Challenging perspectives - Room for all at the table

Inclusion and equity in HPE policy and practice- An evaluation of school responses within three Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) primary schools

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Abstract

The 1999 Queensland P-10 Health and Physical Education syllabus adopted a socio-cultural approach to learning, underpinned by social justice principles which include diversity, equity and supportive environments. This approach has afforded HPE even greater relevance in Catholic schools. Successful implementation of inclusion and equity within the syllabus requires teachers to have an understanding of various pedagogies and an awareness of when to choose the most appropriate.

This research has been designed within a constructionist paradigm. An interpretivist study was conducted employing symbolic interactionism. This qualitative, interpretive study is most appropriate as meanings were constructed. The case study methodology was chosen to construct meaning through capturing the context of each school. The sites for the three case studies involved: one small sized Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) primary school (less than 200 students); one medium sized BCE primary school (200 - 400 students); and one large sized BCE primary school (over 400 students). The participants included teachers and students from the respective schools. The data gathering strategies used were; semi-structured and focus group interviews, reflective journal note taking, observations, questionnaire and document analysis.

The research revealed that school principals play a significant role in the implementation of the 1999 HPE syllabus and the social justice principles it entails, a role made more imperative by the absence of BCE HPE Curriculum Officers and systemic HPE professional development. The data generated in this small-scale sample suggests that the HPE key learning area requires further system level support and attention so that the social justice principles promoted in various national, state and systemic policies can be implemented successfully in all BCE primary schools.

Policy

The Australian Education Council recommended in 1991 that statements and profiles be developed for eight broad learning areas of which Health and Physical Education (HPE) was one (Australian Education Council, 1994a). A major change in the National Statements and Profiles was the shift from content-based education to outcome-based education and the new national "HPE statement was based upon key principles of diversity, social justice and supportive environments" (Australian Education Council, 1994a, p. 5). The National Statements and Profiles (Australian Education Council, 1994a; 1994b) were written 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, in a nationally consistent curriculum (Marsh, 1994).

Throughout the history of HPE many discourses have influenced the construction and delivery of the HPE 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 & Twigg 1993; Scraton, 1990; Tinning, 1990; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992; Tinning, Kirk, & Evans, 1993), wherein students acquire knowledge and attitudes unintentionally while in the school environment (Kirk, 1992). The hidden curriculum relates directly to the actual learning in practice.

The devising of the HPE National Statement and Profile coincided with a Senate Inquiry into physical and sport education and provided a timely incentive for the development of a new Queensland HPE syllabus (Dinan, 2000; Glover, 2001; Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999a). The Queensland HPE syllabus (1999) is a policy, more specifically, a public incremental educational policy (Dinan-Thompson, 1998) and its implementation required primary schools to replace the outdated 1972 HPE syllabus.

The Queensland P-10 HPE syllabus adopted a socio-cultural approach to learning which recognises that students are influenced by the different physical, social, cultural, political, economic and environmental forces (Dann, 1999). The socio-cultural approach is underpinned by social justice principles. Within the curriculum material, "The principles of diversity, equity and supportive environments are highlighted to develop in students an understanding of, and a commitment to, a socially just society" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999a, p.3). As a result people are assisted to make well-judged decisions in relation to good health and well-being (QSCC, 1999b).

The choice of the socio-cultural perspective is supported by Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) who considered the crisis in physical education at the time of the syllabus construction, to have cultural meaning. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, before the development of the current HPE syllabus, the HPE curriculum within Australian schools was considered to be in crisis (Tinning, Kirk, Evans, & Glover, 1994), a situation that was true of the physical education key learning area in Queensland schools as well (Walmsley, 1998).

HPE teachers today need to be able to deliver quality HPE lessons across the three strands of the syllabus: enhancing personal development; developing the concepts and skills for physical activities; and promoting the health of individuals and communities. This involves teachers having the knowledge and understanding of a socio-cultural approach, of various pedagogies that can achieve this in HPE and awareness of when to choose the most appropriate pedagogical approach for particular HPE learning experiences (Tinning, 1999). Often this entails favouring critical, socially just pedagogies over the traditional dominant scientistic and performance-oriented pedagogy in HPE. Teachers need to be educated and trained to use socio-critical pedagogies (Tinning, 2004).

