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# **AN INTRODUCTION TO MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL EDUCATION**



UNIVERSITY OF  
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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# MY VISION FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**“The only real sustainable aim for physical education is more physical education.”**

**(Quennerstedt, 2019, p.612)**





# TODAY

- Analyse how we could develop current practice in schools to create more impactful experiences for young people in physical education.
- Consider what makes a positively memorable and meaningful experience for young people in physical education.
- Generate ideas that we can use in practice to increase the likelihood that pupils will find their physical education experiences positively meaningful.

**WHAT DO WE  
MEAN BY A  
“MEANINGFUL  
EXPERIENCE”?**



# MEANINGFUL

SIGNIFICANT

DEEP

WORTHWHILE

PROFOUND

DEEP

IMPORTANT

# EXPERIENCE

EVENT

ACTIVITY

ENCOUNTER

MOMENT

LESSON

UNIT

# FINDING YOUR OWN MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

Think about a time(s) you have been physically active and it has held personal significance, and/or a created a positive memorable experience for you. Be ready to share an overview.





# WHAT MADE THEM MEANINGFUL?

Now consider the features of that experience that made it relevant, positive, memorable (this takes a bit more time and thinking).

CHALLENGE  
SOCIAL  
RELEVANCE



COMPETENCE  
COMPETITION  
SOCIAL



FUN  
SOCIAL  
RELEVANCE



# HOW DO WE LINK THIS TO PE?

The promotion of meaningfulness in physical education has the potential to encourage a **lifelong pursuit of physical activity** (Kretchmer, 2006).

Many students cite **current versions of PE as lacking relevance to their lived experiences** (Ladwig et al., 2018).



# MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

You walk in to the best physical education lesson you have ever seen. Describe the scene. What are the key features that are making this lesson so effective?



# KEY WORK ON MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## Viewpoint

### Ten More Reasons for Quality Physical Education

R. Scott Kretchmar

In the August issue of *JOPERD*, Guy Le Mesurier and Charles Corbin (2006) provided their top ten reasons for physical education programs. The article blurb suggested, "When [people] ask 'why,' this is what you tell them" (p. 44). Scientific evidence indicates that regular physical activity

1. helps to prevent disease;
2. promotes a sense of well being, self-esteem, and overall wellness;
3. aids in fighting obesity;
4. promotes lifelong physical fitness;
5. enhances the likelihood of activity persistence;
6. provides health-related self-management skills and motor capabilities;
7. does not detract from academic objectives and may actually promote them;
8. makes economic sense;
9. is widely supported by a variety of governmental, health, and academic organizations; and
10. fosters whole-child education.

They concluded by asking a rhetorical question and providing an answer. "Ask [any parents] what is important. Perhaps more than anything, they would wish for good health for their children and their loved ones" (p. 50).

Le Mesurier and Corbin, I think, are right both about parents and reasons for quality physical education. Health is a high-priority concern for parents, and we need to do a better job of sharing the scientific information that ties human well-being to movement. Nevertheless, these authors stopped short of providing the full list of top reasons for quality physical education. I say this be-



R. Scott Kretchmar

cause I have it on good philosophical authority that there are actually 20 reasons. The following 10 additions, therefore, are offered in the spirit of a friendly amendment.

Consequently, when anyone asks you why quality physical education is important, this is what you should add to the previous list.

11. Physical activity is fun.
12. It is also delightful.
13. It is personally meaningful.
14. It is a primary source of identity, of who one is.
15. It offers a refreshing playground, a respite, something to look forward to.

Physical activity also helps a person develop five fundamental human freedoms:

16. The freedom to express
17. The freedom to explore
18. The freedom to discover
19. The freedom to invent
20. The freedom to create

One of the greatest things about physical activity and play is that they make our lives go better, not just longer. It is the quality of life, the joy of being alive, the

things we do with our good health that matter to us as much or more than health itself.

Of course, parents want their children to be healthy. When asked about preferences for a boy or girl, most expectant parents say, "We don't care. We just want our baby to be healthy." Nevertheless, if and when a healthy child comes into the world, the focus shifts quickly beyond health. Parents then say that they also want their child to be happy, well-adjusted, and successful.

