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What is This?

Australian curriculum reform II: Health and physical education

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Abstract

It is implied by governing organizations that Australia is presently experiencing its first national curriculum reform, when as the title suggests it is the second. However, until now Australian states and territories have been responsible for the education curriculum delivered within schools. The present national curriculum reform promises one curriculum framework for health and physical education (HPE), currently under review. This paper explores the history of Australian curriculum reform in the HPE key learning area, revealing that the present review offers an opportunity to focus on the vital 'implementation' stage which seems to be continually overlooked.

Introduction

The problem this paper investigates is 'what lessons can be learnt from previous HPE reform efforts'. This is imperative if the curriculum reform is to be successful and deep curriculum change is to occur. Indeed, while the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and federal government state with clarity the advantages and necessity of the new pedagogically-based curriculum reform, deeper investigation and reflection on the historical construction of the health and physical education (HPE) learning area curriculum identifies many similarities between the recommended changes and some already existing, localized frameworks. This conclusion raises another question: why change at all in HPE if not for reasons of overall political control of the curriculum and the political need to be seen to be reformist? This is strengthened by a political reform element which could be considered as an attempt to corral states

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and territories' education systems using an accountability agenda, rather than the stated need for pedagogical reform. How will curriculum be managed differently to the last curriculum reform at a national level and how deep will policy be implemented and monitored within the eight different states and territories who have maintained responsibility since 1901? (Braithwaite, 1994).

The lead writer for the new Australian HPE curriculum, professor Doune Macdonald (2012) has referred to the very slow change in HPE nationally as curriculum change 'gradualism'. This term represents a 'gradual rather than immediate change in policy' (Macdonald, 2012). Limited or lack of change in policy was a key finding in what was one of a few, if not the only, research studies to evaluate school responses to the previous HPE curriculum reform in Australia. 'Data generated in the three Case Study schools suggests that at the time the research was conducted teachers in a sample of schools were not working from Whole School Curriculum Programs (WSCP) based on the syllabus in HPE' (Lynch, 2005: 224). While this study was narrow in scope it does trigger interest in HPE policy documents which determine the delivery within schools.

The term 'gradualism' was deliberately chosen to represent the slow changes in curriculum as described by Macdonald (2013: 97):

'Might gradualism be a wise approach to curriculum reform given the complexity of stakeholders? What of the different iterations of HPE and its derivatives nationally? And the sometimes fraught journeys of Australian curriculum learning areas in the earlier phases of writing and implementation?'

This statement suggests that previous national curriculum reforms have not been consistently implemented within Australia and raises a number of pertinent dynamics that may have impeded implementation. These include stakeholders and their interests, iterations or versions of delivery, and the contentions involved in having one document represent all member groups. One stakeholder group identified as a flaw in Penney and Harris's (1998) research data during the implementation of the national PE curriculum of England and Wales was teachers. They found their opinions to be mixed with regards to the need for change and questioned whether it was necessary. This resulted in not only 'slippage', but also resistance to changes they did not believe in (Jewett et al., 1995).

Teacher and non-teacher stakeholders advocate many focus areas that sit within the HPE umbrella. These groups include mental health promotion, sexuality and reproductive health, food and nutrition, safety, drug use, respectful relationships, personal identity and sense of self, physical activity and fitness, games and sports, and aquatics and water-based activities (ACARA, 2012: 22). Hence, there are diverse perspectives in what can be best described as a complex and rich field representing a geographically large country.

It can be argued that the term 'gradualism' is cleverly and diplomatically used to maintain all stakeholders' interest, openness, and subsequently synergy required so that change can be optimized. However, it can be cautioned that by labelling the new HPE curriculum change as 'gradualism' it may adversely disguise flaws embedded within the previous curriculum reform (1994) (within some Australian states and regions). To put it bluntly, implementation flaws can be identified and prevailed, or they can be ignored and the cycle will be allowed to continue, forever designing a new curriculum in the hope it might successfully reach students in schools. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the HPE curriculum literature by identifying and investigating curriculum reform implementation weaknesses from past attempts, that is, areas that can be improved, thus, offering valuable insights into enhancing curriculum change. The analysis process involves examining literature, Australian national visions and policy documents at state

and territory level (curriculum teacher guidelines), reflecting on the historical construction, analysing (selecting, filtering, and categorizing), and synthesizing. By investigating 'what lessons can be learnt', three historical and contextual facets are examined as follows:

- curriculum reform in Australia: the need;
- curriculum change, enabling curriculum reform; and
- Australian HPE curriculum: unpacking 'gradualism'.

