CHAPTER 2

Context of Partnerships

Abstract Sustainability of partnerships requires problem solving, which considers 'context'. The context setting within this partnership was Latrobe Valley, Gippsland (Victoria, Australia), but it was also heavily influenced at the time by the Australian national curriculum reform and national HW & PE initiatives. The national curriculum was underpinned by the socio-cultural perspective and explicitly espoused the permeation of a 'futures perspective' in health, quality teaching, and teacher education. What began as a pathway seed quickly grew to involve multi-stakeholder partnerships; Australian universities, schools, Australian Registered Training Organisations (RTO), the local health industry (local leisure, and sports centre), Education departments, sport governing bodies at the national level, and a world leading international Initial Teacher Education (ITE) university course in the UK.

In Chap. 1 the 'what' was introduced through key themes, themes which closely intertwine with the 'how'. In particular, the last key theme in the conceptual framework discussed, 'Problem solving' (Fig. 1.1). Problem solving has strong connections to the 'how' and is often dependent upon

To achieve the 2015 ambitious goals (SDGs) we need to focus on the how, the means of implementation, as much as the what (Badenoch 2015).

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Jim Sallis on what we should focus on in research on PA [physical activities]:

translation, dissemination and implementation. #SHAPESeattle

Fig. 2.1 Key message Jim Sallis proposed at the 130th Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America National Convention and Expo, 21 March 2015

context. That is, to solve problems for sustainability one must consider the context. Context, along with stakeholders belief in the project are described as the two essential 'aspects for success' within community partnerships (Lynch 2013c). As previously mentioned, the context setting within this partnership was Latrobe Valley, Gippsland (Victoria, Australia), but it was also heavily influenced at the time by the Australian national reform in Health and Physical Education. The national curriculum was underpinned by the socio-cultural perspective (ACARA 2010) and explicitly espoused the permeation of a 'futures perspective' in health. Futures perspective in health will be discussed in more detail in Chap. 4. More so, a fundamental for sustainability of partnerships within the Best Start programme was that QPE was experienced by the pre-service teachers.

Quality Physical Education Teacher Education

Professional preparation of pre-service teachers within Australia has been identified as a priority. The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) report titled 'Action Now, Classroom Ready Teachers' recommendations included:

Recommendation 2—The Australian Government acts on the sense of urgency to immediately commence implementing actions to lift the quality of initial teacher education.

Recommendation 14—Higher education providers deliver evidence-based content focussed on the depth of subject knowledge and range of pedagogical approaches that enable pre-service teachers to make a positive impact on the learning of all students.

Recommendation 19—Higher education deliver integrated and structured professional experience throughout initial teacher education (ITE) programmes through formalised partnership agreements with schools.
Recommendation 22—Higher education providers ensure staff delivering ITE are appropriately qualified, with a proportion having contemporary school teaching experience.
Recommendation 25—Higher Education providers assess all pre-service teachers against the Graduate Level of the Professional Standards.
Recommendation 28—Higher education providers and schools work together to assist pre-service teachers to develop and collect sophisticated evidence of their teaching ability and their impact on student learning for their Portfolio of Evidence. (TEMAG 2014, pp. xiv–xvi).

It is argued that the recommendations listed above were essential for 'Best Start' programme success and are promoted. This is evidenced by the Student Evaluations of Teaching Units (SETU) in Table 2.1.

Furthermore, in December 2015 Australian Education Ministers agreed on a new and improved system for the accreditation of ITE programmes (http://www.aitsl.edu.au/initial-teacher-education/ite-reform). This agreement reinforces the underpinning philosophy of this storyline, that quality and realistic pre-service teacher preparation maximises children's learning. Hence, learning and teaching involving 'quality experiences' is powerful, research suggests that high quality teaching has the largest impact on children's learning outcomes, other than a children's socio-economic background (DEECD 2012, p. 5).

Many of these explicit recommendations are self-evident within teacher education, which does cause reason for concern. This was the first programme of its kind within Gippsland, which offers partial reason as to why there was no financial support, time, and/or workload support for this initiative although it strongly promotes the TEMAG recommendations.