A socio-cultural approach to implementing the HPE syllabus, underpinned by social justice principles of diversity, equity and a supportive environment has afforded HPE even greater relevance in Catholic schools. Under the HPE umbrella, physical education sits alongside health education, outdoor education, home economics and religious education (Macdonald, 2003; Macdonald & Glover, 1997). In Catholic education, the HPE learning area is strongly connected to the Religious Education (RE) curriculum (Lynch, 2004b) and in particular the faith dimension of the RE syllabus (BCE, 2003). One of the three HPE syllabus strands, Enhancing Personal Development is an essential curriculum teaching component within Religious Education (Lynch, 2004b) and in the physical dimension students are presented with many practical and social experiences that require living and reflecting upon Catholic religious traditions and gospel values (Lynch, 2004a).

The findings of the Senate Inquiry (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) supported the in-house discussions of crisis among HPE professionals. The problems identified 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, & Glover, 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, p.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) and due to inadequate HPE teacher training teachers often lack confidence to teach HPE effectively (Morgan & Bourke, 2005). Furthermore, the best time for children to learn and refine their motor skills is in the preschool and early primary school years (Branta, Haubenstricker & Seefeldt,, 1984; Commonwealth of Australia, 1992; Espenschade & Eckert, 1980). However, when generalist teachers are unable to provide a meaningful HPE program, the community questions the necessity of HPE in the curriculum (Hickey, 1992).

Brisbane Catholic Education

Catholic schools educate approximately one in five school students in Australia (Australian Education Union, 2003; MCEETYA, 1995) and therefore influence a large percentage of Australian school students. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) is responsible for the five autonomous Catholic authorities within the state of Queensland for which Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) is one. The QCEC have authority and collaborative responsibility in policy making and action in areas which include curriculum and social justice matters (QCEC, 2006).

Implementation challenges for the socio-cultural HPE P-10 syllabus were investigated by BCE, and according to the *Position Paper on Health and Physical Education* include:

- A commitment to Social Justice challenging us to develop HPE programs that are resistant to the forces that undermine the dignity of the individual-unequal opportunities, abuse of power, greed, socio-economic disadvantage, sexism, unhealthy competition, racism and inappropriate structures;
- A commitment to Participation challenging us to make special provision for all students to have access to appropriate HPE programs, regardless of ability, gender, class or culture;
- A commitment to Stewardship challenging us to ensure just and effective use of resources. HPE should have adequate human and material support, distributed equitably regardless of ability, sex or culture; and
- A commitment to Responsiveness challenging us to reflect critically on teaching, learning and assessment practices in HPE to ensure they remain effective, appropriate and in harmony with changing school policies and structures. (BCE, 1998, p.4).

Within Brisbane Catholic Education a team of three people were selected to support the implementation of the 1999 Health and Physical Education Syllabus, Sourcebook and Initial In-service materials (BCE, 1999). "It was anticipated that by the end of 2001, teachers will be working from School Curriculum Programs based on the new outcome-based syllabus in Health and Physical Education" (BCE, 1999, p.3). Within BCE "efforts to ensure that public policy 'fits' may demand local 'reshaping' of the policy" (McDonald, 2000, p.4). Such reshaping was carried out through the adoption of Whole School Curriculum Programs which "are a translation of current Queensland syllabuses, guidelines and courses through the lens of the Learning Framework and needs of students within a specific BCE school community" (BCE, 2003b, p.4).

Since the end of 2001 there have no longer been any Health and Physical Education Officers employed by BCE (BCE, 2006a; BCE, personal communication, 2003) or any professional development provided to teachers within this learning area. Although BCE (2005b) published the Strategic Renewal Framework 2002-2006 to guide and inform school communities in the

renewal of all curriculum areas, there has been no specific detail as to how this is to be done nor the degree of importance that will be afforded the HPE learning area. This would imply that HPE syllabus policy implementation support has ceased and that inclusion and equity is evident in HPE practice as the various national, state and system specific policy documents recommend.