Themes that emerge include stages of process for curriculum change and equity in effort required, stakeholder beliefs, socio-cultural approach, equal value and attention as a learning area, similarities between this reform and the previous, effort required at various educational levels (classroom, school, system, state, and national), previous difficulties in national management attempts, and quality assurance.

In conclusion, for the present HPE curriculum reform this means that until all stages of the curriculum change process, especially implementation and evaluation, are given appropriate time and energy, consistent deep curriculum change will not be evidenced. The paper's contribution to literature increases the likelihood of reform; subsequently the ideal of a consistently implemented HPE national curriculum reaching schools is heightened and can be collaboratively worked towards. This paper therefore evaluates what has been planned for and what has resulted in HPE national curriculum change to date, offering direction for success.

Curriculum reform in Australia: the need

The purpose of the latest national reform is to enable a socially just curriculum throughout Australia, a large country consisting of diverse school contexts. Australian academic education commentator and professor at Sydney University, Ewing (2010: 127) states: 'The most important driver for a National Curriculum should be about equity and social justice and improved learning outcomes for our most disadvantaged and isolated students.' Chair of the ACARA board, McGaw (2007) argues that at present many Australian students' educational outcomes are more a function of their socio-economic situation than their abilities and skills when Australia's educational results are compared with those of other high achieving Western countries. Furthermore, Ewing (2010) states that up to 70% of the differences in educational achievement in Australia can be attributable to the social background of students; such conclusions imply that equity does not exist between various Australian education sectors.

Through reflection, defined by Ewing (2010: 17) as the 'deliberate and focused attempts to make greater meaning and understanding of our experience', recommendations can be made from historical construction and implementation of curricula within Australia. Dinan-Thompson (2009) refers to this most successful national reform to date (1994) as the 'de-facto' curriculum reform. History reveals that the first national curriculum reform actually took place in the early 1990s:

'In April 1991, the Australian Education Council (AEC) launched the projects in their final form by deciding that Statements and Profiles would be developed for eight broad learning areas, forming a template of the knowledge and processes to be taught and learnt in Australian schools' (AEC, 1994: 50).

The second attempt at curriculum national reform is presently taking place:

'In 2008 all Australian governments agreed that a quality education for all young Australians is critical to maintaining Australia's productivity and quality of life. They agreed that a national curriculum would play a key role in delivering quality education and committed to the development of a K–12 national curriculum' (ACARA, 2011).

It is explicitly implied by governing organizations that this latest attempt at a national curriculum is a first in that it is dissimilar to other curriculum reform efforts.

For the first time Australia is going to have one curriculum framework. It is stated by ACARA (2010) that Australia should have one curriculum for school students, rather than the eight different arrangements (states and territories) that exist at the moment. As opposed to the last 'de-facto' curriculum reform where for the first time Australia had not one national framework for each key learning area, but one national curriculum statement and profile. The obvious and common sense approach of having one curriculum for one nation seems logical. However, deeper investigations within the HPE key learning area reveal that there is little change, or it can be argued that there is no change in the proposed curriculum reform process from the last one.

This channels thought to the curriculum change process. For if states and territories, school systems, and geographical areas are not on level playing fields as political reform efforts suggest, then it can be argued that curriculum change efforts in the last national curriculum reform, the 'de-facto' curriculum reform, were inconsistent. This implies that it is not a promised curriculum reform, evidenced as a new policy construction (written curriculum) that is needed. Rather, the implementation and evaluation stages of curriculum change require completion through continued time, effort, support, and pressure. Until all stages of the curriculum change process are given appropriate time and energy, consistent deep curriculum change in all sectors of Australia's education will not be evidenced.

The present national curriculum is a general framework and it will not warrant change by itself, for it is what occurs in the local contexts of schools and classrooms that determines curriculum change. Furthermore, history suggests that few reforms actually make it into classroom lessons (Cuban, 1990); hence, no improvement can then be made. As with the last de-facto Australian curriculum reform, ACARA (2010: 10) state there are 'four interrelated phases necessary for curriculum change; curriculum shaping, curriculum writing, implementation, and curriculum evaluation and review'. How these stages are met is paramount. The various contexts and autonomy of schools are essential and need consideration; however, these also append to the already complex stage of curriculum implementation (Kirk and Macdonald, 2001). This is supported by Ewing (2010: 10):

'Given the different interactions between teachers and learners, the different beliefs and practices about how people learn and the huge differences in the contexts in which this learning happens, it is important to acknowledge that no one lesson can ever be implemented in exactly the same way from one suburb to the next, let alone across the country.'