There is no question that health and happiness are closely connected. Obesity produces both health risks and adjustment problems. However, we also know that biological health alone does not guarantee a meaningful existence. Good health, by itself, does nothing to ennoble us. None of us wants our epitaph to read: "In his better days, he had a resting heart rate of 54!" And nobody ever won a citizenship award or a Nobel Peace Prize for having a body mass index of 22.

That is why those of us in physical education need to focus on two things at once—on health promotion and on quality-of-life education. I would like to believe that the greater tradition in physical education has always focused on developing people as much as organisms, meaning as much as muscles—all the while understanding that both sides of the equation are intertwined. In this regard, it is significant that Le Mesurier and Corbin ended their top-ten list with whole-person education. This could well be interpreted as an indication of their support for this broader tradition and history.



# KEY WORK ON MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## Original 10 Reasons for Physical Education

1. helps to prevent disease;
2. promotes a sense of well being, self-esteem, and overall wellness;
3. aids in fighting obesity;
4. promotes lifelong physical fitness;
5. enhances the likelihood of activity persistence;
6. provides health-related self-management skills and motor capabilities;
7. does not detract from academic objectives and may actually promote them;
8. makes economic sense;
9. is widely supported by a variety of governmental, health, and academic organizations; and
10. fosters whole-child education.

# KEY WORK ON MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

## Kretchmar Additional 10 Reasons for Physical Education

11. Physical activity is fun.
12. It is also delightful.
13. It is personally meaningful.
14. It is a primary source of identity, of who one is.
15. It offers a refreshing playground, a respite, something to look forward to.
16. The freedom to express
17. The freedom to explore
18. The freedom to discover
19. The freedom to invent
20. The freedom to create

# MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES



“One of the greatest things about physical activity and play is that they **make our lives go better**, not just longer.”

(Kretchmar, 2006, p.6)




# KEY WORK ON MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

QUEST  
2017, VOL. 69, NO. 3, 291–312  
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## Meaningful Experiences in Physical Education and Youth Sport: A Review of the Literature