There are presently thirteen Religious Education Curriculum Officers/ Moderators employed by Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE, 2005a) to support schools during the School Curriculum Renewal period but regrettably, no Curriculum Officers for the HPE key learning area. A possible rationalization for this systemic support deficit is that "Catholic Education, maintaining its unique mission in Australian education is the only way Catholic schools can justify their existence." (McDonald, 2000, p.12). The present BCE system infrastructure suggests that the unique Catholic mission can only be achieved through the key learning area of Religious Education.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the implementation of the social justice principles that underpin the national, state and system specific HPE policy documents in three BCE primary schools of varying enrolment numbers.

Research Questions

The overarching general research question that guided conduct of this research is:

How is the key learning area Health & Physical Education being taught according to the social justice principles that underpin the current (1999) HPE syllabus within three BCE primary schools?

The data collection was guided by the following research questions:-

- How are teachers in these BCE schools implementing the social justice principles from the HPE curriculum documents?
- What readily accessible resources do schools have to assist with the implementation of Health and Physical Education?
- What are teachers' perceptions with regard to the HPE Key Learning Area?
- What are the children's perceptions of the HPE Key Learning Area?

An analytical question arising from the research questions provides a more critical generation of data:

- What implementation strategies are required to optimize social justice principles within HPE practices in BCE schools?

Research Design

The purpose of this research study is to explore HPE inclusion and equity in practice within three BCE primary schools of varying enrolment numbers. Within the constructionist paradigm, an interpretivist study was conducted and more specifically the interpretivist study employed symbolic interactionism. This theoretical framework is most apposite for this study considering that the success of policy implementation ultimately depends on teachers and students (Gardner & Williamson, 1999). Hence, their voices can be heard and this theoretical framework enables the participants to share their stories on how HPE is taught and learned within the contexts of their schools, thus providing valuable insights.

This qualitative, interpretive study is most appropriate due to the significance of constructed meanings developed from the interpretation of shared experiences and perspectives. The

perspectives differed depending on the context of the school and the experiences of the participants within the school. From within an interpretivist theoretical perspective, a symbolic interactionist lens was applied for the purpose of investigating how Health and Physical Education is taught. Symbolic interactionism as a perspective "focuses on the human being and tries to understand human behaviour" (Charon, 1998, p.12).

The methodology chosen to construct meanings through capturing the context of each school was 'evaluative' and 'multiple' case study (Merriam, 1998). The research questions, the data to be generated and the resources available indicated that this qualitative study was best suited to a small-scale sample with a deep understanding, rather than a large-scale validation. The sites for the three case studies involved: one small sized BCE primary school (less than 200 students); one medium sized BCE primary school (200 - 400 students); and one large sized BCE primary school (over 400 students). The three case studies were selected as representative of their different demographics, pertaining to their size as measured by enrolment numbers, their geographic location and their socio-economic status. The researcher in "qualitative research is often the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p.7), noting the differences between what was planned and what actually occurred (Anderson, 1990).

The methods engaged so as to enable precision of details within the chosen theoretical framework were interviews: semi-structured and focus group, reflective journal, observations and document analysis. The participants were teachers and students from the respective schools and the research questions guided conduct of this research and generated data.

Table 1 Research Framework within which the specific methodology has been selected.

Epistemology	Constructionism
Theoretical Perspective	Interpretivism - Symbolic Interactionism
Research Methodology	Case Study
Data Generating Methods	Interviews; Semi-structured Interviews; Focus group Reflective journal Observation Document Analysis

Participants

In the three schools, participants were chosen intentionally as representatives of each school/case. HPE specialist teachers were key participants to interview, assuming they possessed comprehensive and accurate HPE program knowledge within their school context. If the school did not employ a HPE specialist then the sports coordinator/ HPE lead teacher was interviewed. These key participants together with three classroom teacher representatives, one each from the early years, middle years and upper years of the school respectively, were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. These research questions encompass issues of syllabus implementation, available resources and teachers' perspectives. HPE lessons (Physical Activity strand) were observed to supplement the issues raised in the semi-structured interviews. A variety of lessons were observed in the three levels of the school, early, middle and upper years. Classroom teachers were observed teaching the lesson if there was no specialist HPE teacher in the school, as in Case Study One school. As well, a sample of student participants from the observational classes were chosen for focus group interviews.

