

Critical Reflection on Community Partnerships in HPE for Diverse Learners

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Introduction

The academic well-being of the students depends upon many factors, and one of these many factors is the effectiveness of the school-community partnership; gone are those days when school alone was enough to maximize students' learning due to their defining involvement in the mental and physical health of the students. Communities provide the most desirable environment to enhance the student's mental and physical health with the help of teachers, parents and community leaders. The goal of community partners is not merely to help students with assessments but to explore their passions and interests through careful observation and psychological insights. Maximum learning through cooperation is the key role of a community school. Communities and schools work together through a cooperative and wide-ranging approach. Community partners help and prepare students for the great challenges that they would face in colleges and in their professional lives ahead, young people are supported and offered further opportunities. The bond between a school and a community partner is an essential element of the rising standards of education in the 21st century.

Why?

The importance of community partnerships in the development of Health and Physical Education is undeniable as the community partnerships. There are many elements essential for an effective partnership in order to enhance student's mental and physical health. First, it is very critical to involve the parents, students, community leaders, principle, and the support personnel in the preparation, assessment, and carrying out of School-community partnership, therefore, there must be a leadership team that involves people from communities and schools. Second, health and social support are the single most important elements, considering the importance of community partnership. In a community school, the physical and mental health of the students is a primary concern for the community; according to a report published in 2015, half of the public schools in America deal with students who are poor, homeless and have very low nutrition levels that drastically affect their learning and long term commitments. Furthermore, there is a shortage of qualified teachers in those schools. The students and teachers have to face this everyday reality (Jacobson, R., & Blank, M. 2015).

There are many levels of learning, for example, at the student level the leaning depends on student's physical and mental health, family issues and access to social services. On the other hand, at the

school level, there are hurdles such as a lack of quality resources, a better environment, time, and opportunities. The goal of Community partnerships is not only to fill this gap at the school level but also to provide necessary measures for the mental and physical health of the students. Furthermore, for the students who are studying HPE, their core focus is learning, not sports and physical activities, though that might be the secondary concern.

‘It is important, however, to recognize that HPE is a learning area and not a health profession. Although it supports the development of the knowledge, understanding and skills students need to make healthier choices, it cannot be expected that HPE will resolve the complex nexus of contributors to young people’s health and well-being (St. Ledger, 2004).

Community partnerships help students (no matter what field of studies they belong to) maximize their abilities, interests, and passions and direct them towards the exclusive goal they are born to pursue and achieve. As the above statement states HPE is a learning area, hence, community partnerships is equally important for the students of Health and Physical Education as any other field of studies. Furthermore, nothing is more important than community partnership when it comes to diverse learners because it enhances not only the possibilities for academic learning but also social, emotional, and ethical competencies. Therefore, in terms of diverse learners, community partnership in Health and Physical education is even more demanding and urgent for maximum learning and inspiration. The Australian Curriculum for Health and Physical Education is particularly designed in consideration of the possibility of learning for all; it helps in the development of exclusive teaching strategies in order to test students’ skills as well as respect for the diversity of students in Australian schools.

The purpose of community partnership in Health and Physical Education is to maximize opportunities for diverse learners. Therefore, community partnership is very important for the students of HPE because it provides health and social support, engages the family and the community to better understand their children and intends to focus on expanded learning opportunities.

When considering the role of physical education in promoting engagement in healthy, active lifestyles through the life course, the development of partnerships – between schools and community-based sports organizations and clubs – is essential to accommodate broader life-long educational outcomes, including health and well-being, as well as personal and social development. (UNESCO, 2015, p 44).

The given statement emphasizes the broader scenario of the coalition of community partnerships and schools for the general well-being of the students and their social and personal development; hence, the importance of community partnerships in the development of the students of Health and Physical Education is undeniable and potent as we have seen and analyzed it through different perspectives and dimensions in the course of this paper. Now we will examine three community partnerships which provide an understanding of the needs of diverse learners, these partnerships can be tertiary, vocational and non-vocational.

One of the most important vocational partnerships seen in Austria came from the State Government

of Queensland, which initiated the Gateway to Industry School. The most important thing about Gateway to Industry School is the range of diversity that it offers; it has partnered with state, Catholic, and independent schools. The figures include 450 schools in Queensland that were partnered with the Gateway Industry. It was not a private organization but a government-sponsored though it was also supported by other industries as well. Donnelly was the first person who advocated vocational education. He defined the term in the following statement;

“a broader educational position, in which it is argued that provision orientated towards the future occupation of the student can yet form the basis, or at least part of, general education in a broad, liberal sense” (p. 229).

Donnelly (2009) summed up his definition by using the keyword ‘liberal sense’; hence, we can sense a broader perspective of vocational by this precise definition where the core is the general education of science, not in the strict academic sense but creating professionals who want to pursue learning both at school and at the workplace that provide opportunities for all, by all I mean the diverse learners. These institutions represent formal theoretical understanding, applied knowledge, knowledge of workplace practices, knowledge of roles, semiotics, and knowledge of workplace texts. Hence, vocational partnerships help students develop in theory as well as in practice in order to be truly professional and authentic practitioners.