Throughout history, Australian education has been the responsibility of the eight different states and territories because of constitutional decisions taken in 1901 (Braithwaite, 1994). 'The Commonwealth government has an economic interest in the curriculum ensuring it provides students with the knowledge and skills that will enhance the earning capacity of future generations' (Dinan-Thompson, 2006: 27). Hence, consent is often persuaded by the states and territories through the promise of commonwealth funding (Ewing, 2010). The state and territory government

constitutional responsibility for schooling does seem to have been a hindrance to any national efforts in the past (Ewing, 2010). It is feasible that collaborating and coordinating eight governments is less manageable than having one government responsible for mandating education. However, as with the last reform efforts, ultimate responsibility for implementing the curriculum lies with jurisdictions, systems, and schools (ACARA, 2010). Hence, the pertinent curriculum change stages of implementation and evaluation are delegated to states and territories, and ultimately school systems and schools (Kirk and Macdonald, 2001), thus increasing the difficulty in management by a national governing body.

'Quality' assurance is endorsed by national reform stakeholders (AITSL, 2010), representing teaching and learning accountability. It is central to the reform agenda as 'quality teaching and learning and student achievement relate to curriculum planning and implementation' (Ewing, 2010: 39). Quality assurance is planned to be achieved through national consistency in teacher registration and improvement in the quality of teaching; it is led by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and designated by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) (AITSL, 2010). This process has involved teacher registration being introduced for the first time in 2011 to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) under the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. Furthermore, AITSL has the role of 'developing and maintaining rigorous national professional standards for teaching and school leadership and implementing an agreed system of national certification for teachers and school leaders based on these Standards' (*Education Review*, 2010: 32). ACARA has also constructed the 'My School' website which according to McGaw (2011) serves two purposes: firstly, it provides parents and students with information on each school; and, secondly, it provides schools and their communities with comparisons of their students' performances in literacy and numeracy with those of students in other schools.

As can be seen through the development of teacher standards and the comparison of student's results, quality assurance is a key aspect of the present national reform, which places demands on teacher quality and accountability. It was Australia's significant decline in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) results in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) between 2003 and 2006 that inspired the latest national curriculum reform. 'In 2000 Australia ranked in 4th place in literacy and Australia's relative position in reading in PISA had slipped from 2nd in 2000 and 2003 to 6th in 2006' (McGaw, 2010). Hence, the key subject areas examined by the performance of 15 year olds, English, mathematics, and science, were given priority and placed in phase one of the present national curriculum, along with history (ACARA, 2010). The politicized accountability agenda has a strong presence in the guise of quality assurance in this reform, which does appear to be results driven.

Curriculum change: the purpose of curriculum reform

The terms 'curriculum change' and 'curriculum reform' are often used interchangeably. However, they are distinctly different; curriculum change must occur in order for curriculum reform to take place. Ewing (2010: 148) describes the terms with clarity:

'Change arguably refers more generally to undertaking something new: a movement from one state, form or direction to another. Curriculum reform implies more than change — it is a direct assertion that this change will bring about improvement or enhancement. Curriculum re-form therefore suggests

that students will benefit from the innovative practices, materials or the teacher's change in beliefs and pedagogical approach. In other words, their experiences at school will in some way improve.'

Policy construction, implementation, and evaluation are designed to bring about curriculum change, which according to Dinan-Thompson (2001: 9) 'implies a level of metamorphosis in the overall plan of education, including teachers and their ideologies'. Curriculum change is a complex process (Sparkes, 1991) and is socially complex (Fullan, 2001: 69), facts which are often ignored (Hall, 1992) as schools and teachers in many countries appear to be extremely resistant to real (deep) change, often experiencing only surface or superficial change (Sparkes, 1991). 'Bernstein described pedagogic discourse as a "principle" or "rule" that brings a range of discourses into conjunction with each other in educational settings' (Kirk and Macdonald, 2001: 553). It does appear that only surface curriculum change, including teachers' discourses and ideologies in HPE, has been previously achieved.

Teachers' ideologies were influenced by the socio-cultural perspective adopted by the HPE key learning area in the last 'de-facto' reform (Kirk and Macdonald, 2001) which emerged 'as a complex counter-discourse informed by critical pedagogues and critical pedagogy in Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand' (Cliff, Wright and Clarke, 2009: 166). More so, this has in some states and territories of Australia changed the teaching and learning in HPE, in particular the preparation of pre-service teachers:

> 'As a perspective through which to interpret HPE content and issues, it has important implications both for the work of HPE teachers and for how these teachers are prepared through pre-service teacher education programs; first, because its sociological and cultural studies underpinnings represent a significant departure from the predominantly medioscientific, biophysical and psychological foundations of HPE; and second, because its attention to social and cultural influences on health put it in opposition to notions that locate responsibility for health almost solely in the individual and his or her decisions' (Cliff, Wright and Clarke, 2009: 165).