The student participants were interviewed to seek their responses. There were three focus group interviews within each school/ case. One focus group with representatives from a class in the early years, one with representatives from a class in the middle years and one with

representatives from a class in the upper years of the school. Maximum variation representation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) involves "identifying and seeking out those who represent the widest possible range of the characteristics of interest for the study" (Merriam, 1998, p.63). A maximum variation representation process was employed, by means of a questionnaire, to select four student representatives with a high interest level in physical activities (two boys and two girls) and four student representatives with little interest in physical activities (two boys and two girls). The questionnaire results were checked for confirmation by the classroom teacher. As Case Study One school had a total enrolment of less than 200 students, there were fewer students in each sample class from which to choose student representatives. Therefore, the focus group within this case study school was reduced in number to six student representatives. A maximum variation representation process was employed, by means of a questionnaire, to select two students with a high interest level in physical activities (one boy and one girl), two students with little interest in physical activities (one boy and one girl) and two students with medium interest in physical activities (one boy and one girl).

Table 2 Research Participants per case/school.

Data Generating Strategy	**Case Study One School (less than 200 students)**	**Case Study Two School (200-400 students)**	**Case Study Three School (over 400 students)**	**Total**
Semi-Structured Interview (Teachers)	3	4	4	**11**
Interview Focus Group (Students)	18	24	24	**66**
Observations of Teacher	3	1	1	**5**
Observations of Students	65	81	83	**229**

Analysis of Data

An interpretivist data analysis strategy employed for the purpose of this research study was narrative/ descriptive analysis. Each case study investigates a different context, a different story, and this analysis strategy enables emphasis to be placed on the communication of these stories (Merriam, 1998). The interpretivist is committed to hearing the stories of the participants, their perspectives of the world they experience (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The researcher attempts to capture the stories by interpreting the culture of the school through reported experiences, understandings and other collected data, resulting in a learning episode for both reader and researcher (Glesne, 1999). The narrative/ descriptive analysis method was deliberately chosen to illuminate each story/ case study in this interpretive, symbolic interactionist study.

Each individual case was analysed using Wellington's (2000) simplified version of the 'Constant Comparative Method for Analysing Qualitative Data' (Figure 2) and was described. Cross-case analysis was presented at the end of the analysis of each case. Repeating the same analysis process, Wellington's stages (Figure 2) were used to analyse the data across the case studies. All data findings, of individual case study schools and cross-case analysis were reported using a narrative/ descriptive report.

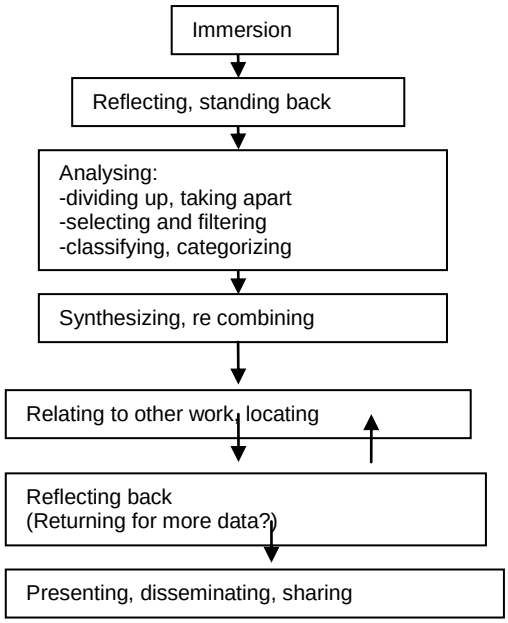

Figure 2 General stages in making sense of qualitative data (Wellington, 2000, p.141).

In an attempt to answer the research questions, units of meaning were formed, coded, and categorized with other similar units. This process occurred within each case study school and across case studies.

Table 3 Process of data analysis.

Stage 1	Analysis of data for each case study/ school using Wellington's table of analysis.
Stage 2	Narrative/Descriptive report given as an analysis for each case study.
Stage 3	Cross case analysis again using Wellington's table of analysis. This time analyzing whole stories or story sections.
Stage 4	Narrative/Descriptive report given for cross case study analysis.