In relation to physical education teacher education (PETE) courses in Australia, and specifically, for primary education, it is reasoned that traditionally quasi-HPE courses have been offered where pre-service teachers may be able to choose electives in general sport often relating to industry or secondary physical education (Lynch 2013d). It is considered that "while these offer opportunities for enthusiasts to study areas of interest, ideal candidates for primary HPE specialists, unfortunately they lack the 'developmentally appropriate' key aspect" (Lynch 2013d, p. 11) that the curriculum reform and literature accentuate. Literature and global recom-

Table 2.1 Student Evaluation of Teaching Unit (SETU). This unit made a positive contribution to my experiences during the field-work/practicum

Units involving community collaborations (5—strongly agree, 1—strongly disagree)	*EDF1600 2011 HPE in schools (modified games)*	*EDF2611 2011 Swimming lessons (offered biennially)*	*EDF1600 2012 HPE in schools (modified games)*	*EDF3619 2012 Sports/ Tennis lessons (offered biennially)*	*EDF1600 2013 HPE in schools (modified games)*	*EDF2611 2013 Swimming lessons (offered biennially)*	*EDF2616 2013 Coaching school sports (offered biennially)*	*EDF1600 2014 HPE in schools (modified games)*	*EDF3619 2014 Sports/ Tennis lessons (offered biennially)*	*EDF3616 2014 Assist with school outdoor education camps*
Positive contribution to practice	4.79	4.30	4.30	4.72	4.70	4.75	4.00	4.67	4.75	4.31
Previous rating (no community collaborations)	(2010) 3.92	(2009) 2.33	(2010) 3.92	(2010) 2.67	(2010) 3.92	(2009) 2.33	(2011) 3.75	(2010) 3.92	(2010) 2.67	(2010) 3.8

More than 15 enrolments and 10 or more completed surveys

mendations further illustrate the significance of the community partnerships within this Best Start initiative.

Specifically within PETE UNESCO state:

> The rationale of a Quality Physical Education Teacher Education (QPETE) programme has at its core a model of the teacher who understands that pupils have a vast range of individual needs and abilities, and can respond to them, who is competent in curriculum areas and classroom practice, and who, as an effective practitioner, is analytical, critically reflective, and professional, as well as one who demonstrates a continuing openness to new ideas. The ability to respond to, and manage change, is a central requisite.
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> Teachers need also to be learners, and to be able to handle issues in an informed way so as to develop their practice in a changing world. In order to plan, deliver, and evaluate the curriculum effectively, the teacher needs professional skills. Programmes of Study should be driven by clear conceptions and shared sets of institutional provider beliefs about what is valued in, and expected of, a teacher. The principles advocated have global applicability. (2015, p. 78).

Children's Voices

It is important to listen to children and consider their interest and needs when planning for the contextual 'what' and 'how'. The Best Start programme needed to provide "A curriculum that recognises the range of differences that exist between learners and that provides diverse and challenging activities relevant to all pupils, the school, and the community setting." (UNESCO 2015, p. 76). In particular, there should be commitment to embrace difference (Miller and Katz 2002).

Two studies targeting perceptions of Early Years and Primary/Elementary school children in relation to HPE include the empirical Sport Wales School survey (2015) 'Hooked on sport' (Years 3–11) and the dissertation 'An evaluation of school responses to the introduction of the Queensland 1999 Health and physical education (HPE) syllabus and policy documents in three Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) primary schools.' (Lynch 2005). The Wales school survey involved 110,000 Welsh school children representing almost 1000 schools. This survey is considered as one of the largest of its kind in the world. Findings included:

- Ninety-two percent of children enjoy physical education
- Making sport and physical activity enjoyable and fun is critical to boosting participation by children and young people

- School is the most important place in which children learn the competence and confidence to participate in physical activity
- Pupils who are happy with their sporting ability are twice as likely to try new activities
- Very confident pupils are twice as likely to be hooked on sport
- Pupils who feel their ideas about PE are listened to are nine times more likely to 'enjoy PE a lot'
- Pupils who enjoy sport in school clubs are five times more likely to be hooked on sport
- Children get hooked on sport when they have the ability to take part, they feel comfortable taking part, they have the confidence to take part and they enjoy taking part (http://sportwales.org.uk/research--policy/surveys-and-statistics/school-sport-survey.aspx)

