



CHAPTER 2

Theories, Models and Approaches: Physical Education and Wellbeing

Beginning with the first element of quality physical education (cf. Figure 1.2) is Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. This chapter explores why having an in-depth understanding of educational theory is necessary for optimising children's wellbeing. Tracey and Morrow (2017) introduce the significance of theories; suggesting that often the way professionals approach education and research in practice are to a large degree driven by theories. This is supported by Ewing; "Different ideologies or beliefs will also impact on understanding knowledge and how learning happens. This in turn leads to different approaches to curriculum planning, evaluation and reporting processes" (2010, p. 23). It is argued that classroom teachers traditionally have been limited in this area, showing a lack of interest or knowledge about educational approaches (Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

It is advocated that linking theories to classroom (or sports field) practice will strengthen both classroom instruction and research; encouraging a wider use of approaches and selecting the most appropriate one to suit the particular context (referred to as 'pedagogy' and specifically place-based pedagogy, cf. p. 90). Similar to didactics of research, pedagogy is defined as the art or science of teaching (Quennerstedt & Larsson, 2015; Tinning, 2010) and involves three elements; the learning, teaching and curriculum (Kirk et al., 2006, p. xi). Pedagogies are similar to the

European research concept relating to teaching, learning and socialisation (Quennerstedt & Larsson, 2015, p. 2).

Theories are frameworks through which people view the world—a lens they may or may not be conscious of. Described by Tracey and Morrow as “explanations that are grounded in belief systems usually supported by extensive research and databases, and often held by large groups of people” (2017, p. 3). ‘Models’ are very similar to theories and often both terms are used interchangeably. However, it is argued that “models serve as metaphors to explain and represent theories” (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p. 4), a set of plans or procedures (Kezar, 2001, p. 26). Hence, in PE there have been many models used to offer a ‘game plan’ for how to teach (pedagogy), thus representing a theoretical approach (Tinning, 2010).

More recent and popular PE models include Teaching Games for Understanding (TGFU) developed from Games for Understanding (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), Games Sense (den Duyn, 1997), Play Practice (Launder, 2001), Games Concept Approach (Wright et al., 2004), Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994) and Hellison’s Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model (2011). “Health education framed through a social lens, with personal and social responsibility for health outcomes acknowledged”, such as TPSR, is significant in relation to wellbeing (Miller et al., 2022, p. 7).

Tinning describes the most dominant PE curriculum models throughout the 1900s as Swedish gymnastics, movement education, health-related fitness (HRF), fundamental motor skills (FMS), sport education, TGFU and Games Sense (2010, p. 50). Curriculum is perceived in terms of approach; considering “the relationships and differences among curriculum’s foundations and domains, its theory and practice, and the roles of participants” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 1). This is particularly significant in H, W & PE as “curriculum is crucial to the health of schools and society” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 1). Leahy, O’Flynn & Wright refer to Foucauldian governmentality to understand curriculum as practical “texts produced within political, economic and social conditions” (2013, p. 177).

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

As stated earlier, understanding the implementation of QPE to enable holistic health is complex. When investigating approaches to education and health it is also essential that the psychological perspectives which

frame the theory of knowledge are understood. Psychological perspectives act as the epistemological bed with which the approaches sit, hence they fundamentally influence teachers' decision-making skills, laws and public policies.

Biological Perspective

The biological perspective relates to the brain and nervous system, investigating plasticity, and brain structures. "This approach seeks to specify the neurobiological processes that underlie behaviour and mental processes" (Atkinson et al., 1990, p. 9). This perspective has built knowledge surrounding learning, memory, motivation and emotion through the conditioning of rats, cats and monkeys.

Behavioural Perspective

The behavioural approach relates to observing one's behaviour rather than their brain and nervous system. This perspective is derived from the American psychologist John B. Watson (1878–1958) in the early 1900s. Watson argued that objective science of psychology is only achievable by studying what people do—their behaviour. Behavioural psychologists who followed Watson include Pavlov and Skinner. The offspring of behaviourism, stimulus–response psychology "studies the relevant stimuli, and the rewards or punishments that follow these responses" (Atkinson et al., 1990, p. 11).