While the adoption of the socio-cultural perspective was national, the depth that this perspective filtered into the implementation of the HPE curriculum in each state and territory has differed considerably. For example, the New South Wales (NSW) Institute of Teachers (NSWIT) subject content requirements for teaching HPE in the state of NSW primary or secondary schools (abridged) July 2010 (2010) policy document states that the minimum requirements for a primary teacher and a secondary teacher in the key learning area include academic study in physical education, health, and personal development (equally weighted) underpinned by cultural and sociological perspectives. Furthermore the key learning area is named personal development, health, and physical education (PDHPE) (Table 1).

Hence, the NSWIT requirements advocate the principles of the 1994 HPE 'de-facto' national statement and profile and promote the socio-cultural perspective.

However, the same cannot be shared for the state of Victoria, where the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) specialist area guidelines policy (2012) state the guidelines shown in Table 2.

This policy has no evidence of a socio-cultural perspective and suggests there has been no departure from the predominantly medioscientific, biophysical, and psychological foundations of HPE. Furthermore, the key learning area is titled physical education which Dinan-Thompson (2006) shares is the name referred to the key learning area pre-1994 national statement and profile. There is no presence of socio-cultural health or personal development, again, raising a question

Table 1. NSWIT (2010) HPE secondary teacher requirements.

Subject area years 7–12	Relevant areas of academic study for first teaching subject	Relevant areas of academic study for second teaching subject
PDHPE	A major (three years of degree level study with at least four units at level 2 or above) in personal development and/or health studies (with a socio-cultural perspective) and/or physical education	At least two years (four units) of degree level study in personal development and/or health studies (with a socio-cultural perspective) and/or physical education with at least two units at level 2 or above
	WITH	WITH
	at least three units of study in health education including mental health, sexual health, relationships, drug education, child protection education, gender studies, and risk taking behaviour	at least two units of study in health education including mental health, sexual health, relationships, drug education, child protection education, gender studies, and risk taking behaviour
	AND	AND
	at least three units of study in physical education including contemporary physical activities, dance, gymnastics, games, and sport. Vocationally oriented courses, coaching certificates, and umpiring/refereeing accreditation in sports and physical activities are not recognized as equivalent.	at least two units of study in physical education including contemporary physical activities, dance, gymnastics, games, and sport. Vocationally oriented courses, coaching certificates, and umpiring/refereeing accreditation in sports and physical activities are not recognized as equivalent.

Table 2. VIT (2012) specialist area guidelines for HPE.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (primary teaching)
  Major study in physical education
  The major study in physical education should include study in human movement (e.g. growth and motor development, exercise physiology, skill acquisition) and in the skill activity areas of aquatics, games, fundamental motor skills, fitness education, dance, athletics, ball handling, and sport education
  A current first aid certificate (Emergency First Aid Level 2) AND a current AustSwim Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety certificate (or a current Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA) - Swim Australia Teacher certificate) are required

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (secondary teaching)
  One and a half years of study in physical education
  The one and a half years of study should include study in the following areas:
  (a) Discipline study: human movement (e.g. anatomy, physiology, exercise physiology, biomechanics, growth and motor development, skill acquisition, and psycho-social aspects of physical activity), health, and nutrition
  (b) Skills: fundamental motor skills, ball handling, dance, games, fitness education, athletics, aquatics, sport education
  A current first aid certificate (Emergency First Aid Level 2) AND a current AustSwim Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety certificate (or a current Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA) - Swim Australia Teacher certificate) are required

over the level of curriculum change that resulted from the last 'de-facto' national curriculum reform.

Promoting social justice and equity in education through the HPE curriculum materials (1994) and the socio-cultural approach does seem to have led the way for other curriculum key learning areas. This is evident through the national curriculum and explicitly within the goals established at the Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians:

- Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
- Goal 2: All young Australians become the following:
    - successful learners,
    - confident and creative individuals, and
    - active and informed citizens (MCEETYA, 2008).

These goals have driven the national curriculum framework; they support critical inquiry where Macdonald (2013: 102) suggests this to mean 'content and pedagogies that engage all students as active learners and, while doing so, question the "taken-for-granteds" of how physical activity and health practices and opportunities play out locally and globally'. Hence, the national curriculum is underpinned by the socio-cultural perspective (ACARA, 2010).