Summary of Case Study One school (less than 200 students)

Case Study One school teacher participants were all experienced teachers, each with at least ten years teaching experience. None of the teacher participants had specialist training in HPE and only one had received professional development in the 1999 Queensland HPE syllabus. The school did not have a specialist HPE teacher and classroom teachers were responsible for the implementation of all three strands of the syllabus. The Physical Activity strand was given the most consideration and time within Case Study One school. There was no Whole School Program for HPE and concepts and skills were few and often repeated. The degree of coverage of the HPE curriculum depended on each class teacher and there was no Perceptual Motor Program in the early years at the school. All teacher participants agreed that there were connections between HPE and the Religious Education curriculum.

Case Study One school had very good facilities, however some were showing signs of neglect. Equipment was sufficient, though Health and Personal Development resources were either lacking or were in need of updating. Students enjoyed HPE and teachers enjoyed taking HPE, believing it to be valuable. The teacher participants did not believe that the school was disadvantaged by not having a specialist HPE teacher. Healthy living was promoted through organisations visiting the school such as the Life Education van, Jump Rope For Heart, Dance Fever and through their sun safety rule 'No hat, No play'.

Summary of Case Study Two school (200 – 400 students)

Case Study Two school appeared to have a well-designed and implemented Physical Education curriculum program which both teachers and students believed to be important, beneficial and enjoyable. The school had an experienced Health and Physical specialist teacher, providing each class with at least one forty minute lesson per week. The Health and Physical Education specialist was responsible for the Physical Activity strand of the program and the classroom teachers were responsible for the Health and Personal Development strands. The teacher participants had received professional development to varying degrees in the 1999 HPE syllabus. The physical activities covered were numerous, wide in scope and variety, utilising the school's facilities and limited space to the optimum. A lack of space and grassed area was compensated for by using a Rugby field which was four hundred metres from the school. Equipment and resources were considered by the researcher and teacher participants as adequate. Although the Physical Activity strand of the syllabus was well established, the Health and Personal Development strands required further development in a Whole School Program. All teacher participants believed that the Personal Development strand connected well with the Religious Education curriculum. They also felt that the PE specialist offered a range of physical activities and sports within the school which was perceived as a school strength by the teacher participants. Healthy living was further promoted by the availability of healthy food at the tuck shop, as well as by a school 'No hat-No play' sun safety rule, through a Walk to School Program, together with Auskick and lunch time touch football and netball competitions.

Summary of Case Study Three school (over 400 students)

Case Study Three school has a full-time HPE specialist teacher who is given one full day release from teaching for sports coordination. The school has ample space, many facilities, sufficient equipment and modern Health and Personal Development resources. The four teacher participants had varying degrees of teaching experience and HPE syllabus professional development. The teacher participants who had begun teaching in the BCE system since 2001 were not as familiar with the syllabus, they had received no in-servicing within this learning area and indicated that they lacked confidence implementing it. This included the specialist HPE teacher whose claimed qualifications were not evidenced within HPE practice or by demonstrated knowledge. Furthermore, the early years' teacher had no professional development in the HPE learning area and graduated recently from University without studying a HPE unit. All teachers agreed that there were connections between HPE and the Religious Education curriculum.

There were mixed and contrary views held by the teacher participants in relation to who was responsible for the teaching of the three HPE strands. Two teacher participants believed the HPE specialist was responsible for teaching all three strands, whereas the HPE specialist believed that she was responsible for only the Physical Activity strand. The HPE specialist teacher claimed that the early years' children did the Perceptual Motor Program using a buddy system with older students, however no teachers or students could verify this. Case Study Three school did not have a whole school program for HPE.

All teacher participants found the HPE learning area to be very valuable and students appeared to enjoy HPE physical activities. However, the students did not appear to be as interested in the key learning area as the teachers perceived them to be. The students believed that HPE helped to reduce stress. The HPE specialist teacher and student participants believed that healthy living was promoted through visits from organizations such as the Life Education van, Dance Fever and Jump Rope For Heart, and the school rule, 'No hat, no play'. Teacher participants listed all three strands in the HPE syllabus; Physical Activity, Health and Personal Development, as areas requiring attention.