Cognitive Perspective

The modern cognitive perspective "is in part a reaction to behaviourism and in part a return to the cognitive roots of psychology. Like the nineteenth-century version, the modern study of cognition is concerned with mental processes, such as perceiving, remembering, reasoning, deciding, and problem solving" (Atkinson et al., 1990, p. 11). In PE this relates to the Information Processing Model (Lynch, 2017a, 2017b) which "stresses the importance of the internal cognitive processing of the learner" (Rink, 2010, p. 24) and relates to metacognition (cf. Chapter 14).

Differing to behaviourists, cognitive psychologists "believe that your behavior is determined by your expectations and emotions. Cognitive

psychologist Jean Piaget would argue that you remember things based on what you already know. You also solve problems based on your memory of past experiences" (<http://mrmcnabb.weebly.com/5-major-perspectives-in-psychology.html>). Swiss Psychologist, Piaget, studied children's cognitive development intensively over many years and developed a four stage theory of how children's abilities to think and reason progress. Within PE understanding the progress of children's motor development is equally as relevant; "the specialised area of study within the sub-discipline of motor control that deals with the description and explanation of these changes from the beginning to the end of life" (Williams, 2014, p. 68).

Psychoanalytic Perspective

The psychoanalytic perspective was developed by neurologist Sigmund Freud by combining:

then-current cognitive notions of consciousness, perception, and memory, with ideas about biologically-based instincts to forge a bold new theory of human behaviour. The basic assumption of Freud's theory is that much of our behaviour stems from processes that are unconscious. By unconscious process Freud meant beliefs, fears, and desires a person is unaware of but that nevertheless influence behaviour. (Atkinson et al., 1990, pp. 12–13)

Forbidding children's natural impulses forces them out of awareness into the unconscious, "where they remain to affect dreams, slips of speech, or mannerisms, and to manifest themselves as emotional problems, symptoms of mental illness" (Atkinson et al., 1990, p. 13).

Phenomenological (Humanistic) Perspective

The phenomenological approach which is also referred to as the humanistic approach relates to subjective experience—the individual's personal view of events. It is about empowering the individual to be the best that they can be, self-actualisation. "We are the builders of own lives because each of us is a free agent - free to make choices and set goals and therefore accountable for our life choices" (Atkinson et al., 1990, p. 13).

APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

Approaches to education sit within the psychological perspectives and influence PE; these include behaviourism, constructivism and critical. Approaches to curriculum reflect the teacher's belief about how children learn and how children are supported by families, communities and educators (Arthur et al., 2015).

Behavioural Approach

The Behavioural Approach is the oldest approach to education and has been the most dominant. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2017), this approach is logical and prescriptive where goals and objectives are listed; and contents and activities are sequenced so that the goals can be achieved. “The learner is rewarded for small steps of learning and achievement with consistent positive reinforcement” (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 9).

Ewing (2010) describes one of the founder's, Ralph Tyler (1949), conceptualizations of the behavioural approach to the curriculum; as a linear, sequenced recipe which begins with objectives, is followed by learning experiences, which emphasise learning of the prescribed content and then evaluating to see if the objectives had been achieved. Hence, learning is teacher-controlled, knowledge is experienced as separate subjects and there is little student choice or interaction (Westbrook et al, 2013).

There has been criticism of the behavioural approach—Ewing (2010) questions behavioural theorists such as Wheeler (1967, p. 11) whose objectives are described as deliberate and systematic planned attempts to change behaviour. “Pedagogic approaches that can broadly be described as ‘behaviouristic’ in origin may result in practices such as lecturing, demonstration, rote learning, memorization, choral repetition, imitation/copying or ‘master classes’” (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 9). Ewing gives the example of learning to recite river names as indicative of the behavioural approach and states that it doesn't constitute learning at all. “Critiques of behaviorism lie in the surface-nature of the knowledge acquired and the way in which ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach excludes students with individual differences” (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 9).

