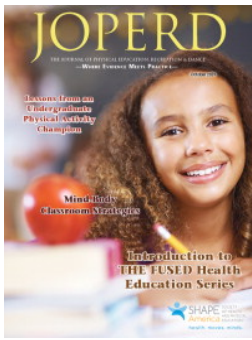


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Item Type	Article
Authors	Scanlon, Dylan;Mac Phail, Ann;Calderón, Antonio;Moody, Brigitte;Murtagh, Elaine
Citation	Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance, 2024, 95 (8), pp 48–50
Publisher	Taylor and Francis
Download date	2026-05-11 23:51:13
Item License	https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/
Link to Item	https://doi.org/10.34961/researchrepository-ul.27324507



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To cite this article: Dylan Scanlon, Ann MacPhail, Antonio Calderón, Brigitte Moody & Elaine Murtagh (2024) Working Principles of Practice for Enacting Social Justice Pedagogies in Physical Education Teacher Education, Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance, 95:8, 48-50, DOI: [10.1080/07303084.2024.2383527](https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2024.2383527)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2024.2383527>



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Published online: 15 Oct 2024.



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Working Principles of Practice for Enacting Social Justice Pedagogies in Physical Education Teacher Education

Dylan Scanlon , Ann MacPhail, Antonio Calderón , Brigitte Moody, and Elaine Murtagh

Social justice can be viewed as both a process and a goal (Walton-Fisette & Sutherland, 2018). As the physical education community pleads for more social justice work to be done in physical education and physical education teacher education (PETE), the question arises: “how” can we teach about, through, and for social justice in PETE? We contend that the *about* (i.e., the content) and *through* (i.e., the pedagogy) can both contribute to the *process*, whereas the *for* (i.e., a socially just society) represents the *goal* of social justice (Scanlon et al., 2022). Acknowledging a lack of literature on how to teach about, through, and for social justice in PETE, we, five physical education teacher educators, studied our own practice as teacher educators “doing” social justice work and constructed seven working principles of practice for enacting social justice pedagogies in PETE.

The intention behind constructing working principles of practice was to share our realities and provide these principles to colleagues who also want to teach about, through, and for social justice in their PETE programs. Following each working principle, we provide an example of what this might look like in practice. We emphasize these are “working” principles of practice because these are not set in stone but can be adapted, adopted, or altered to suit the context in which they are enacted. Here we share seven working principles of practice that we collaboratively constructed.

Acknowledge What Teacher Educators Bring to (Teaching) Social Justice

We need to acknowledge how our experiences and positioning have

influenced our thinking on, and ways in which we approach, social justice. This entails examining our “taken for granted” assumptions and the day-to-day accepted or common practices we undertake in educating preservice teachers (PSTs) and interrogating our level of advocacy for social justice (for example, the language we use, the activities we include, and our preferred instructional strategies).

We encourage the reader to ask themselves, “What are my assumptions and biases with regards to [social justice matter; e.g., LGBTQ+]?” This requires self-awareness. A starting point may be to create “I believe with regards to [social justice matter] ...” statements. This can progress to action statements, such as, “As such, I plan/act/teach. ...” This can shed light on how your beliefs affect your practices. Another activity could be to reflect on your inner 10 people (i.e., 10 people who you spend a significant amount of time with, such as family, friends, or colleagues) and consider their gender, socioeconomic status, religion, or other characteristics and the extent to which that is shaping your values and belief systems in relation to social justice. We point the reader in the direction of a book to help in answering these questions: *Pedagogies of Social Justice in Physical Education* (Lynch et al., 2022).

Encourage PSTs to Acknowledge Their Positionality With Respect to Social Justice

We need to work with PSTs in acknowledging how their experiences and

positioning might influence their thinking about and how they approach social justice. There is an onus on teacher educators to ensure that the social justice matter is meaningful and personally relevant to the PSTs to heighten their reflexivity on their positionality and background and connection with social justice.

A starting activity here may be a photovoice experience whereby the PSTs bring a photo to class that talks to their first experience or awareness of social justice. This can then lead to meaningful conversations on positionality, privilege, and social awareness. Autobiographical pedagogies and the use of case studies or narratives would also help in reconsidering positionalities and perspectives.