These empirical findings supported the children's perceptions in three Australian case study schools in an earlier deep qualitative doctoral study:

> Thirteen of twenty-four student participants within Case Study Two school named HPE as their favourite school learning area. The student participants from Case Study Two school could specifically identify the comprehensive range of games, skills and physical activities that made the lessons fun and enjoyable for them. Enjoyment and fun for the participants must be considered when designing a HPE program (Garcia et al. 2002) and Case Study Two school was the only Case Study school to have taken the time and effort to design a whole school developmentally appropriate program. Case Study Two school was the only school in the research study with a qualified HPE specialist teacher with a thorough knowledge of the HPE syllabus. The number of students who listed HPE Physical Activity as their favourite learning area supports the theory that teachers can influence students' views about the value of physical education (Solmon and Carter 1995), particularly students' beliefs about physical activity (Lee 2002).

> The early years student participants reported that they enjoyed learning the fundamental movements of jumping, running, skipping, hopping, catching, throwing and combining these in dance. Elementary motor skill acquisition in the early years of primary school develops competence in movement (Garcia et al. 2002) and is the "most formative means to establish a healthy approach towards physical activity" (Queensland Government 2003, p. 1). Further, the early detection of motor problems enables the initiation of intervention programs that can reduce many physical and related emotional

> problems (Arnheim and Sinclair 1979; Commonwealth of Australia 1992; Hardin and Garcia 1982; Haubenstricker and Seefeldt 1974; Johnson and Rubinson 1983; Seefeldt 1975; Smoll 1974) which in turn increases the likelihood of students' enjoyment of physical activity.
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> Middle and upper years' student participants from the three Case Study schools stated that HPE Physical Activities helped release stress, enhanced motivation, increased self-esteem, team work and concentration rates. There are numerous mental health and social benefits from participating regularly in physical activities. These include better stress management (Chiras 1991), having fun, building relationships, building self-esteem and self-efficacy, and building personal and social skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork and cooperation (Shilton 1997). "Children need exercise to learn. Scientists say it is plausible that by promoting blood flow to the brain, physical activity increases cognitive power." (Rothstein 2000, p. 11). Therefore, physical activity can help students academically in other learning areas. (Lynch 2005, pp. 251–252).

These findings are also supported by UNESCO who declare that physical activity through "regular participation in quality physical education can improve a child's attention span, enhance their cognitive control and speed up cognitive processing" (2015, p. 6). These findings support the initiation of the 'Best Start—a community collaborative approach to lifelong health and wellness' within the Gippsland context.

Gippsland Context

Within the Gippsland context, community collaboration partnerships involved pre-service teachers teaching local children (Prep-Year 6) swimming and water safety lessons (EDF2611 Experiencing Aquatic Environments), modified games (EDF1600 Health and Physical Education in Schools), various sport sessions (netball, basketball, soccer, cricket, Aussie Rules football, tee-ball), and implementing tennis 'hot shots' (EDF3619 Sport and Physical Activity Education). Independent experiences included a residential camp with primary schools (EDF3616 Camp planning and practices) and coaching experiences within primary schools and sporting clubs (EDF2616 Coaching).

School and university partnerships were timely and well received by education departments. The programme was embedded within the Victorian

Government 'School Centres for Teaching Excellence' (SCTE) initiative, which seeks to improve pre-service teacher education programmes through stronger partnerships between schools and universities and a better integration of theory and practice.

Primary education university students (ITE), who chose the PE major stream, were required to study the unit EDF2611 'Experiencing Aquatic Environments'. This was the initial partnership seed and due to the nature of swimming, did have an element of risk. Furthermore, the prerequisite for pre-service teachers electing the unit and PE stream was that they were interested in teaching PE and not that they were competent or confident swimmers. A condition within this unit (EDF2611) and also for the governing authority, Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) teacher registration, was that PE graduates from ITE programmes in the primary school have a current teacher of swimming and water safety qualification (VIT 2008). The unit at Gippsland campus previously required that students complete this during their own time and present evidence. The approximate cost of the recommended qualification was $350.