It is important to understand how this perspective first developed in HPE. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the HPE school curriculum within Australian schools was considered to have been in crisis (Dinan-Thompson, 2009; Tinning, Kirk, Evans et al., 1994). Curriculum research indicates that the 'crisis' was experienced at an international level also (Dinan-Thompson, 2009: 4). 'In-house' discussions of crisis at HPE conferences and in journals led to a senate inquiry (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) into the state of HPE (physical and sport education) within Australian education systems. The findings in the report by the senate standing committee on environment, recreation and the arts (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) confirmed the 'in-house' discussions of crisis (Dinan-Thompson, 2009); findings included that there was in fact a decline in the opportunities for quality HPE (physical and sport education) in Australian schools although paradoxically there was unanimous support for the learning area. The problems were mainly with resources and the time allocation to the key learning area which resulted in a drastic decline in children's skill levels and physical fitness (Tinning, Kirk, Evans et al., 1994). Another major problem was that 'suitably qualified physical education teachers are not being employed to teach physical education and school sport to all children' (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992: xiv). There was also no required accreditation or formal training in physical or sport education as a condition of employment for graduating primary school teachers (Moore, 1994). Webster (2001: 1) recommended that 'pre-service education of primary school teachers include mandatory units directly related to the content strands of the syllabus, with further opportunities for teachers to specialize in PE courses'.

These issues, according to the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) (2011) still exist today: 'It is true that some schools struggle to provide quality PE and sport, in particular in primary schools.' Furthermore, in England and Wales, which is similar to Australia there are concerns relating to implementation: 'Research suggests that primary schools are, by themselves, unable to deliver quality early experiences, while the contribution of PE specialists in secondary schools may come too late to impact a majority of children in relation to their competence, perceptions and motivation' (Kirk, 2005: 240).

Graduate teachers are to this day completing teaching degrees within Australia without studying any units in HPE and are then responsible for implementing this learning area in schools (Lynch,

2005, 2013). Again, this implies that curriculum change in some schools may have only been surface level if at all. HPE primary specialist teachers are only employed sporadically within primary schools across Australia with, according to Dinan-Thompson (2009: 48), questions often raised about 'who is teaching HPE, and who is deemed competent to teach HPE in schools'. Hence, the recommendations of a senate inquiry made 20 years ago appear to not have been achieved.

HPE teachers need to be able to deliver quality HPE lessons across all strands, which include physical activity, health, and personal development. This is supported by the latest national curriculum which states: 'Schools and teachers determine pedagogical and other delivery considerations' (ACARA, 2010: 10). This involves the teacher having the knowledge and understanding of the various pedagogies that exist in HPE and the awareness to choose the most appropriate for each particular learning experience (Tinning, 1999). This often involves choosing critical, socially just pedagogies rather than the traditional dominant science and performance-based pedagogies for HPE (Tinning, 2004).

As with this present national curriculum reform, the last was the responsibility of the states and territories to implement. Within the state of Queensland the 1999 HPE syllabus, for the first time, was constructed under the guidance of the three schooling systems within Queensland: Education Queensland (EQ), the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC), and the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland (AISQ). The syllabus was a public incremental educational policy (Dinan-Thompson, 1998) trialled in all three school systems; however, the implementation process was the responsibility of each of the three school systems (Dinan-Thompson, 1998). This appears to be the same arrangement for the latest national curriculum framework as stated by ACARA (2010: 25): 'State and territory school and curriculum authorities are responsible for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.'

There is a theme emerging within this investigation; in simple terms, effort is being afforded the shaping and writing stages of the curriculum change process, however not towards the implementation and evaluation stages. After a period of time, then, it is 'out with the old and in with the new', reverting back to the shaping and designing stages once again, and the cycle continues. The problem of educational change is more a question of the 'difficulties related to planning and coordinating a multilevel social process involving thousands of people' (Fullan, 2001: 69). To understand fully this process Goodson (1997: 196) suggests 'one must look inside the curriculum' which according to Sparkes (1990) involves considering levels of teacher change for investigating deep, real change in schools. Unless there is significant establishment of all three levels only superficial change will result (Figure 1).

This is supported by Fullan (2001) who suggests that a fully implemented innovation or reform will involve changes in (1) curriculum materials, (2) teaching practices, and (3) beliefs or understandings about the curriculum and learning practices. 'Effective strategies for improvement require an understanding of the process, a way of thinking that cannot be captured in any list of steps to be followed' (Fullan, 2001: 71). This becomes confusing and problematic for schools as 'the goals and processes of change are narrowly proscribed by existing structures, resources and traditions, with the result that schools always fall short of meeting the needs of young people and their communities' (Macdonald, 2003: 139).