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### ABSTRACT

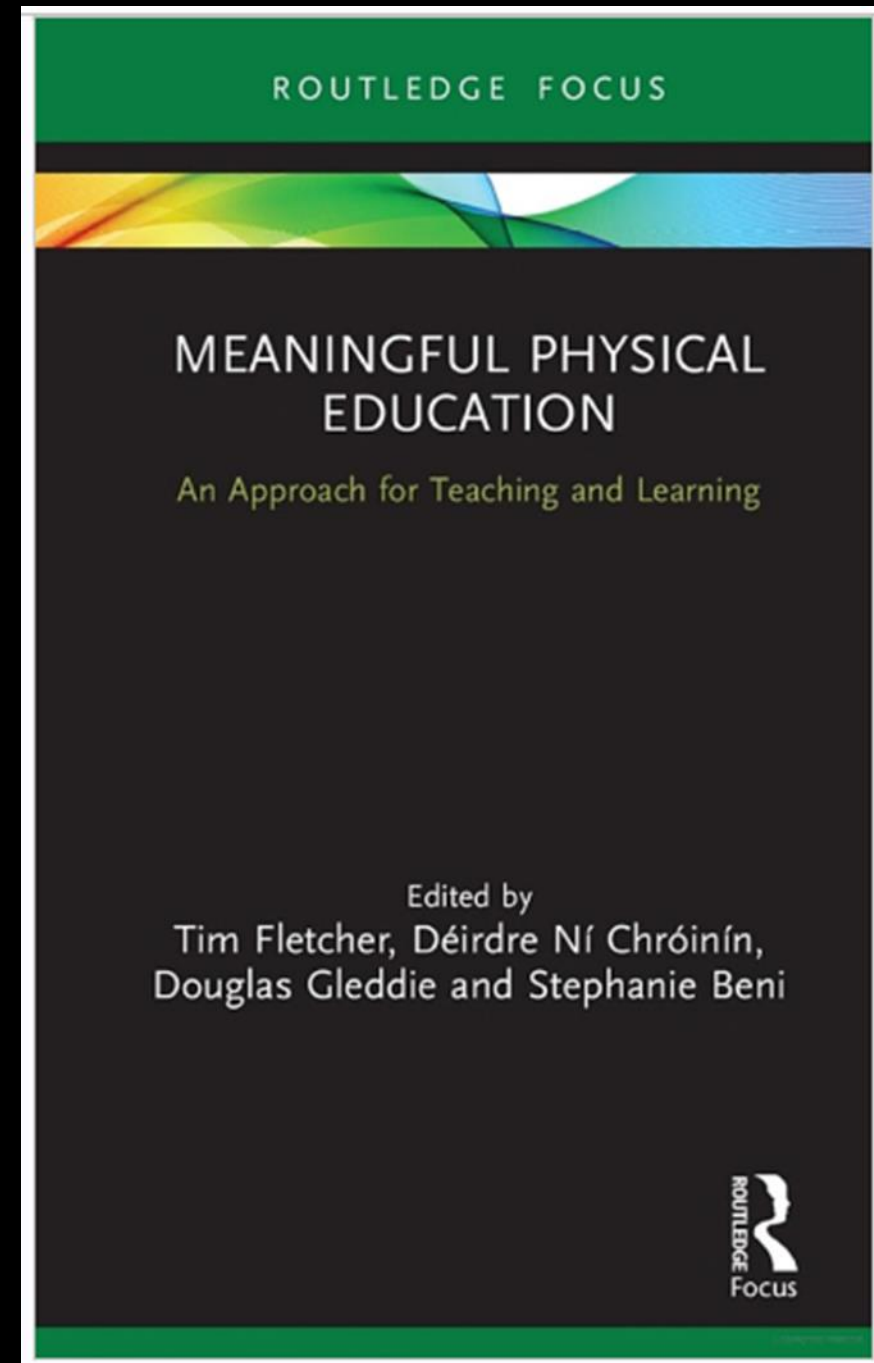
The purpose of this research is to review the literature about young people's meaningful experiences in physical education and youth sport. We reviewed 50 empirical peer-reviewed articles published in English since 1987. Five themes were identified as central influences to young people's meaningful experiences in physical education and sport: social interaction, fun, challenge, motor competence, and personally relevant learning. These themes provide future direction for the design and implementation of meaningful physical education and youth sport experiences. We also highlight the need for the development of pedagogies that facilitate and promote meaningful engagement in physical education and youth sport settings.