PE, similar to all curriculum learning areas, has historically employed a behavioural approach. However, if PE is to succeed in enhancing children's wellbeing it must continue to become holistic in nature; that is, it can no longer afford to predominantly adopt a behavioural approach. For "While the simplicity of this means-end, objectives approach is its strength, it is also its strongest limitation. This is because it cannot take account of the more complex and integrated purposes and processes of education" (Ewing, 2010, p. 27).

However, there are arguments based on research into how humans best learn, that explicit instruction is the preferred pedagogical approach. "We should be teaching domain-specific knowledge, not generic skills" and "Initial instruction when dealing with new information should be explicit and direct" (Australian Government, 2014, p. 125). For the example of acquiring basic mathematical skills, "the research clearly shows that teacher-directed learning is better suited. Needless to say, these basic skills must be firmly in place before students can approach problem-solving questions with any degree of competence" (2014, p. 126). Furthermore, behaviourism has been dominant as it "could be held to be universal as a theory, applicable within a variety of contexts, both cost and time efficient and require fewer resources, including demanding less qualified and skilled teachers" (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 9). Hence, the behavioural approach is influenced by business and industry with a focus on efficiency in schools which often means;

eliminating small classes, increasing student-teacher ratios, hiring fewer administrators, reducing teacher salaries, maintaining or reducing operational costs and then preparing charts and graphs to show the resultant cost reductions... The goal was [is] to reduce teaching and learning to precise behaviours with corresponding measurable activities. (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 2)

Embedded within the behaviourist approach is the 'utilitarian one' "where outcomes must be work-related and help a nation's economy be more productive in an increasingly challenging global environment" (Australian Government, 2014, p. 18). Hence, the behavioural approach is connected to a top-down directive, which historically within developed countries has been unsuccessful. This occurred within Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, which minimised the teacher's influence on curriculum reform (Kirk, 1990; Macdonald, 2003) and as a result, the changes did

not happen (Lawson, 1990; Sparkes, 1991). A behavioural, top-down governmental approach is currently happening within England, where the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspect and regulate. Ofsted set common ideals and expectations for every maintained school to strive for. From 2017 Ofsted have stated that:

- All of their work is evidence-led.
- Their evaluation tools and frameworks are valid and reliable.
- Their frameworks are fair.
- They aim to reduce inspection burdens and make their expectations and findings clear.
- They target their time and resources where they can lead directly to improvement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about>).

This statement does question the educational practice expected by Ofsted before 2017 before the practice was evidence-based. This is supported by Coffield who concluded from a study on behalf of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) that Ofsted “currently does more harm than good. Its methods, although changed every few years during the 25 years of Ofsted’s existence, are still invalid, unreliable and unjust” (Coffield, 2017). Hence, Moran argues that “the Ofsted hand is fundamentally broken” (2019) and creates stress for school communities rather than raising standards (Jeffreys, 2023).

Historically, Ofsted inspections and judgements have weighted heavily on quantitative data, such as Year 2 and Year 6 national curriculum standardised testing (known as SATs). Corbyn speaks of “SATs and the regime of extreme pressure testing giving young children nightmares” (2019). Furthermore, it is argued that since 2010 due to austerity measures, education has been narrowed within the UK and only purpose has to have been for the economy or business (Corbyn, 2019). Quantitative research is “an approach that seeks to determine the relationships between variables and, particularly, cause and effect relationships” (Kervin et al., 2006, p. 36), hence, such research relates to the behavioural approach. This statement is supported by the Ofsted’s Chief Inspector at the time, Amanda Spielman who during a speech delivered at The Festival of Education (23 June, 2017) stated:

So I believe we have a vital role in balancing the accountability system. What we measure through inspection can counteract some of the inevitable pressure created by performance tables and floor standards. Rather than just intensifying the focus on data, Ofsted inspections must explore what is behind the data, asking how results have been achieved. Inspections, then, are about looking underneath the bonnet to be sure that a good quality education – one that genuinely meets pupils' needs – is not being compromised. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/amanda-spielmans-speech-at-the-festival-of-education>)

When Spielman speaks of data, she is referring to quantitative research data—performance tables and floor standards (e.g. SATs); where “variables of interest are very clearly spelled out, measurement is standardised, and results analysed through statistical means” (Kervin et al., 2006, p. 36). This is surprising in the field of education, as while the strengths of quantitative methods have been well suited to scientific research over the last century (Kervin et al., 2006), it is the richer and more varied insights offered by qualitative research that is commonly used in education and social sciences around the world (Kervin et al., 2006; Lune & Berg, 2017; Merriam, 1998; Moran, 2019; Salkind, 2017). Qualitative research is best suited because “Curriculum results from social activity. It is designed for both present and emerging purposes. Curriculum is a dynamic field” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 1).

The qualitative research approach is inferred by Spielman; “explores what is behind the data [quantitative], asking how results have been achieved” (2017). Hence it “provides insight into the subtle nuances of educational contexts and allows the exploration of the unexpected that cannot be accommodated in quantitative approaches” (Kervin et al., 2006, p. 37). Furthermore, “reports of qualitative research tend to adopt a narrative form that is more accessible to practitioners... and thus is more likely that the research findings will have an impact on educational practice” (Kervin et al., 2006, p. 37).

The need for qualitative data methods is invoked by Spielman; “interpreting data wisely and placing it in its proper context”. Considering that the success of policy [curriculum] implementation ultimately depends on teachers and students (Gardner & Williamson, 1999), qualitative research methods are most appropriate as they enable the participants to share their stories and valuable insights on how the curriculum [including PE] is

taught and learned within the contexts of their schools. Moreso, a qualitative study approach in education acknowledges that meanings are socially constructed: “Social realities are constructed by the participants in their social settings” (Glesne, 1999, p.5).

Qualitative researchers establish credibility and trustworthiness through their data gathering, analysis and reporting—rather than focusing on quantitative terms of validity, reliability and generalisability (Kervin et al., 2006), as adopted by Ofsted. Hence, only relying on quantitative research methods, as Ofsted has traditionally done, limits findings within schools, as it ignores contexts and experiences. This assumes that every school within England, every classroom, every teacher and every child is the same; subsequently, it forms a paradox to the UK curriculum policy titled ‘Every child matters’. Therefore, to add balance and give a deeper analysis of the school context, Ofsted is required to apply qualitative research methods also. As Kervin, Vialle, Herrington & Okely (2006) recommend, qualitative research enables the research findings to have an impact on educational practice.

Ofsted standards are overseen by the government which “reduce teaching and learning to precise behaviours with corresponding measurable activities” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 2), ensuring efficiency in schools. It can be argued that this top-down behavioural approach and associated funding cuts are failing miserably in the UK (Bottomley, 2023; Corbyn, 2019; Meredith & Fox, 2023; Richardson, 2018a; Walker, 2023). Reports have included:

- increased teacher workloads, resulting in record numbers of early career teachers leaving the profession (Corbyn, 2019; Coughlan, 2017a; Smith, 2023);
- record high numbers of teachers suffering from job stress and feeling undervalued, including depression and anxiety (BBC, 2022; Brennan & Henton, 2017; Corbyn, 2019; Education Support Partnership, 2017; Education Support, 2023);
- regular strike threats; and frustrated head teachers leaving the profession (Coughlan, 2017b; Richardson, 2018b; Shearing, 2024; Smith, 2023);
- 95% of Headteachers feeling stressed, 89% of Senior Leaders feeling stressed (Education Support, 2023) and a shortage of headteachers (Clarke, 2022; Smith, 2023; Walton, 2014);

- experienced quality teachers being lost to the profession, resulting in reduced teachers in schools; increased number of unqualified teachers and increased class sizes (Burns, 2018; Corbyn, 2019; Lynch, 2023; Sellgren, 2017; Smith, 2023).