Real change involves transformation of people's beliefs about their surroundings which can be threatening and stressful for the teachers involved (Sparkes, 1991). Transformations often result in conflict, loss, and struggle which are fundamental to successful change (Fullan, 1982). The appellation 'real change' is referred to by Dinan-Thompson (2001: 9) more appropriately as 'authentic change' which includes the 'important elements of emotion and the role of interactions
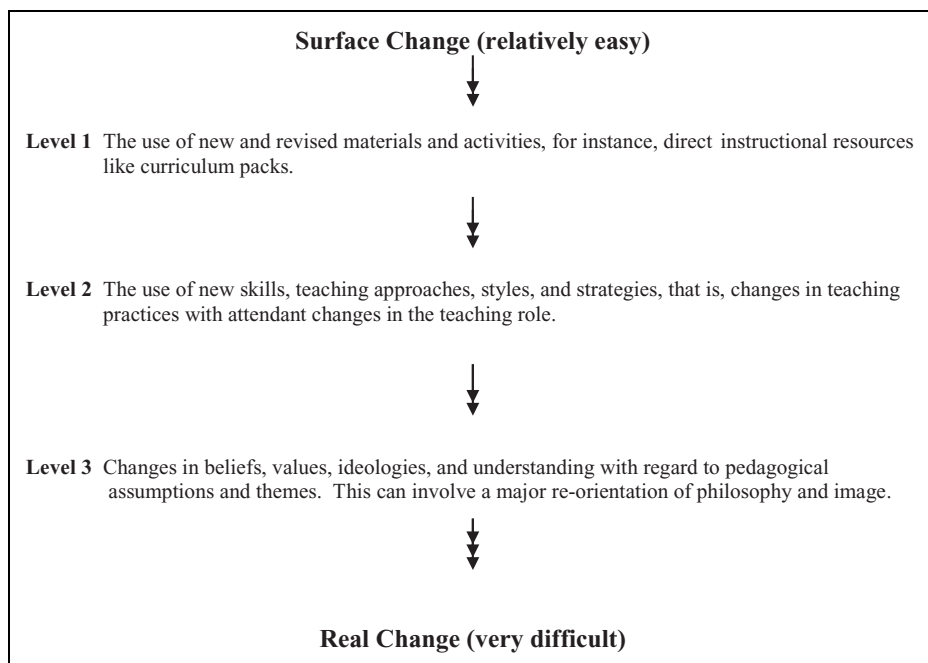
Figure 1. Levels of teacher change (Sparkes, 1990: 4).

in teacher change'. Hargreaves (1997: 109) warns that if emotional dimensions are ignored during curriculum change then 'emotions and feelings will only re-enter the change process by the back door'. Therefore, authentic change takes into consideration the micro-politics which often cause change to fail (Datnow, 1998; Dinan-Thompson, 2002; Sparkes, 1990).

The present national reform, as with the last 'de-facto' reform proposes to achieve curriculum change using a collaborative approach. 'ACARA's work is carried out in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, principals, governments, state and territory education authorities, professional education associations, community groups, and the general public' (ACARA, 2011). This approach according to McDonald (2000: 12) requires a balance of pressure: 'Substantial curriculum change requires support and pressure.' Pressure enables curriculum change to occur at personal, occupational, and societal levels (Candy, 1997). Personal pressure includes changes within the classroom and depends on factors such as the teacher's year level, composition of students in a class, pedagogies, staff transfers, career direction, and the teacher's lifestyle. Occupational pressure for change may occur as a result of changes in school administration, policies, and curriculum. The impact of education paradigms at national and international levels results in pressure for change within society. Societal changes may influence both the occupational and personal lives of teachers (Candy, 1997).

Curriculum change requires effort not only from the individual teacher, but efforts at the school, system, and professional teaching levels. MacPherson (1994) states that heavy demands are often placed on teachers for accountability of student learning and development which has had questionable success in the past. Within the context of HPE in the state of Queensland, Walmsley (1998: 7) suggests that 'if policy represents practice, it would appear that physical education as an

area of curriculum is highly resistant to change'. Effort at the school, system, and professional levels needs to include professional development, 'a fundamental factor for the improvement of the educational process' (Day, 1994: 108). One of the paradoxes of the teaching profession is that while student life-long learning is accentuated, support for teachers as life-long learners is often muted (Sachs, 1997).

The notion that the 'de-facto' curriculum implementation may not have been sufficient is strengthened through investigating the history of the HPE learning area in Australia. One does not have to look back far in history to realize that the ideals of the new national curriculum may not be as revolutionary or as promising as advocated by governing bodies.