### KEYWORDS

Curriculum; meaningfulness; pedagogy; social interaction; students



# KEY WORK ON MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION



# MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES (Beni, et al., 2017)

**SOCIAL  
INTERACTION**

**CHALLENGE**

**MOTOR  
COMPETENCE**

**FUN**

**PERSONAL  
RELEVANCE**

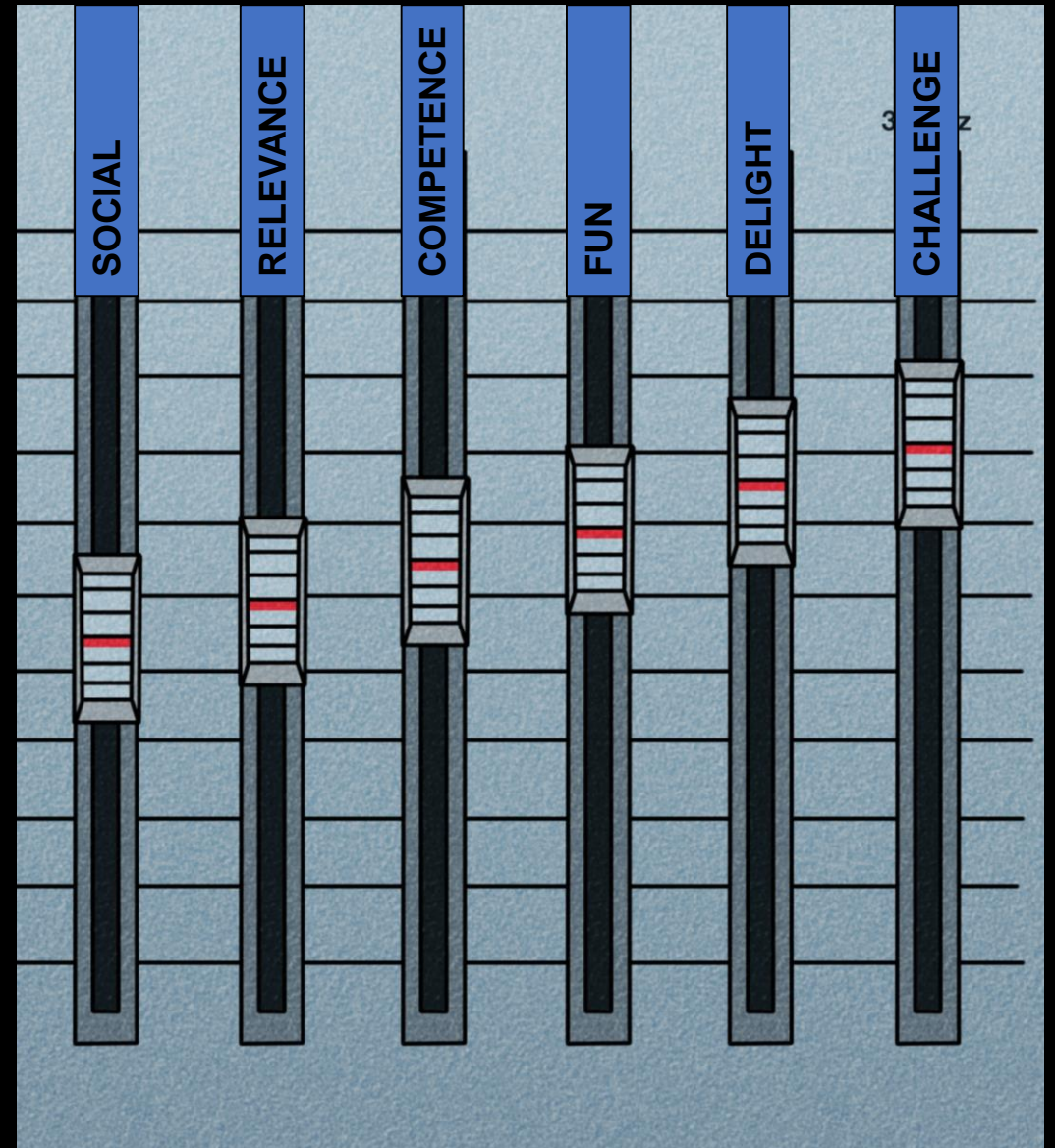
**DELIGHT**



# MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES - FEATURES

Key feature	Explanation
<b>Social interaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interaction with others including friends, peers, teachers</li><li>• Feelings of isolation or being left out contributed to a lack of meaning</li><li>• groups formed by both student choice and teacher selection can generate feelings of meaning</li></ul>
<b>Fun</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perceptions of fun for vary so practitioners need to understand how this concept is perceived</li><li>• Challenge and avoiding boredom, pupil-centred pedagogies appear to have a positive impact on the notion of fun.</li></ul>
<b>Challenge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement in activities that provided an appropriate challenge for participants</li><li>• Task difficulty is key to appropriate challenge allowing pupils to complete tasks that are optimally challenging</li><li>• Careful with competition</li></ul>
<b>Motor competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experiences in PE were more positive when students' perceptions of their competence were high.</li><li>• Pitching activities at the right level and utilising praise and encouragement as well as creating a supportive social climate were identified as important</li></ul>
<b>Personally relevant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participants can recognise the importance of what they were learning</li><li>• Make explicit connections between their current PE experiences and future aspects of daily living outside of the school or community.</li></ul>
<b>Delight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delight is more enduring than fun and grounded in powerful intrinsic satisfactions</li><li>• To experience delight, one must achieve a close tie with something that is desirable but often lies at a distance or is typically out of reach</li></ul>

# WORKING WITH THE FEATURES OF MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL EDUCATION



**THE EQUALISER APPROACH**  
(Beckey, 2021)

# WHAT CAN WE DO AS TEACHERS TO **MAKE THESE** **FEATURES** **ACCESSIBLE IN** **OUR LESSONS?**

Visit each of the pieces of paper around the room that are titled with one of the features.