Due to the shortage of teachers in England, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is being replaced by quick fix and ad-hoc Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programmes, where the time involved for UK Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) has been reduced from the traditional four year Bachelor of Education courses to as little as 12 weeks for candidates with recognised prior learning (<https://www.tes.com/institute/assessment-only-route-qts>). Consequently, it can be argued the quality of teacher preparation and quality education has diminished.

Furthermore, quality assurance extends to the regulators themselves, who is regulating the regulators—Ofsted? Following the recent death of UK Headteacher, Ruth Perry, school inspections as a whole have been questioned (Jeffreys & Evans, 2023), including the experience and qualifications of the inspectors. In English-maintained schools, his Majesty's Inspectors are required to have QTS, as well as successful experience (over five years) in school senior leadership (National Careers Service, 2024). However, unqualified teachers, who are 31 per cent cheaper (Department for Education, 2022), can become inspectors in British Schools Overseas (BSO) and do not require any school senior leadership experience—this can have dire consequences (Fazackerley, 2023). The circumstances leading to the tragic death of Headteacher Ruth Perry, the state of wellbeing in school communities and consideration of what the implications are for OFSTED going forward, are reflected upon in Chapter 8.

Subsequently, the UK has been described as ‘lagging behind’, and ‘flat in a changing world’ in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) world rankings based on OECD tests (Coughlan, 2016). The PISA tests are taken by 15-year olds in maths, reading and science every three years from over 70 countries (79 in 2022). In 2015, the UK was ranked 27th in maths, the lowest in the 18-year history of participation; 22nd in reading and 15th in science. In 2018 the UK's results were their best ever, ranking 18th in maths, 14th in reading and 14th in science. However, in their most recent PISA results (2022) “average scores returned, in mathematics and reading, close to their pre-2018 level, reverting all gains observed in the previous cycle. In science, the most

recent PISA results are close to the results observed in 2018, but below those of any previous assessment—confirming a decade-long decline that began around 2012” (OECD, 2023). In summary, the UK’s performance across the three learning areas has remained stable since 2006.

Hence, government efforts to produce and control ‘trained teachers’ (behavioural approach) rather than emphasising ‘educators’ (constructivist approach) have emanated limited trust in the profession. This is also directly related to the limited teacher and school leader qualification requirements. The absence of trust is witnessed by the overemphasis of teachers evidencing class progress, which results in increased workloads and subsequently, deducts from the teacher-student quality learning experience (Corbyn, 2019). As the PISA results suggest this has been ineffective and even counterproductive compared to quality educators spending quality learning time with students—as seen in countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong (China), Canada, Finland and Ireland (OECD, 2019; OECD, 2023; PISA, 2015).

Constructivist Approach

In the Constructivist Approach “educators recognise ‘active learning’ or ‘play-based learning’ where children learn across emotional, social, physical and cognitive areas” (Arthur et al, 2015, p. 427).

Play-based learning capitalises on children’s natural inclination to be curious, explore, and learn. Children actively construct their own understandings that contribute to their own learning. In play experiences children integrate their emotions, thinking and motivation that assists to strengthen brain functioning. They exercise their agency, intentionality, capacity to initiate and lead learning, and their right to participate in decisions that affect them, including about their learning. (AGDE, 2022, p. 8)

Given that this book adopts ‘education through movement’ as a lens to describe and advocate a holistic approach towards child health and wellbeing—this premise is underpinned by the constructivist approach. Moreso, “Children as active learners participate in integrated hands on experiences with open-ended materials as they construct new meanings” (Arthur et al, 2015, p. 427). Constructivism is based mainly on Piaget (1896–1980) and perceives “the mind as inherently structured to

develop concepts and acquire knowledge" (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 10). It involves "individual learners actively exploring their environment by building on their existing cognitive structures" (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 10).