Summary of Cross Case Analysis

While some similarities could be drawn, the data findings varied in many ways across the three Case Study schools. Sport and physical activity had a long and proud history in all Case Study schools, which more recently had experienced a shift in paradigm. This shift towards an inclusive, socially just curriculum was evidenced in all three Case Study schools. The degree of shift related to students' interest; teacher participants' experience, knowledge and confidence within the HPE learning area; Case Study schools' facilities, equipment and space; Case Study school partnerships and services made within the community; whether or not the Case Study school had a HPE specialist teacher; and if the school had implemented a whole school program for the HPE key learning area.

Table 4 Summary of Cross-Case Data Analysis Findings

School	HPE specialist	HPE specialist in-serviced in syllabus	Number of Classroom Teacher participants professionally developed in new syllabus	Clear knowledge of who is responsible for the different strands	No extra cost involved (paying other organizations to implement syllabus)	Number of Classroom Teacher participants who evidenced HPE in book	Whole School Program
Case Study One	No	No	1	✓	Extra Cost	1	No
Case Study Two	✓	✓	2	✓	✓	2	✓
Case Study Three	✓	No	2	No	Extra Cost	0	No

Table 4.6 Comparison of Case Study School Resources and Facilities.

School	Facilities and Space	Sporting Equipment	Teaching Resources (books, kits, videos)
Case Study One	Good	Sufficient	Poor
Case Study Two	Poor	Good	Good
Case Study Three	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

Table 4.7 Comparison of Case Study School Student Participants' Interest in HPE.

School	Teachers' perception of students interest levels in HPE	Number of students interviewed in each focus group	Number of Early Years student participants whose favourite subject was HPE		Number of Middle Years student participants whose favourite subject was HPE		Number of Upper Years student participants whose favourite subject was HPE		HPE specialist teacher
Case Study One	Medium	6	0	0%	2	33%	0	0%	No
Case Study Two	High	8	6	75%	3	37.5%	4	50%	Yes
Case Study Three	High	8	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	Yes

Discussion

By the completion of the HPE curriculum documents implementation phase in 2001, it appears that not one of the Case Study schools was working from a school curriculum program for the HPE key learning area as envisaged by the Catholic employer, BCE. At the time of the data generating process for this research only one Case Study school, Case Study Two school, evidenced a HPE program, which was for the Physical Activity strand. Within the sample of three Case Study schools, the degree of implementation of inclusion and equity corresponded to the HPE specialist teacher's degree of qualifications, knowledge and experience in the HPE learning area and of the 1999 syllabus documents, as well as the HPE specialist teacher's ability to share this with colleagues. When one of these areas was lacking, as in Case Study Three school, teacher participants could not come to a consensus as to who assumed teaching responsibility for teaching each of the three syllabus strands.

It also appeared that experienced teachers were more confident and had a better understanding of the HPE syllabus than younger teachers, having been in-serviced in the HPE syllabus documents at the time of their release in 1999. Further, teachers can be employed as HPE specialist teachers while not necessarily having specialist qualifications and therefore quality lessons are not always implemented, resulting in negative influences on students' perceptions of physical activity. Data generated from the three BCE Case Study schools suggests that the Physical Activity strand is the only strand that is consistently and purposefully allocated sufficient teaching time and that some schools rely on sporadic visitations from sporting organisations to implement the syllabus, often at additional cost to students. The Case Study school without a specialist HPE teacher was generally lacking HPE resources for all strands of the 1999 HPE syllabus as the key learning area required advocacy. Case Study Two school overcame their lack of space through developing partnerships and services within the community.

Teacher participants who had begun teaching in the BCE system since the conclusion of the implementation period in 2001 were not as familiar with the syllabus and indicated that they lacked confidence implementing it. The teacher participants included: Kate (3 years in BCE) and Jody (1 year in BCE) from Case Study One school; Lucy (2 years teaching experience) from Case Study Two school; and Alicia (3 years teaching experience) and Naomi the HPE specialist (2 years teaching experience) from Case Study Three school. Therefore, of the three Case Study schools two employed a HPE specialist teacher, only one of whom had been in-serviced in the HPE 1999 syllabus.

Since the end of 2001 there have no longer been any HPE Education Officers employed by BCE nor has there been any professional development within this key learning area, which helps explain why new teachers entering the BCE schooling system lack knowledge in and familiarity with the HPE 1999 documents.