Can you add an action/teacher behaviour to each of the features that would enable this feature to be evident/amplified in our PE lessons/practice.

SOCIAL  
INTERACTION

CHALLENGE

MOTOR  
COMPETENCE

FUN

PERSONAL  
RELEVANCE

DELIGHT



# MPE FEATURES BECOME OUR **PRIORITY FILTER** FOR DECISION MAKING

SOCIAL  
INTERACTION

CHALLENGE

MOTOR  
COMPETENCE



FUN

PERSONAL  
RELEVANCE

DELIGHT

# MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL EDUCATION PEDAGOGIES

Create a shared language around meaningfulness within both staff and pupils.

Retrospective and personal characteristics of meaningfulness point to the value of **REFLECTIVE** and **DEMOCRATIC** pedagogies as central to meaningful physical education

# MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL EDUCATION IS DEMOCRATIC

Teachers and pupils working together to set goals and agree on activities within a flexible curriculum



Where can we provide pupils an opportunity for choice and voice both on a macro and micro scale?

# **MEANINGFUL PE IS REFLECTIVE AND INVOLVES GOAL SETTING**



Opportunities to set goals and to reflect on their achievement is central to identification of experiences as meaningful.



# IMPACT OF THE MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL EDUCATION APPROACH

Article

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## ‘It’s how PE should be!’: Classroom teachers’ experiences of implementing Meaningful Physical Education

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### Abstract

Meaningful Physical Education (PE) is a pedagogical approach to PE instruction designed with the aim of helping teachers explicitly prioritise meaningful experiences for students. The purpose of the current study was to conduct a small-scale implementation of a preliminary version of Meaningful PE with a sample of five primary classroom teachers in Ireland to receive their feedback on the approach and their experiences of implementing it in their classrooms. Qualitative data were collected across an eight-week implementation period. An actor-oriented analysis was used to focus specifically on teachers’ decisions concerning both *what* and *how* to implement the approach, as well as the reasons *why* they implemented Meaningful PE the way they did. Results show teachers were generally supportive of Meaningful PE as they attempted to implement several components of the approach in their classrooms. Teachers’ implementation was highly related to their positive interpretations of the approach, in relation to both their perceptions of beneficial student outcomes and in drawing connections between the approach and prior experiences of and beliefs about teaching. This study adds further support to prior small-scale studies where implementation of Meaningful PE has been assessed and provides insight into how the approach might be introduced to and implemented more broadly by teachers in the future.

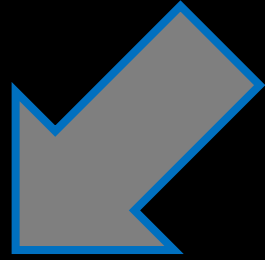
### Keywords

Pedagogy, elementary, primary, innovation, actor-oriented

# THE NEXT STEPS FOR **YOU** AND **MEANINGFUL** **PHYSICAL** **EDUCATION?**



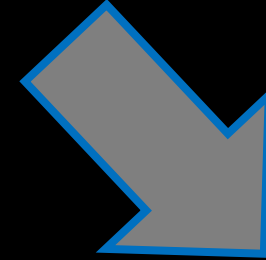
# MEANINGFUL PHYSICAL EDUCATION



## FEATURES

**Social interaction**  
**Challenge**  
**Motor Competence**  
**Fun**  
**Personal Relevance**  
**Delight**

**PURPOSE**  
**HELPING**  
**TEACHERS**  
**EXPLICITLY**  
**PRIORITISE**  
**MEANINGFUL**  
**EXPERIENCES**  
**FOR**  
**STUDENTS**



## PEDAGOGIES

**Democratic Approaches**  
  
**Goal Setting**  
  
**Reflection**

# MEET EVERY AMBITION



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