFLP into HPE programmes (Scott, Hill, Barwood and Penney, 2021).

6. Physical literacy, research, practice and policy in New Zealand

The crown agency responsible for oversight and leadership of the sport and recreation sector - Sport New Zealand - aims to operate with a strong partnership focus towards understanding the impact that physical literacy has on other sectors, particularly education and health (Laurie, 2019). The concerns in New Zealand are that the concept of physical literacy seems to overlap with the aims of physical education (PE) and that physical literacy could fail to adequately address the national values, cultural identity and broad educative aspirations of New Zealand current curriculum (Stevens, Ovens, Hapeta and Petrie, 2021).

Conclusions

The concept of physical literacy was reinvigorated more than 25 years ago by Whitehead and has since gained an even broader ground on all continents. It essentially describes a human activity of great importance, the individuals' embodied ability to maintain their movement throughout the life course to enhance one's quality of life. Because physical literacy has been associated with various aspects of one's life and with all ages, numerous groups around the world have adopted its objectives and principles, specific policies have been developed and programmes have been implemented for its promotion, while books have been written and several scientific articles have been published on the subject. Research data indicate an increased interest in the concept of physical literacy, its implementation and global advancement, mostly in Canada and the United Kingdom. The policies proposed in most countries are mostly associated with the field of education and least associated with sports, recreation or public health. There is a variety of programs mostly related with childhood while the shortage of programmes focused on adults is registered as a great gap in the course of consolidating physical literacy. The non-linear nature of the concept requires rejection of conventional assessment methods and adoption of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods for the evaluation of interventions. However, the term still seems to be unclear, many times resulting in its confusion with other similar concepts. Studies focusing on the results of physical literacy programmes are long-term and this is why a lot of them is still in progress. People's awareness and mobilisation in this specific field nevertheless signal an encouraging sign for the future and for having healthier societies (Thermou & Riga, 2020).

Finally, the main challenge is to appropriately integrate physical literacy into physical education programs. Considering the analysis carried out in the present report, the best way to implement physical literacy in PE would be to develop physical education curriculum in such a way that PE lessons focus on motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

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