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## Descending the mountain: Exploring the impact of research on pedagogy and practice. Virtual scientific conference of the International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education (AIESEP) 2021 and the University of Alberta and McGill University, Canada, Banff.

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**Abstract:** Conference report to the virtual scientific conference of the International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education (AIESEP) 2021 hosted by the University of Alberta and McGill University (Banff, Canada).

## Introduction

The International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education (AIESEP) is the global umbrella organization for Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) institutions. As a non-political, non-profit and multidisciplinary community, AIESEP is dedicated to pedagogically relevant issues in the field of PETE and school sport. From 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021 the annual and first ever virtual AIESEP Scientific Conference was hosted by Lee Schaefer (McGill University, Canada) and Doug Gleddie (University of Alberta, Canada). The conference team and indigenous Canadian land keepers invited 450 registered delegates to the thematic framing of “Descending the mountains – exploring the impact of research on pedagogy and practice”. Overall, 4 keynotes, 10 symposiums with over 200 presentations and 69 posters were accessible to every delegate in a mixture of live and pre-recorded contributions from around the globe for a two months period.

Against the backdrop of recent revelations from Canada’s colonialist past about violent crimes in the forced schooling of aboriginal children, the thematic orientation took a critically questioning perspective of philosophical and anthropological principles of the present movement and sport culture. This was done both, with regard to the use of sport as an instrument for disciplining and subjugating individuals, bodies and cultures, and on the level of the selective thematization of certain movement cultures in many sport pedagogical contexts and the resulting

exclusion of minorities. The main theme was therefore represented by the following six sub-themes:

- Honoring Indigenous ways of knowing in research and practice.
- Equity, diversity and inclusion: impacting practice through ethical research.
- Engaging stakeholders (e.g. practitioners, students, administrators, parents, curriculum developers) in exploring the relationship between quality research and quality practice in PE and sport pedagogy.
- Practitioner preparation/professional development/pre-service and in-service teachers' preparation.
- Teaching and learning in contemporary times: implications of the current teaching and learning environment and state of physical education and sport pedagogy today.

From this variety, only a subjective and incomplete selection can be presented. The four keynotes are briefly outlined below and are supplemented by a variety of contributions from researchers around the globe.

### **Selected conference contributions**

In the first keynote, Elke Grimminger-Seidensticker (Paderborn University, Germany) discussed diversity as a challenge and a possible driver for the professional development of (future) PE teachers. She emphasized the need for a professional view, which she defined as a teacher's ability to see and interpret relevant aspects of learning situations. Therefore a skillful and selective perception of diversity seems necessary, which should be grounded in a knowledge-based rationale and is followed by a decision-making about how to respond that is grounded in that rationale. To ensure appropriate perceptions of diversity in PE and, consequently, the perceived needs of students in a group, the understanding of inclusion as a general issue that affects all students must be promoted in PETE programs. PETE programs must also take teachers' overload seriously and provide sufficient resources to ultimately increase teachers' perceived self-efficacy. Elke Grimminger-Seidensticker suggests the usage of critical pedagogy and service learning, lesson studies, and co-teacher peer review to foster diversity related competency experiences for PE teachers.

In the sub-theme "Practitioner preparation and professional development" Sebastian Ruin (University of Graz, Austria) and Stefan Meier (University of Vienna, Austria) presented considerations to the complex relation between pedagogical practice and theoretical considerations in PETE with "Experience – on filling the gap between practice and theory in PETE". The researchers proposed to emphasize experience as a sound pedagogical category, seen as an active process for the individual to discover a subjective link between theoretical considerations and pedagogical practice. By rethinking practice and

theory within PETE they aim on a more interlinked and holistic experience-based framework of PETE, that is already common in the German-speaking world, and might potentially be meaningfully connected to international contexts. Annemari Svendsen and Louise Strom (University of Southern Denmark, Denmark) outlined the pedagogical concept of “Cultural leadership in Physical Education”. PE teachers, seen as cultural leaders, can have a substantial impact on the cultural values that are (re)produced in the context in which they are operating. Therefore, they suggest some guiding principles for cultural leadership in PE and propose it as a gainful pedagogical concept. In their presentation “Doing and saying content – a comparative analysis of the practical knowledge in PE classes” Benjamin Zander (University of Göttingen, Germany) and Daniel Schiller (University of Osnabrück, Germany) imply a praxeological perspective on the practical knowledge through which PE content is (co-)constructed as specific and meaningful content. By the analysis of two, at the first glance, similar videographed PE situations they showed the extent of different practical knowledge, therefore meanings of actions, the practitioners orient upon by analyzing actors’ specific doings and sayings.

Within the sub-theme “Engaging stakeholders” (e.g. practitioners, students, administrators, parents, curriculum developers) the relationship between quality research and quality practice in PE and sport pedagogy was investigated by multiple workgroups with a particular attention to those voices that may often be excluded. Johanna Korte (Technical University Dortmund, Germany) presented results of a quasi-experimental mixed method intervention study in PE on body (dis)satisfaction of adolescent girls. She investigated whether a combined media literacy and physical activity program can liner body image concerns of adolescent girls. The researcher stated that further research is needed to develop body image programs that positively effect body satisfaction not only for girls but also for boys in co-educational settings.

