CHAPTER 6

‘Physically’ Educated for Student Wellbeing

The purpose of this chapter is to continue to clarify physical education labels, exploring the terms ‘health and physical education’ (HPE) and ‘quality physical education’ (QPE). Hence, this chapter relates to being, belonging and becoming physically educated and specifically in relation to whole child development (cf. Figure 1.2). The concepts are defined and located within the broader physical education (PE) field. PE curriculum practice around the world is explored in relation to the recent shift towards advocating ‘wellbeing’. The problem (gap in research) is identified; ‘What does quality holistic physical education look like in practice?’.

‘Health and Physical Education (HPE)’ and ‘Quality Physical Education (QPE)’

Literature suggests that the notion of health is reliant on the concept of wellbeing, which is explained as the complex inter-relationship of physical, social and mental health (Garvis & Pendergast, 2014). As already mentioned, connections between the physical dimension and wellbeing are evident in curriculum documents (cf. p. 40). The National Statement and Profile for HPE in Australia followed the ten national education goals. Goal Nine was “to provide for the physical development and personal health and fitness of students, and for the creative use of

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leisure time" (Australian Education Council, 1989), thus highlighting the importance of HPE as a key learning area within Australian education systems. The Australian Education Council recommended in 1991 that statements and profiles be developed for eight broad learning areas of which HPE was one (Australian Education Council, 1994). This effectively "reinstated HPE as an essential component of a child's learning" (Dinan-Thompson, 1998, p.4).

Bradshaw, Hoelscher and Richardson (2007, p. 8) define wellbeing in the early years as "the realization of children's rights and the fulfilment of the opportunity for every child to be all she or he can be in the light of a child's abilities, potential and skills". The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) stated that all children have the right to an education that lays a foundation for the rest of their lives, maximises their ability and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages. The Convention also recognises children's right to play and be active participants in all matters affecting their lives. This research book listens to children's voices about their learning.

The significance of child wellbeing and specific connections to the physical dimension in education appears to have initially been identified within early year's curriculum sources in the UK. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)—birth to five (2008) in the National Curriculum of England and Wales consisted of six areas of learning and development which were identified as equally important and connected. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) (mental health and wellbeing) has a strong presence and is the first of the six areas listed: Personal, Social and Emotional Development. It is stated that of the six learning areas, "none can be delivered in isolation from the others. They are equally important and depend on each other to support a rounded approach to child development" (2008, p. 11). Furthermore, "All the areas must be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities" (2008, p. 11). Today, the EYFS statutory framework has seven areas of learning and development that are important and interconnected. "Three prime areas are particularly important for learning and forming relationships. They build a foundation for children to thrive and provide the basis for learning in all areas" (Department for Education, 2023, p. 8). The three prime areas are:

- communication and language
- physical development

- personal, social and emotional development

All three prime areas can be enhanced through Physical Education. Furthermore, a significant strength for children to be actively engaged is through movement and more specifically, play:

> 'Play' sits within the physical dimension—'where children are learning through their interactions, as well as adopting and working through the rules and values of their own cultural group' (Arthur et al., 2015, pp. 99–100). The socio-cultural benefits of play enable 'the development of imagination and intelligence, language, social skills, and perceptual-motor abilities in infants and young children' (Frost, 1992, p. 48). (Lynch, 2024, p. 54)

Miller et al., (2022, p. 5) advocate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) play environments; "the provision of research-informed play experiences for children of varied ages to facilitate the growing child in a non-gender-biased, culturally inclusive environment is essential to optimise learning outcomes". Play-based learning involves children moving and has many benefits:

- allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- offers opportunities for multimodal play
- enhances thinking skills and life-long learning dispositions such as curiosity, persistence and creativity
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning and to transfer learning from one experience to another
- assists children to develop and build relationships and friendships
- develops acquisition and concepts in authentic contexts
- builds a sense of identity
- strengthens self-regulation, and physical and mental wellbeing (AGDE, 2022, p. 8).

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0, 2022) is underpinned by the child-rights approach. "It also promotes children's safety, wellbeing and responsibilities as active citizens" (AGDE, 2022, p. 5). Furthermore, the Framework "underpins the implementation of relational and place-based pedagogies and curriculum relevant to each local community and all children in the early childhood setting" (AGDE,

2022, p. 7). Place-based pedagogy refers to educators' knowledge about a context that influences their practice. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:

> conveys the highest expectations for all children's learning, development and wellbeing from birth to 5 years and through the transitions to school. It communicates these expectations through the following 5 Learning Outcomes:
>
> - Children have a strong sense of identity
> - Children are connected with and contribute to their world
> - Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
> - Children are confident and involved learners
> - Children are effective communicators (AGDE, 2022, p. 7).

Within Australia, it was the 2009 Victorian Early Years and Development Framework (VEYDF) which first elucidated the relationship and responsibilities between the learning area of HPE and wellbeing. For outcome three, 'children have a strong sense of wellbeing', it categorised wellbeing into two aspects (cf. Figure 1.2, p. 12):

- children become strong in the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing;
- children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing (DEECD, 2009, p. 23).

