



Unlock Research Research for Physical Educators

Research Journal of the Month
AUGUST 2003

Quest.

If *Quest* is not a research journal, then why is it reviewed here as though it were? A complete answer to that question would have roots that go back more than half a century, and have more convolutions than a Gordian knot. To respond for the here and now, however, an answer can be provided in straightforward fashion. *Quest* is a journal of ideas in the area of physical education, and a great many of those ideas either reflect or deal directly with research. Research reviews, topical essays making use of research-based knowledge, and critiques of the research enterprise itself are standard fare in the journal. The fact that it does not publish research reports, per se, does not mean that systematic inquiry is not a central focus. It always has been, and continues to be so.

The standing statement of Editorial Policy (as published each year) reflects that characterization.

Quest's purpose is to stimulate professional development in physical education by publishing articles concerned with issues critical to physical education in higher education. The journal does not publish original research reports but welcomes articles that are based on, compliment, or review empirical research related to the profession. Both theoretical and practical articles are considered. *Quest* serves a broad readership that includes academicians, teachers, and administrators by providing a public forum for scholarly and creative thought about the profession.

Thus, as a practical matter, if you are searching for leads to research on a particular topic, for articles about the role of research in physical education, or for essays that illustrate the uses of research-based knowledge, it makes perfect sense to peruse the pages of *Quest*, or consult any of the 20 catalogue, search, and retrieval systems in which its content is indexed (see for example: *Education Index*, *Physical Education Index*, *Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences*, *Social Sciences Citation Index*, *Current Index to Journals in Education (ERIC)*, *Sport Discus*, or *Wilson Education Abstracts*).

Sponsored by the National Association for Physical Education in Higher Education (NAPEHE), *Quest* is one of the 20 journals now published by Human Kinetics (HK). Members of both NAPEHE and the American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education (AAKPE) receive copies with their membership (nonmember rates presently are \$49 for individuals, \$159 for institutions, and \$33 for students). Published four times each year, one issue in each volume is devoted to publication of *The Academy Papers* – the papers delivered at the annual AAKPE conference. In addition, the papers from three annual lecture series (The Dudley Allen Sargent, Amy Morris Homans, and Delphine Hanna Commemorative Lectures) are published as "significant historical documents."

The three regular issues of the journal are peer refereed by members of the Editorial Board, and, when appropriate, by guest reviewers selected by the Editor. Instructions to Contributors are regularly included, and an author index appears in the closing issue of each volume (usually in November). That same issue contains a list of NAPEHE members, made particularly useful because it contains both postal and e-mail addresses. As with all of the HK journals, the cover is attractive, the inside format is clean, and the contents clearly benefit from the strong editorial and production resources of that highly successful publishing house. Subscriptions are available at the HK web site <http://www.humankinetics.com>.

Those are the basic facts, and now we can move on to more interesting things. From the beginning (nominally given as the date of the first monograph issued in December 1963) *Quest* was a target for criticism, a subject of controversy, and a mirror for political tensions within physical education that

existed long before the appearance of the maiden monograph. There is evidence that "the need for a serious journal in physical education" was discussed by leaders in the profession well prior to World War II. In that context, the word "serious" almost certainly was intended to indicate an entity that would be distinctly unlike the practitioner-oriented *Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation*, or the science-oriented pages of the *Research Quarterly*.

After several false starts and considerable jockeying, the two professional organizations that served (primarily) college and university professors of physical education, The National Association for Physical Education of College Women (NAPECW) and The National College Physical Education Association for Men (NCPEAM), agreed to co-sponsor such a "serious" journal – and *Quest* was born.

Initial tensions for the new publication, revolving largely around issues related to gender, were at least reduced by the merger of the two organizations into the present day NAPEHE. A much more profound tension, however, between a vantage point in the humanities (primarily as expressed in art and philosophy) and a vantage point in the social and biological sciences (expressed early on in motor learning and exercise physiology, but later by a growing tradition of research on teaching and teacher education) made it difficult for successive editors to establish a clear and stable identity for the journal.

Through 1978, the first 30 monographs (two per year) were idiosyncratic reflections of personal dispositions imposed by the editors (of whom I was one). Frequently uneven in quality, the monographs reflected both uncertainty about purpose and resistance to any sort of discipline from the sponsoring organizations. Paradoxically, however, the journal also was quick to establish a reputation for offering provocative thought (and sometimes zesty disputation) not otherwise available in the bland pages of most publications serving the field. Whatever its flaws, *Quest* often found itself to be a vehicle for the landmarks laid down by leading scholars (an example, among many, was F. M. Henry's combatively reformulated statement of "The Academic Discipline of Physical Education" in Monograph 29 – Winter, 1978).

Subscribers and NASPE members continued to complain that *Quest* just was not what it should be (according to their personal lights), but they also seemed to keep reading it (and manuscripts continued to be submitted). The HK years began in 1979 (with Volume 31, as the old serial numbering of monographs was abandoned), and some of the purely mechanical problems were quickly resolved. Other problems remained (or lay dormant), however, and it will be fascinating to watch what happens next.

As an example of smoldering trouble, the statement of Editorial Policy noted above reflects the historic position of NAPEHE (and the parent organizations NAPECW and NCPEAM) as very much a creature of physical education in higher education. In contrast, however, the accompanying policy statement from the partner organization, AAKPE (also prominently displayed in *Quest*), now carefully eschews any mention whatever of physical education. It is not difficult to believe that such a discontinuity represents a point of accumulating political stress. Perhaps the progenitors were right, and we really do need a "serious" journal of ideas that can rise above the turbulence of changing academic fashions and organizational politics. Stay tuned folks – the story of *Quest* is not over yet!

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