Australian HPE curriculum: unpacking 'gradualism'

It appears that curriculum change in the HPE learning area has been nationally inconsistent, with some states implementation of the last 1994 curriculum being more gradual than others. Also, I argue this inconsistency went unrecognized due to the lack of attention or priority the HPE learning area is given. This was evidenced by the panic caused during recent curriculum reform events, when it was feared that HPE could be left out of the latest national curriculum process (ACHPER, 2010). Interestingly, HPE was only confirmed as being one of the learning areas to be included in the national curriculum in mid-April 2010. Ewing (2010: 140) shares: 'It remains unclear why other Key Learning Areas, such as Social, Health and Physical Education have not yet been included in the planning.' There was grave concern on behalf of the ACHPER (2009) that HPE may be omitted from the national curriculum.

> 'Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) will continue to lobby if that is what it takes to join the national curriculum club but we would prefer Health and Physical Education to be included on the basis of its relevance and credibility around lifestyle education and its significance to learning across the curriculum.'

This concern grew from events during Australia's curriculum history where the learning area had been neglected. Stolz (2009: 45) reinforces that 'historically, the discipline of Health and Physical Education has struggled for legitimacy at most, if not all levels of the educational system'. This belief is supported by Brooker and Penney (2009: 61): 'HPE has been under threat of sustained marginalization among educational policy-makers and those overseeing whole curriculum developments focusing on other learning areas that are perceived to be of more importance to children's development.' In the Australian state of Queensland for example this neglect was conceded and evidenced by decisions made during the last curriculum reform by the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC). The Queensland HPE syllabus, together with the science syllabus, was given priority and both syllabuses were the first to be developed as it was acknowledged that both science and HPE had been neglected (Macdonald, Glasby and Carlson, 2000). In April 2010, concerns of many advocates for HPE not being part of the present national curriculum were laid to rest when it was supplemented to phase three of the curriculum development plan (of three phases) for students in each year from K–10 (ACHPER, 2010). Nonetheless, HPE as a learning area did appear to be an afterthought rather than a priority.

Throughout the history of HPE many discourses have influenced the construction and delivery of the curricula. These have included military, scientific, health, and sporting discourses, which have been underpinned by ideologies of sexism, elitism, healthism, individualism, and mesomorphism.

These ideologies often permeate the hidden curriculum (Colquhoun, 1991, 1992; Hickey, 1995; Kirk, 1992; Kirk and Twigg, 1993; Scraton, 1990; Tinning, 1990; Tinning and Fitzclarence, 1992; Tinning, Kirk and Evans, 1993). It was the presence of such discourses that influenced the last curriculum reform for HPE in the early 1990s and in particular the adoption of the socio-cultural perspective (Tinning and Fitzclarence, 1992). It can be assumed that if the last HPE curriculum reform was successful that such discourses evident 20 years ago no longer exist to a degree of concern. However, Australian academic, professor at Queensland University and renowned HPE expert, Tinning (2009: vi) sheds light on this assumption asking: 'If the "new" [sic] curriculum has been around for a decade or so [derived from the national statement and profile], why is it still necessary to advocate the very principles upon which it is based?' Suggesting that the implementation of the HPE curriculum derived from the national statement and profile (1994) was inadequately only at a surface level.

HPE does belong and play a major role in Australia's curriculum; in national policy it is given equal status to any other learning area. In 1989, a statement of 10 common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia were designed at the Hobart declaration on schooling (AEC, 1989). The Australian Education Council (AEC) has since been renamed and is today known as the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). The Hobart declaration on schooling was accepted by the state, territory, and commonwealth ministers of education. Goal nine was 'to provide for the physical development and personal health and fitness of students, and for the creative use of leisure time' (AEC, 1989), thus highlighting the importance of HPE as a key learning area within Australian education. Similarly, HPE was identified as one of the eight key learning areas in the Adelaide declaration on national goals for schooling in the 21st century in 1999 and more recently in the Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians, held in December 2008.

The HPE national statement and profile had a similar if not the same purpose as the present national framework, a socially just curriculum. The national HPE statement is based upon the key principles of diversity, social justice, and supportive environments (AEC, 1994). The development of the 'de-facto' national statements and profiles were to promote cohesion in the curriculum through national collaboration, to enable equitable sharing of resources across systems, and to remove unnecessary differences that were in existence between the systems, thus developing a nationally consistent curriculum (Marsh, 1994). This is comparable to the latest national curriculum (ACARA, 2010: 25). Hence, the present promise of the national curriculum and an equitable education is not a new concept within Australia.

