

Review

Physical literacy in the field of physical education — A challenge and a possibility

Suzanne Lundvall

The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, GIH, Box 5626, 114 86 Stockholm, Sweden

Received 25 November 2014; revised 18 February 2015; accepted 18 February 2015

Available online 10 April 2015

Abstract

Publications of articles with physical literacy as a topic have increased dramatically since the beginning of 2000s. The aim of this paper is to, through an explorative literature overview with an inductive approach, analyze frequent, and significant themes in published peer reviewed articles, with a focus on physical literacy. The database EBSCO has been used with the identifiers “physical literacy” and “physical literacy and evidence”. Furthermore ICSSPE Bulletin’s special issue on physical literacy has been included in the overview. The findings have resulted in three key themes: assumptions of the concept physical literacy and its educative role, sports development and physical literacy, and assessment and physical literacy. Future studies are needed to examine if the advocated pedagogical strategies based on the concept physical literacy have led to a re-organized and revitalized school subject. There is also an existing critique towards making physical literacy an idealistic neutral concept or synonym with fundamental movement skills or sports talent identification. The role of higher education emerges as crucial for the next step of the development of the scientific framework as this involves how physical literacy will be socially configured, nurtured, and embodied in practice. Copyright © 2015, Shanghai University of Sport. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Educational practice; Implication; Literature overview; Physical literacy; Scientific frame work

1. Introduction

The term literacy is used globally and it is often used to separate a technical understanding of reading and writing on one hand, and a wider understanding of communication on the other hand. From a sociocultural perspective, this analytically distinction of literacy “... shifts our view from classroom and methods to a range of communication activities human beings engage in over their life span”.¹ This moves our understanding of how literacy can be developed beyond that of reading and learning and as cognitive skills. Hence to learn the act of reading and to develop reading competence become a process that occurs not only within the individual, but also in-between people and in contexts outside of school. The concept of literacy has become broader than the acquisition of cognitive

knowledge and understanding of a context. It is, as Mandigo et al.² formulated it, “about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture”. Further, it is,

... to use the attained knowledge in ethical and just ways. Being literate includes the use of critical and creative thinking — a process of conveying information in a multimodal ways of communication, applying knowledge and skills, make connections with and between various contexts.²

In physical education (PE) the word physical literacy has become part of the discourse among PE educators, and to some extent also among those working with athlete development. How come that physical literacy renders such an interest in the field of education and physical culture at this point of time? The purpose of this paper is, through an explorative literature overview, to explore frequent and significant themes of physical literacy. In this process, I use an inductive approach that pays a special attention to the way that physical

E-mail address: Suzanne.Lundvall@gih.se

Peer review under responsibility of Shanghai University of Sport.

literacy is conceptualized and used in published scholarly works. Furthermore throughout my analysis I will seek to explore and discuss significant implications for PE practice.

2. Background

Among scholars and PE practitioners Margaret Whitehead is seen as “the” scholar who brought physical literacy on the agenda. In more than a decade, she has been exploring the concept persistently for a conceptualization that is philosophically and theoretically sound and operationally feasible.^{3–6} Originally she defined physical literacy as the lived body and the embodied dimension of human existence. The concept of physical literacy describes embodied experiences that are aimed to enhance or improve physical performance aspects of movements that enable a particular goal to be achieved, or elements of movement that need attention.³ The concept highlights “the developing and maintaining of all-round embodied competence, together with positive attitudes towards this sphere of human activity”.⁴ The individual’s ability to develop a capacity to reflect over the nature of his or her performances and bodily intentionality is part of what the concept embraces. A focal point is therefore the concept’s intimate relationship between perception and movement in relation to bodily intentionality.³ In 2010 she refined the concept of physical literacy as “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to maintain physical activity throughout the life course”.⁵

Over time there has been a growing interest in elaborating on what the concept stands for and how it can be used in educational contexts. The concept has also been challenged by other scholarly discussions about ability and educability that has been considered parallel with the conceptualizing of physical literacy, not the least in Australia and Europe.^{7–13} These discussions have had as departure point critical pedagogy and a focus on the social construction of ability. In other words scholars have been attempting to clarify the extent to which physical ability is recognized, conceptualized, socially configured, nurtured and embodied as construed in physical literacy in and through practices of PE.^{7,9,10}

One common cause for the attention given to both physical literacy and ability as concepts and social constructions is the structural changes in society that have influenced children’s and adolescents’ physical activity (PA) habits and the concern about increased sedentary lifestyles. Here PA and movement competence have been identified as important factors contributing to the development of physically active lifestyles. Given this background, I will (a) turn the focus the scientific framework of physical literacy in terms of frequent and significant themes that have been foci in published peer reviewed articles, and (b) discuss how these themes can be related to PE practices.

3. Foci of this review

In this article, I attempt to lead the reader to consider these specific questions: (a) What are the frequent and significant

themes the scholarly articles are mostly concerned about? (b) How does the use of physical literacy emerge in the literature? (c) What kind of scientific frameworks are represented in the concept of physical literacy?

The primary method I use draws on an explorative literature overview with an inductive analysis.¹⁴ Specifically, I first conducted a comprehensive literature search using the EBSCO database and the identifiers “physical literacy” and “physical literacy and evidence”. The search rendered a total of 108 scholarly articles published from 1998 to 2014 in peer reviewed sources. I then focused in particular on the articles published during the years 2006–2014 because they were published with the established concept of physical literacy. A total of 99 are in this pool. It is interesting to note that 72 of the 99 were published after 2010. To note is that among these 72 was a special issue on physical literacy in the *International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE) Bulletin* (2013, No. 65). This special issue contained in itself of 49 articles. These were added to the literature overview. The majority of the articles were published in journals aimed at scholars in humanities and social science and/or PE educators in higher education and schools. Three articles in the EBSCO search were published in public health or medical journals.^{15–17}

4. Identified themes

Three major themes were found with scholarly significance regarding philosophical importance and operational feasibility. They are: assumptions of physical literacy and its educative role, sports development and physical literacy, and assessment and physical literacy. I describe each below to illustrate their characteristics and compare their similarities and nuances.

4.1. Assumptions of physical literacy and its educative role

The theme “assumptions of physical literacy and its educative role” is an absolutely dominant theme. The literature advocated the physical literacy as an answer to the lack of philosophical ideas experienced in PE, a rationale that can underpin the school subject PE, and a foundation for the development of children and youth throughout life. The articles within this theme highlight the educative role of physical literacy and how physical literacy can develop PE practice. Marshden and Weston¹⁸ pointed out that a philosophical basis has been longed for as historically there has never been a shared philosophy in the field. This observation is echoed in several other articles which further elaborate that because of the absence of a shared philosophy, PE has lacked cohesion and a shared curricular approach.^{19–22}

The authors in this category of articles seek to describe and/or resonate how physical literacy can make a contribution to human development. Several articles mention the phenomenological view of human potential and capability and the theory of Merleau Ponty²³ as scientific framework. Others, on the other hand, clarify the concept by elaborating on the

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1084113>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1084113>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)