In relation to the HPE specialist teacher's coordinating physical activities and sporting events, Case Study Three school's HPE specialist is provided 5.5 hours release time, equivalent to one full day per week. Case Study Two school's HPE specialist teacher is not provided with any release time for this purpose and has the responsibility for teaching a Year Six class.

Conclusion

BCE specifically aimed to eliminate unequal opportunities, inappropriate structures and to promote just distribution of resources (BCE, 1998) during the implementation process of the socio-cultural approach based HPE syllabus, but as can be evidenced by the unequal allocation of teaching resources, equipment, facilities, HPE specialist teachers and HPE specialist teacher release time this clearly has not been achieved within the three BCE Case Study schools, responsibility for which appears to have been devolved to the school principal. Furthermore, this inequality contradicts the intended purposes of the HPE National Statements and Profiles and their aspirations to "enable equitable sharing of resources across systems and to remove unnecessary differences that were in existence between systems" (Marsh, 1994).

It appears that in BCE schools the HPE syllabus implementation process support ceased prematurely, before all schools had sufficient time and preparation to design whole school HPE programs. Teachers lacked understandings of practical ways to implement the social justice underpinnings of the syllabus and school principals were unaware of the necessity of employing qualified HPE specialist teachers.

Teachers needed to grasp outcome-based education before they could embrace the socio-cultural approach that the 1999 HPE syllabus adopts. This appears to have been an obstacle for the implementation of the 1999 HPE syllabus, as teachers firstly required a paradigm shift in their curriculum and pedagogical thinking. Data generated in this study suggests that it wasn't just a matter of educating specialist teachers in new critical pedagogies but rather educating inexperienced teachers in all HPE pedagogies and quality teaching practices.

With schools often sharing the teaching of the three HPE syllabus strands, as in Case Study Two and Three schools, effective communication and effort is essential. A lack of communication and effort seemed to be a detrimental factor across all three Case Study schools during the implementation process. Case Study Three school's teacher participants had fundamental misunderstandings among them as to whose responsibility it was to implement the different strands of the HPE syllabus. Schools not having part or all of a whole school program for HPE suggests that there well may have been communication problems between the employing authority (BCE) and the principals who were responsible for facilitating the implementation of the HPE curriculum and for employing specialist HPE teachers. Effective communication is essential and assumes greater importance in the absence of system-wide HPE curriculum officers.

Successful implementation is possible as manifest by Case Study Two school, having a very positive effect on students' attitudes towards and ultimately their participation in physical activity. Case Study Two school teacher participants and the HPE specialist teacher had a good understanding of the syllabus and the socio-cultural approach needed to implement it. The school had a whole school HPE program for the Physical Activity strand that was diverse in physical activities and developmentally appropriate. The HPE specialist teacher used

eclectic pedagogies as required and had a good understanding of the way social justice principles could permeate lessons, choosing radical social pedagogy often over dominant scientistic pedagogies. As a result, many students of varying interests and abilities enjoyed physical activities. This was achieved despite having the least space and facilities of the three Case Study schools.

Data suggests that many graduating teachers lack knowledge and confidence to teach HPE physical activity strand so as to promote inclusion and equity which underpins the socio-cultural approach adopted by the 1999 P-10 HPE syllabus. The best time for children to learn and refine their motor skills is in the preschool and early primary school years, learning fundamentals of movement and skill acquisition. Case Study One and Three schools appeared to fail to do this, an issue that needs to be addressed, especially with BCE introducing a Prep year in 2007. One recommendation would be for further professional development within the HPE key learning area.

The present BCE system infrastructure suggests that the unique Catholic mission can only be achieved through the key learning area of Religious Education. This is a paradox, given that the Church seeks to integrate the Christian message into people's lives by finding God in the everyday (Hutton, 1999). Data generated supports that the HPE learning area is strongly connected to the Religious Education (RE) curriculum and in particular the faith dimension of the RE syllabus (BCE, 2003a). The literature suggests that HPE has been neglected as a key learning area throughout history, whereas it should be embraced as a powerful medium providing students with many practical and social experiences living and reflecting on the Catholic tradition and gospel values (Lynch, 2004a). This research challenges Catholic education to rethink priorities and encourages them to provide support at system level for all key learning areas, especially HPE.

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