During the time of its design and release the 1994 HPE national statements and profiles created as much impetus if not arguably more. The devising of the 1994 documents coincided with a senate inquiry into physical and sport education and provided a timely incentive for the development of new state and territory HPE syllabi (Dinan, 2000; Glover, 2001; QSCC, 1999a, 1999b). At the time, these strategic political initiatives offered possibilities for rescuing HPE from potential cultural obsolescence (Kirk and Penney, 1996). While this latest national curriculum reform has gained immense attention, the last reform efforts cannot be diminished. According to Glover (2001: 375) the 1990s were a 'significant and turbulent period in the history of educational policy, marking the most intense national collaboration in the history of Australian education' with the development of the national statements and profiles being one of the most important initiatives in the 20th century.

The structure of the curriculum documents, in particular the present reform's framework and the last 'de-facto' reform's statement and profile, are comparable. The purpose being as follows: 'The Statement sets out to define what is unique and distinctive about the field, while the Profile offers a

means of reporting on student learning' (Glover, 2001; Kirk 1995: 2). The latest national curriculum 'describes knowledge, skills and understanding organized by learning areas and that form the entitlement of a learning area' (ACARA, 2010: 17), which replaces the role of the statement. The achievement standards within the framework 'provide for a nationally consistent approach to assessment and reporting' (ACARA, 2010: 22), which draws similarities to the role of the profile document in the last curriculum reform. Furthermore, the 'de-facto' national statement and profile documents were also used as a model for states and territories to develop their own syllabus documents from.

There are parallels that can be made also between the documents contextual purpose; the major change in the 1994 national statements and profiles was the shift from content-based education to outcome-based education. The present national curriculum is guided by the Melbourne declaration on educational goals which emphasizes the importance of 'knowledge, skills and understanding of learning areas' (ACARA, 2010: 4) with a focus on 'generic and higher order' thinking skills (Dinan-Thompson, 2009: 10) as it 'pursues deep learning' (ACARA, 2010: 27). It can be argued that this is not a new shift in Australian education but rather a concept that has evolved gradually and grown over the last decade or so.

State and territory syllabi developed from the 1994 'de-facto' national statement and profile differed slightly in terminology and general layout of the document. 'However, there is some agreement in that the strands/main ideas are typically aligned with year levels' (Dinan-Thompson 2006: 34). When the context of the school and 'world perspectives' of the students is taken into consideration by teachers during the planning, at some stage along the implementation process there will be a degree of autonomy that influences the curriculum in some form. 'A teacher or other educator interprets the formal curriculum (perceived curriculum) and then enacts, translates or operationalises this curriculum in a classroom' (Ewing, 2010: 40). This is acknowledged by ACARA (2010: 10):

> 'Jurisdictions, systems and schools will be able to implement the Australian Curriculum in ways that value teachers' professional knowledge, reflect local contexts and take into account individual students' family, cultural and community backgrounds. Schools and teachers determine pedagogical and other delivery considerations.'

Therefore, one does have to question the importance the terminology within documents play and the difference if any, this will make to the delivery of formal curriculum for students? This question is one of importance as terminology consistency appears to be the only amendment between the 'de-facto' national statement and profile for HPE (1994) and what the latest national framework promises. Reid (2006) supports this question suggesting that the overarching motivation for a coherent framework should be about the improvement of learning outcomes for all students. How does this latest curriculum offer more to students than the last? This sustains questioning of the implementation process of the 1994 'de-facto' national statements and profiles, and specifically asks what has been planned differently for the latest reform implementation stage.

Learning from past experiences: concluding remarks

Until all stages of the curriculum change process, especially implementation and evaluation, are given appropriate time and energy, history suggests that consistent deep curriculum change will not be evidenced. This paper questions what is different about the latest HPE national curriculum reform in Australia. Through reflecting on the historical construction of the HPE curriculum,

namely investigating literature, Australian national visions, and state curriculum teacher guidelines, it appears this political reform implementation plan is no different to the last. Successful implementation must include policy change to enable national consistency within teacher pre-service preparation. Also, it must involve deep penetration through localizing the national curriculum. Curriculum change must occur in order for curriculum reform to take place. Investigation into this process appears to be cyclical in the nature of Australian curriculum reform attempts and heavily weighted in curriculum design.

In conclusion it is argued that for reform to improve students' experiences at school, the HPE learning area needs to continue the last curriculum change stages of implementation and evaluation for as long as possible, and requires the on-going support of curriculum specialists, researchers, and practitioners. This national reform for all learning areas can appear to be an attempt to corral states and territories' education systems and key curriculum learning areas into a nationally-directed framework using a politicized accountability agenda, results driven in literacy and numeracy (where HPE has been an afterthought); however, it does not diminish the opportunity presented for HPE. It can be strongly argued that HPE as a learning area within the contemporary school curriculum is vital, more so today than ever before. On a final note, it is time the exemplary role HPE assumed in previous curriculum design, which is leading present national curriculum change, be acknowledged.

Funding

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