

The definition and attributes of physical literacy

In short, **physical literacy** can be described as a disposition to capitalize on the human embodied capability, wherein the individual has:

the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engaging in physical activities for life

On account of our holistic nature, individuals who are making progress on their individual/unique physical literacy journey, demonstrate the following attributes or symptomatic behaviours:

- A. motivation to be proactive in taking part in physical activity, applying self to physical activity tasks with interest and enthusiasm and persevering through challenging situations in physical activity

Physical literacy is an inclusive concept. All humans exhibit this potential, however its specific expression depends on individual endowment in relation to all capabilities, significantly movement potential, and is particular to cultural and environmental contexts

- B. confidence in relation to the ability to make progress in learning new tasks and activities and assurance that these experiences will be rewarding
- C. movement with poise, economy and effectiveness in a wide variety of physically challenging situations
- D. thoughtful and sensitive perception in appreciating all aspects of the physical environment, anticipating movement needs and possibilities in different physical activities
- E. effective interaction with the environment evidencing problem solving, imagination and creativity in a wide range of situations
- F. the ability to work independently and with others in physical activities in both co-operative and competitive situations
- G. an assured self - belief in the ability to interact effectively within a wide range of physical activity environments
- H. the ability to identify and articulate the essential qualities that influence the effectiveness of movement performance
- I. an understanding of the principles of holistic embodied health, in respect of a rich and balanced lifestyle
- J. a lifestyle, that, as appropriate, demonstrates the valuing of, and commitment to, participation in physical activity.

Physical Literacy - Quotations supporting the centrality of our embodied dimension in human life.

Monist perspective

1. *Sartre (1957)* p476 For human reality, to be is to act,
2. *Burkitt (1999)* p74..... prior to the Cartesian 'I think', there is an 'I can' - a practical cogito which structures not only our relationship to the world, but also the ways in which we think about it.
3. *Leder (1990)* regrets that the stranglehold of dualism has resulted in our being 'trapped inside a picture – a dualist picture that has limited our self- development and self-relation.'
4. *Gibbs (2006)* p3 the traditional disembodied view of mind is mistaken, because human cognition is fundamentally shaped by embodied experience.
5. *Bowman in Bresler (2004)* p 36 The body is minded, the mind is embodied, and both body and mind are culturally mediated.
6. *Lakoff and Johnson (1999)* p540 Philosophy itself also turns out to be very different from what we thought before. Instead of being an activity of pure reason, it is an activity of an embodied reason.

Existentialism and Interaction with the world

7. *Burkitt (1999)* p74 Prior to thought and representation, then, there is a primordial coexistence between the body and its world, which grounds the possibility of developing conscious awareness and knowledge.
8. *Levins and Lewontin in Johnson (1987)* p 207.... the environment and the organism codetermine each other....
9. *Johnson (1987)* p 207 When we speak of 'experience', therefore, we do not merely mean a flow of mental representations. We mean to include bodily experience in all its richness. P 209 ... knowledge must be understood in terms of structures of embodied human understanding, as an interaction of a human organism with its environment.
10. *Clark (1997)* p98 Adaptive success finally accrues not to brains but to brain-body coalitions embedded in ecologically realistic environments.

Phenomenology, Perception and Embodied experience as the foundation of conceptual development and functioning

11. *Leder (1990)* p1 The human experience is incarnated. p 17 Perception is itself a motor activity. Moreover, that which is perceived is always saturated by the implicit presence of motility.
12. *Gill (2000)* p100 'Only against the backdrop of embodied experience does propositional knowledge become comprehensible and useful. p130 Embodiment is, after all, the axis or fulcrum of tacit knowing, which in turn is the matrix of all explicit knowing.
13. *Nietzsche (1969)* p 61/62) sums up the situation in respect of the body by asserting that 'The body is a great intelligence'
14. *Burkitt (1999)* p 85 Thus, the basis of meaning is not to be located in the rules that order cognition, nor in the grammatical structure of linguistic sentences, but in the bodily pattern and order of active perceptions.
15. *Gill (2000)* p 54 The main point that Polanyi wishes to make is that because tacit knowledge is the anchor or tether for explicit knowing, it necessarily follows that we always know more than we can tell.
16. *Lakoff and Johnson(1999)* p 26 For real human beings, the only realism is an embodied realism. P 78 ...second generation cognitive science is in every respect a cognitive science of the embodied mind. P 495 Concepts get their meaningthrough embodied experience. They are not part of a disembodied innate faculty of pure mind.
17. *Leder (1990)* p7 As Merleau-Ponty suggests, abstract cognition itself may sublimate but never fully escapes its inherence in a perceiving, acting body.

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What is the value of being physically literate?

Physical literacy is valuable because it fosters a fundamental human capability

a capability without which we could not develop as human beings
a capability that has the potential to enhance and enrich the quality of lives
a capability which operates in concert with our other capabilities

More specifically those making progress on their physical literacy journey:-

- develop their physical potential and
experience the satisfaction of progress and success in physical activity
- grow in self awareness and self assurance and
strengthen their global self belief and self esteem
- come to realise that being active can be rewarding and pleasurable and
develop a commitment to an active lifestyle
- have the confidence to explore participation in a wide range of activities and
thus widen their life choices
- enhance their all round health and well being and
are less likely to become over-weight and more likely to remain fit and healthy into old age
- realise the importance of taking responsibility for their own well being and learn to make informed decisions about the kind of physical activities they want to engage in, on a regular basis and
actively evaluate their life habits and patterns, with respect to participation in physical activities, from an informed position

I judge these to be highly significant values, values that give physical education **educational validity**, not least in preparation for life beyond school.

Through making progress on their physical literacy journey individuals cannot only develop the motivation and confidence to maintain an active lifestyle, they can also grow in self confidence and self esteem, enjoy participation in a wide range of activities and appreciate the beneficial effect of being active on their total well being.