The constructivist approach focuses on the process rather than the end result; influenced by theorists such as Bruner (1986, 1960) and Stenhouse (1975). "It emphasizes the importance of understanding how we learn and that, therefore, learning processes themselves must be carefully planned and organized to meet the needs of the learners, and to allow them to learn in different ways" (Gardner, 1983; cited in Ewing, 2010, p. 29).

Learning experiences should be meaningful and engaging and learners must see the point of what they are learning because in reality they are the ones who control what they learn. While knowledge is acknowledged as important, the teacher is not viewed as the transmitter of the knowledge but rather a co-learner and a facilitator of the learning process for students. (Ewing, 2010, p. 29)

Learners actively explore their environment to build on their existing knowledge base. It is imperative that PE teachers have expertise in the subject content so that they can provide developmentally appropriate activities that enable individuals to continue making progress. Hence, in the constructivist approach, "Individual and group work centred around problem solving and project work is appropriate. Concrete activities are privileged for younger children, with activities involving symbolic and abstract thought reserved for older students" (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 10). For example in the early years of PE:

Consistent with the socio-cultural approach and comparable to play-based pedagogy, learning motor skills requires scaffolding and guidance from an expert to assist the child to become competent. Scaffolding sits within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and expertise may involve family and community partnerships. While tasks may be initially challenging for the child, practising should be enjoyed regularly if the child is to master the skill. (Lynch, 2017b, p. 88)

Therefore, if teachers know their students and their students' interests, as part of a unique learning context deep understanding, then they can plan learning experiences that the learners will want to engage in.

The students will “make connections with and relevance to their own lives” (Ewing, 2010, p. 29). The constructivist approach also relates to didactic research. Quennerstedt and Larsson (2015) refer to the classical work of Czech scholar and teacher educator John Amos Comenius who in 1657 wrote the main objective of didactic research is “to find a method of instruction, by which teachers may teach less, but learners may learn more; by which schools may be the scene of less noise, aversion, and useless labour, but of more leisure, enjoyment, and solid progress” (p. 4; cited in Quennerstedt & Larsson, 2015, p. 2).

The term social constructivism is also used, implying that knowledge is socially constructed and learning is a social process. Meaning making is prioritised in familiar contexts and mediated using cultural tools, especially language (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 10). Teachers apply Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development “where tasks are too difficult for a child to perform independently, but are possible with the assistance of more knowledgeable others” (Arthur et al., 2015, p. 431).

The 1999 Queensland (Australia) Health and Physical Education (HPE) Years 1 to 10 Syllabus sits within constructivism and advocates the inquiry-based approach to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills (connecting to metacognition). This curriculum document was purposefully chosen because it was in many ways the leading H, W & PE curriculum document. While there has since been a new national HPE curriculum released in November 2013, there have been many similarities drawn between this most recent national Australian Curriculum for HPE and the 1994 HPE National Statement and Profile, which provided a foundation for the construction of the 1999 Queensland HPE (P-10) Syllabus (Lynch, 2017a).

The inquiry-based model has been evidenced through research as a successful HPE framework for guiding teachers when designing units of work (Lynch, 2016). The iterative cycle involves four stages: understand; plan; act and reflect. The 1999 Queensland HPE curriculum contributed to lifelong learning described as:

- a knowledgeable person with deep understanding;
- a complex thinker;
- a creative person;
- an active investigator;
- an efficient communicator;
- a participant in an interdependent world;

- a reflective and self-directed learner (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999, p. 5).

As a participant in an interdependent world;

Learners develop a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of themselves, of others and of the environment. They develop an understanding of social justice principles by:

- learning about the values and views of other groups;
- planning ways and developing skills to redress inequities (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999, p. 3).

Hence, constructivism “is associated with so-called twenty-first century lifelong learning” (Australian Government, 2014, p. 125). The twenty-first-century lifelong learning skills include:

- Communication skills
- Numeracy skills
- ICT skills
- Thinking skills and problem solving
- Self-management and competitive skills
- Study and work skills
- Social skills
- Physical skills
- Aesthetic skills (UNESCO, 2019).