Christoph Kreinbacher-Bekerle (University of Graz, Austria) contributed to the sub-theme “Equity, diversity and inclusion: impacting practice through ethical research” by examining how students with and without disabilities are involved in extracurricular school sports events. Furthermore, Brigitta Höger (University of Vienna, Austria) presented results of her research project on the discursive production of the body in physical education against the backdrop of intersectionality. She was able to show how hegemonic discourses permeate the body intersectionally and how ideals of masculinity, whiteness and slimness are largely reproduced. Martin Giese (Heidelberg, University of Education, Germany), Justin Haegele (Old Dominion University, USA) and Sebastian Ruin (University of Graz, Austria) sought to understand “individual constructions of barriers to participate in integrated PE among learners with visual impairment in Germany” and showed that normality imperatives (of physical fitness, performance and health ideas) are consistently producing exclusion in integrated PE. They suggested to take a closer look at the excluding potential of PE, its’ inherent body-

related social norms and requirements in didactic concepts and curricular requirements from the perspective of marginalized groups.

A large number of contributions to the conference dealt with the reappraisal of colonialist appropriation and violence towards Indigenous people and future ways of appreciating and honoring indigenous ways of knowing in research and practice. In particular, recent revelations about hundreds of undocumented deaths of native children in Canadian colonialist boarding schools during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries colored the discussion. This terrible reminder of systematic racism, discrimination and injustice that Indigenous people have faced (around the globe) due to colonial invasions showed the ongoing need for investigations of the colonial past. All workgroups worded the necessity to decolonize the westernized (sport) culture by developing awareness and a sense of responsibility by overcoming colonized world views and addressing injustice that indigenous are still facing today and the particular part movement and sport took and might still take in this regard.

In her keynote Lisa Hunter (Monash University, Australia) invited the audience members to embrace the discomfort within questioning one's own anthropologies and therein encouraged the concept of professional ethical response-ability (seen as a merge of responsibility and responsiveness). By explaining how PE brings normalized violence into this century creating and enforcing a White washed and binary dominance that is leading to exclusion of minorities. Lisa Hunter emphasizes the need to transform anthropologies in a radical (systematical and ontological) change by shifting away from anthropocentrism (suggesting this could also benefit dealing with other millennial challenges) and could possibly be found in alternative world views "e.g. like indigenous communities cultivate". She states that such a transformation means educating ourselves and enduring discomfort that should be seen as an important learning stage leading towards the direction of reappraisal. Lisa Hunter underlines the fields need to embrace and address its' problems and decolonize teaching and research work and accents that PE isn't necessarily a save space especially not for those pupils and bodies whom are not considered. Lisa Hunter accentuates the development of a professional ability to ethical response-ability.

In line, Janice Forsyth (Department of Sociology, Western University, Canada) explored the cultural politics of knowing, being and doing our bodies in an interface between culture, movement, knowledge and power in her keynote. She discussed the relationship between settler colonialism and PE as the representation of a singular type of physical culture while other movement cultures, embodied knowledge, ways of knowing and being (our bodies), and activities associated with moving bodies got suppressed. Indian affairs and recreation of indigenous ways of using the body are still scarce in PE contexts. To her, colonialists and descendants must stop believing in their moral authority in their understandings and need to investigate in undoing unequal power relations and acknowledge Indian (educational) ways. Janice Forsyth

encourages to pause our privileged doing, think and reflect upon past and present ways of schooling our bodies and unpack the forced alterations of indigenous ways of life. The many and ongoing ways of reforming and reshaping caused trauma which by our present doing is (re)cultivated in everyday actions. Sport as a (past) instrument of disciplining bodies, individuals and whole cultures therefore needs to stop its White washed narrative and self-centered normalization of violence and cultivation of trauma. Practitioners should develop an awareness for the deep significance within their present actions and conceptual believes. PE therefore needs to include ways indigenous people engage in movement and reflect upon its own philosophical and anthropological orientations by the usage of historical reappraisal, awareness and reflection. Similarly, Louise Humbert (University of Saskatchewan, Canada) closed the conference with her keynote calling for all to be aware of their colonial enculturation. She emphasized the need for everyone to reflect on the colonial education they have received and that all sports leaders have a great responsibility to create welcoming spaces in PE, so that exclusive potentials of movement cultures will not accelerate. She states that PE teachers should act as advocates who reflect on movement cultures history and actively contribute to the transformation of the future and to the reconciliation of different (movement) cultures.

## Conclusion and outlook

Overall, the conference team did a wonderful job hosting the virtual format. Nevertheless, the web-conference could not substitute the international personal exchange so that the community is looking forward to next years, hopefully face-to face, conference at the Gold Coast, Australia from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2022 hosted by the Griffith University. More information about the organization is available on the following website: <http://aiesep.org>.

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## Información adicional

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