The university semester unit/module weekly one hour lecture and two hour workshop was redesigned to create a pathway with the swimming and water safety course qualification (industry) units of competency. This pathway initiated the partnership journey between Australian RTO, the local health industry (local leisure and sports centre) and external swimming instructors employed at the venue, local primary schools and the University sector; Monash University. Careful mentoring enabled the implementation of 'hands on' practical teaching and learning experiences for the university ITE pre-service teachers. Subsequently, the workshops enabled the comparative advantage of quality lessons at no cost for local primary school children (from a disadvantaged socio-economic Gippsland region). It was only for this innovative initiative that many of the children received any swimming lessons for the year. This was of particular benefit as although a considerable amount of work has been attributed to educating the Australian public about swimming and water safety awareness in a commitment to reducing drowning fatalities, research suggests that rural and isolated schools find it most difficult to conduct aquatic activities (Peden et al. 2009, p. 200). Furthermore, the best time to prepare children for safe aquatic participation and provide the skills and knowledge needed to have a lifelong safe association with water is during childhood (Royal Life Saving Society Australia 2010).

The discussion paper released in August 2011 titled 'A tertiary education plan for Gippsland, Victoria' (DEECD 2011) was written specifically for this context using recent national and state level developments including the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Review 2008). This paper supported such pathways as it "encourages building on existing partnerships and strengthening articulation arrangements between providers" (p. 4). In the written submissions for the discussion paper, specifically focussing on Gippsland, "the need for additional training capacity and improved collaboration between providers of tertiary education and industry was identified as a major concern" (DEECD 2011, p. 10). There are five key outcomes for the Gippsland tertiary education plan, a derivative of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The third key outcome supports the swimming and water safety pathway holistic vision:

3. Improved participation in education and training more generally for the community.

The attempt to create what could be described as a logical pathway led to a process of events that although initially on the surface seemed quite simple, involved a complex process of social relationships between stakeholders.

> The challenge is to provide for the alignment of the provision of education and the needs of the local industry. Collaborative relationships between TAFE institutes, universities and local industries are critical to establishing meaningful pathways and sustainable economic growth. (DEECD 2011, p. 11).

The challenge presented various obstacles that were either overcome or evaded, which upon reflection offers insight for all stakeholders in improved future attempts of collaboration between universities with other community sectors or local industries.

Primary ITE university students (pre-service teachers), choosing the PE major stream, also study the unit EDF3619 'Sport and physical activity education'. Through amendments made to this unit, objectives involved the implementation of the Friday Sports programme which was the second community collaboration in the 'Best Start' programme. Friday Sports ran over five weeks and was again the first programme of this nature to be implemented within the area.

The Friday Sports programme was designed so that the Year 5 and 6 children from the six participating schools could choose a sport of their interest. The ITE pre-service teachers decided on which sports they would offer taking into consideration their group strengths, equipment, and facilities. The children would then participate in the same sport each week for a one-hour session over five weeks. Each sport group consisted of 20–25 children, were mixed sexes and mixed schools. The aim of the programme was to progressively work towards achieving the objectives of the Sports Education curriculum model; "to develop as competent, literate and enthusiastic sportspeople" (Siedentop 1994, p. 4). Monash University provided the equipment, the human resource of five teacher education students per group who had planned the five week units, and collaboratively with the local health industry (local leisure and sports centre) provided the stadium and field facilities, all at no cost to schools. Subsequently, the implementation of this sport unit built relationships between Monash University (Gippsland campus) Faculty of Education and the surrounding rural primary schools.

The innovative partnership was implemented over four years (2011–2014) and along with the research conducted was prescient with recent international and national partnership policy developments. The process of strengths-based partnerships involved mentoring and leadership, collaborative problem solving, and improved social justice (Fig. 1.1). This research is based upon activating a plan, expressing the experience and sharing the contextual story to assist other stakeholders. As evidenced by Fig. 2.1, it is supported by the most cited PE educator in the world, Jim Sallis. Sallis, has well over 100,000 citations on Google scholar, endorses this journey storyline.

Table 2.1 accentuates the positive contribution community collaboration partnerships (across units EDF1600, EDF2611, EDF2616, EDF3619, and EDF3616) have made towards teacher preparation.

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