Furthermore, Miller et al. (2022) encourage practitioners to embrace the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority’s (ACARA) seven general capabilities for inclusion: critical and creative thinking; digital literacy, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding; literacy; numeracy; and personal and social capability.

Examples of pedagogies used in constructivism include project work, individual activity, experiential, Montessori; Steiner and Pestalozzi education in the US and Europe, reciprocal teaching of reading in the US, communicative learning, cooperative learning and group work element in national strategies (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 12).

A Critical Approach

Critical pedagogies, originating from Paulo Freire (1972) in Brazil, aim towards pursuing a fuller humanity, social emancipation and transformation, led by ‘the oppressed’, such as the poor and women. This is a through a dialogic, reflective approach wherein the teacher is no longer authoritative but, as an intellectual, enables students to develop critical consciousness of their own oppression and to act on the world as they learn in order to change it. (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 11)

Ewing draws on the work of Habermas (1984) to describe a critical approach as; “seeks to go beyond simple cause-effect or process oriented emphases” (2010, p. 30). The student also “shares responsibility for teaching and learning processes, along with the teacher and the whole group” (2010, p. 31). Collaborative and individual experiences are all important and vary depending on the context. The teacher is responsible for providing scaffolded learning. In reality, the curriculum comprises all the experiences that occur in a particular context (Pinar, 1975).

In this approach “competitive examinations and traditional academic subjects are seen as reinforcing inequality and being biased towards students from privileged backgrounds” (Australian Government, 2014, p. 20). The Liberal-humanist view also is embedded within a critical approach which specifically “differentiates between training and education, and is based on the belief that whereas the first is committed to skills and competencies directed towards utilitarian ends, the other is concerned with knowledge and understanding” (Australian Government, 2014, p. 20). Examples of pedagogies used in a critical approach include critical pedagogies such as Philosophy for Children in England and student voice (Westbrook et al, 2013, p. 12). Leahy et al. (2013) note that the inquiry approach adopted in the 1999 Queensland HPE (P-10) Syllabus was renamed a ‘critical inquiry’ approach as one of the five key propositions that underpin the 2013 Australian Curriculum: HPE. Furthermore, they argue that critical approaches have influenced the educational thinking that has shaped curriculum development in both health education and physical education since the late 1980s in Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

WHICH APPROACH?

Ornstein & Hunkins suggest that when considering education and, in particular, the curriculum covered that there are no precise answers to which approach should be used and this is intentional (2017, p. 1); it is about increasing understanding with regard to the complexities surrounding this issue. They argue that schools do tend to commit to one particular approach although many educators do not, “Rather, they emphasize one approach in some situations and advocate other approaches in other situations” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 2). This is why it is so important that curriculum designers, curriculum specialists, curriculum students and teachers need to continue to develop their understanding.

In the latest Australian curriculum reform review it was encouraged that teachers should use an eclectic choice of approaches to suit the context, as advocated by Lynch (2014). Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) support and emphasise the importance of context. Hence, the purpose of education is to achieve all approaches:

- Develop practical skills, strengthen productivity (utilitarian).
- Prepare and deal with the future (twenty-first-century learning).
- Develop the child (personalised learning).
- Critique society (equity and social justice).
- Introduce students to the best that has been thought and said (enculturation). (Australian Government, 2014, p. 24).

All approaches have a place and evidence-based research suggests that there should not be a prevalence of certain approaches (and pedagogies embedded within) over others. However, the “curriculums for geography, history and science [also health and physical education] all privilege inquiry-based and student-centred teaching and learning” which sit within constructivism (Australian Government, 2014, p. 5).

REFLECTION

In this chapter the three key approaches to education are discussed. Think about your context. How is the behavioural approach presented? How is the constructivist approach presented? How is the critical approach presented? Is there a predominant approach in existence within your

context? If so, why do you think this is the case? What are the strengths of each education approach within your context?

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