

# Introduction

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This book is aimed primarily at under- and postgraduate students pursuing entire programmes or discrete courses and modules in the broad area of physical education and sport in schools. It consists of a collection of what we consider to be essential readings – in the sense that they are contributions from eminent authors on a breadth of salient and enduring themes as well as contemporary issues – in physical education. Many of the authors are distinguished figures who have, over the last two decades, made substantial and distinctive contributions to our understanding of the process of physical education. By enduring themes we mean those aspects of physical education that have continued to be discussed, in a more or less contentious manner, throughout the history of the subject; for example, the nature and values of physical education and the relationship between the subject and physical activity and health. At the same time, the book explores contemporary issues in the form of relatively recent debates surrounding topics such as the growth of examinations in physical education and innovations and developments in teaching styles and formats.

The study of physical education has increasingly become multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary and the book reflects this, incorporating philosophical, sociological, pedagogical and comparative perspectives on central themes and issues in the academic and professional study of physical education. In this respect the book offers readers ample opportunity to gain insight into the various disciplinary means by which we can develop a more adequate understanding of the subject.

While, at first glance, the text may appear oriented towards secondary school physical education in the United Kingdom, closer inspection reveals material that has direct relevance at an international level – either because the topics addressed are generic topics (physical activity, health-related exercise and pedagogy, for example) or because they offer comparative study (such as physical education in international context) or involve reference to international aspects of the topics under consideration (model-based teaching and assessment in physical education and the significance of social class for sport and physical education). Similarly, many of the themes and issues discussed are equally relevant to physical education at junior and senior levels of schooling.

We are acutely aware that, in attempting to provide such broad disciplinary and thematic coverage, an edited collection inevitably runs the risk of failing to satisfy anybody's requirements! At the same time, we appreciate that there are a number of themes and issues, as well as eminent authors that we have not managed to include. For this we can

only apologise whilst accepting that the responsibility for this particular selection is entirely ours.

We trust that the book will provide a service to all those interested in the process of physical education. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the individual chapter authors who have gone to a great deal of trouble to provide stimulating, up-to-date contributions that can be considered essential readings for anyone involved in the domain of physical education. We particularly want to thank Marianne Lagrange and Emma Grant-Mills of Sage publications for their support in bringing the book to fruition. All that remains is to point out that the royalties from the sales of this book will go to the North-West Counties Physical Education Association (NWCPEA) – the parent-body of the *European Physical Education Review* of which this book's editors are current and immediate past editors – to support its work in furthering the study and practice of physical education.

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