

## Book Review

**Tozer, M. (2012). *Physical education and sport in independent schools. John Catt Educational***

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British physical education has influenced physical education in parts of the world that are former British colonies and Malcolm Tozer's edited monography, *Physical education and sport in independent schools*, provides a context for those of us working in physical education in one of those former colonies. The book comprises a wide range of contributions (34 in all from 36 authors) about physical education and sport in British public schools. The content is clustered into four main sections plus an appendix. Generally the authors are writing from a personal perspective and several of the short essays are either abridged life histories or case studies; the editor has established their credibility in short profiles which follow the Foreward. The general purpose of the book is developed the Introduction wherein it is argued that the role of sport in British society has its foundations in school sport and physical education and that athletes in independent schools today are international sports stars of the future.

The current status of physical education and sport is considered in the State of Play, the second section of the book. As the book unfolds, it becomes clear that, unlike the situation in state schools, the marginalization of physical education in independent schools is not evident. Indeed, the status that many of the elite athletes who are reported or doing the reporting, in the book is often related back to their sports experiences in independent schools. The strong basis of many physical education programmes is established through holistic physical education in the early years of schooling. There are a series of scenarios that put readers in situ in a range of British independent schools. For those who have not experienced an independent school there are glimpses of what school might be like from a student or teacher's perspective and for those of us in former British colonies, there is possible insight into what has shaped physical education there. However, the traditional team games

which are reported as the basis of physical education programmes are generally unproblematised.

World-wide experts lay claim to the benefits of physical education and sport in the school curriculum, in Lasting Benefits. Essays in this, the third section of the book laud an independent school education not only for the quality of academic education, the fostering of sports talents, but also for the building of lasting social bonds. Many of the outcomes of physical education in terms of active lifestyle and positive health hold true across all school systems, but the authors argue that the quality of education in independent schools lays down a stronger base than it does in state schools. The quality of the teacher-student teacher relationship seems central to the success of many of the former student-athletes. Here the over representation of independent school students/ex-students in national teams speaks to the success of such an education in identification/nurturing of sports talent. Again these essays are mainly presented through personal life story or a reflected case study. It must be assumed that the full significance of these stories is gained through understanding the role that the authors have played in British society, especially in terms of sporting success. They give us insights into the writers of the stories just as much as insights into the reported stories.

To conclude the main body of the book, Talking Points, several critical issues arising from and/or impacting on school physical education and sport are examined through the lens of independent schools. The increasing marginalization of physical education, relative to school sport, from the central academic curriculum is illustrated through the relative lower numbers of independent school pupils registering for physical education as an examinable subject in its various forms. The alienation of independent schools from their local communities is also raised as a potential social problem. Other key equity issues such as

integration, access and gender equity are just as salient here as they are across the broad educational field. Regardless of school type, health issues emerging from hypo activity and/or hyper cyber engagement, contemporary youth lifestyle are relevant for attention by today's educators. Internationally we, in physical education, often bemoan the quality of 'bought-in' coaches (external providers) who do not necessarily hold physical education teacher qualifications; here the need for external provider-school fit is of particular significance in high profile schools where parents are likely to be more informed and expert in demanding educational value than might be their equivalents in the state school system.

This text is useful from several perspectives: understanding of the positioning of physical education and sport in the British independent school system; realizing the depth of contributions that independent school athletes later make to society and the national identity; and acknowledging that similar social issues within physical education are experienced across the broad education spectrum. Although, the Appendix provides additional data on independent school students and alumni who have represented Britain in various international sports events in the 21st century, the general lack of hard data and referencing to support the anecdotal is a disappointment.

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