Work With PSTs on Identifying Social Justice Matters Likely to Arise Across Diverse Teaching Environments

We encourage working with PSTs on considering social justice matters that arise across diverse teaching environments and how best to identify and enact aligned effective teaching practices. This entails acknowledging and discussing the wide variety of social justice matters that PSTs experience during school placement. This also entails appreciating that PSTs will be exposed to social justice matters during school placement that they and teacher educators may not be familiar with and thus will subsequently not know how best to deal with the situation. Encouraging PSTs to act as critical friends in listening to and sharing experiences

can be a safe, authentic, and meaningful support structure for PSTs who have the reality of school placement as a common experience.

Therefore, we suggest starting with the PSTs' experiences: "Reflecting on school placement, what social justice matters did you experience? How can you go about educating yourself on this matter? What action can you take? What can we do in the teacher education program to better prepare you?" Being vulnerable here as the teacher educator may strengthen the conversation as reciprocal learning occurs through this dialogical critical friendship process.

Increase PSTs' Confidence in Social Justice Literacy

We believe there is a need to increase PSTs' confidence in social justice literacy (rather than "terminology," which has a more mechanistic connotation) by equipping them with the language of social justice. This is more than teacher educators modeling social justice language. It involves providing PSTs with a social justice language and conceptually understanding the intended meaning and consequence of such language, which allows them to identify related issues in schools and have an ability to talk about these with their peers using meaningful and appropriate language.

A suggested activity is to begin with the social and emotional skill of empathy. Learning experiences can involve developing empathy for different social justice matters. For example, if the social justice matter is related to transgender students, one could set a flipped classroom task of listening to a podcast or watching a YouTube video of a transgender person's experience in sport or physical education. This allows the PSTs to listen to a perspective they may not be exposed to on a daily basis, understand aligned experiences, and, with related scaffolded tasks, develop a sense of empathy for such a perspective. This can then provide the PST with the language needed to have meaningful conversations.

Share Vulnerabilities in the Social Justice Space

We believe that teacher educators and PSTs need to share vulnerabilities in teaching, given that the nuances in school contexts make it virtually impossible for us to know how to deal effectively, at the time, with every situation that arises. This includes not only sharing vulnerability related to not knowing how to react to specific situations but also sharing instances where one has perhaps reacted inappropriately to a specific situation in the past, along with a suggested alternative and more appropriate reaction. We suggest that teacher educators model vulnerability to create a safe space for PSTs to be vulnerable too.

An activity that may help with creating this safe space is a "vulnerability contract" (similar to a learning contract). Co-creating this with expectations (e.g., asking questions on uncomfortable topics, no judgment, conversations in the classroom are not shared outside the classroom) can lay the foundations for creating a safe space.

Meaningfully Embed Social Justice Elements Where Appropriate

We acknowledge that social justice is a thread that is embedded throughout the PETE program where appropriate. That is, be an educator and activist for social justice rather than dipping in and out of the space. There is an obligation to champion social justice as a "way of life" and not only with respect to the PETE program.

A suggested activity for a programmatic approach could be to start a community of learners between all teaching staff with the intention of learning about social justice (pedagogies). With regards to a way of life, suggested activities may be different for everyone (e.g., volunteering, professional learning, activism). What is important is sharing these experiences with PSTs to encourage them to champion social justice as a way of life.

Encourage Layers of Reflection in All Teaching and Learning

We suggest that reflection needs to be central to all teaching and learning about, through, and for social justice, for both the teacher educator and PST. This working principle of practice should underpin the previous six principles. As such, reflective activities should be embedded in all learning experiences for both the teacher educator and PST.

A reflection structure that might work is to ask, "What?" (i.e., descriptive account), "So what?" (i.e., connection to what one already knows/what literature tells us about the social justice matter), and "Now what?" (i.e., implications for practice).

Conclusion

We trust that these seven working principles of practice can help others in starting a journey of becoming a teacher educator for social justice. These are working principles of practice that can and should be built on and extended. We encourage someone starting on this journey to focus on one principle and work with that; take "baby steps" in the right direction. We would also encourage readers, where possible, to share this journey with other colleagues within or beyond the institution as a powerful way to learn from, and together with, different perspectives and backgrounds.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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