This identification of wellbeing as two categories was momentous for physical education. It is important to note that while HPE is the only learning area explicitly associated with wellbeing in curricula, it is not and cannot be responsible for all wellbeing development; for wellbeing is holistic and not one-dimensional. "Holistic approaches recognise the integration and connectedness of all dimensions of children's learning, development and wellbeing. When educators take a holistic approach, they pay attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and cognitive aspects of learning" (AGDE, 2022, p. 20).

This statement acknowledges that all areas of wellbeing need to be explicitly taught. Similar to what the EYFS proposes, learning needs to be purposefully planned. This is supported by Cale and Harris (2019, p. 5); "psychological and social benefits only occur if experiences of physical activity, physical education and sport are positive and explicitly planned and structured to produce particular outcomes". Additionally, Bailey et al. (2009) summarised from a review of research papers that many educational benefits claimed by physical education are highly dependent on contextual and pedagogic variables. This is reinforced by the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia which states:

> Educators are intentional in all aspects of the curriculum and act deliberately, thoughtfully and purposefully to support children's learning through play. They recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and that joint attention, interactions, conversations and shared thinking are vitally important for learning.
> Educators act with intentionality in play-based learning when they, for example:
>
> - plan and create environments both indoor and outdoor that promote and support different types of play for children's active engagement, agency, problem solving, curiosity, creativity and exploration
> - take different roles in children's play or make purposeful decisions about when to observe and when to join and guide the play
> - extend children's learning using intentional teaching strategies such as asking questions, explaining, modelling, speculating, inquiring and demonstrating to extend children's knowledge, skills and enjoyment in thinking and learning
> - sustain, extend, challenge and deepen children's ideas and skills through shared thinking and scaffolding learning
> - use a range of strategies to plan, document and assess children's learning in play-based experiences
> - plan and implement worthwhile play-based learning experiences using children's interests, curiosities and funds of knowledge
> - assist children to recognise unfair play and offer constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community
> - act as resourceful and respectful co-learners and collaborators with children

- support children's progress in play-based learning through the thoughtful extension of children's knowledge, skills and concept development
- notice and work sensitively with very young children's intentions in exploring, practicing and experimenting through play
- acknowledge children's enjoyment and sense of fun and playfulness in learning, particularly when engaged in group play
- provide a balance between child-led and adult initiated and guided play
- plan opportunities for intentional knowledge building, as well as recognising and utilising opportunities for spontaneous teaching and learning
- use routines and transitions to foster learning, development and wellbeing
- join in with children's play experiences, such as taking a role in children's pretend play, to understand and build on children's ideas to support and foster learning
- facilitate the integration of popular culture, media and digital technologies which add to children's multimodal play. (AGDE, 2022, p. 22)

Intentionality is not only necessary for play-based learning through movement for young children but relates to developmentally appropriate learning through the physical dimension of all physical education experiences. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (2007) states five premises for a PE programme:

1. The ultimate purpose of any physical education programme is to help children develop the skills, knowledge and desire to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity.
2. Children should engage in physical activity that is appropriate for their developmental levels
3. Recess and physical education are important but different parts of the school program
4. Physical activity and physical education are not the same
5. Physical education and youth sports are different (NASPE, 2007, pp. 4–5).

In order for the PE curriculum to fulfil a role in developing life-long participation in healthy activities, thus optimising wellbeing, it is imperative that a quality HPE curriculum be implemented in schools (NASPE, 2007; Queensland Government, 2003). "Improving the quality of physical education in schools is the best-documented intervention approach to promoting physical activity in youth" (ACHPER WA branch, 1999, p. 9). Research data from a national survey in the United States of America of students Years Four to Twelve revealed that enjoying physical education was one of the most influential factors for encouraging participation in physical activities outside school (Sallis et al., 1999) and that if opportunities for physical activity were denied during school time, children would not voluntarily catch up on physical activity (Dale et al., 1999).

Pangrazi states that "there is no higher priority in life than health. Without it, all other skills lack meaning and utility" (2000, p.18). Pangrazi's opinion suggests that a quality PE school programme should be given priority over other subjects/ learning areas. A quality PE school program, rather than being neglected or relegated to a minor place in the school curriculum, plays a dominant role in the development of the child from the early years of primary school, it improves child wellbeing and the likelihood of life-long participation in physical activities. Within the dimensions of health, physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual, while it is acknowledged that all are significant, it is the 'physical' explicitly named in the nomenclature, and the value of movement that forms the foundation of the Health and 'Physical' Education learning area.

> Health and Physical Education is the key learning area in the curriculum that focuses explicitly on developing movement skills and concepts students require to participate in physical activities with competence and confidence. The knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions students develop through movement in Health and Physical Education encourage ongoing participation across their lifespan and in turn lead to positive health outcomes. Movement competence and confidence is seen as an important personal and community asset to be developed, refined and valued. The study of movement also provides challenges and opportunities for students to enhance a range of personal and social skills and behaviours that contribute to health and wellbeing. (ACARA, 2019)

Research findings suggest that if holistic HPE is to be achieved, students must first be 'physically educated' (Lynch & Soukup, 2016). Hence, while it is acknowledged that wellbeing can be achieved through

all health dimensions, the physical dimension of physical education is the focus within HPE. According to UNESCO "physical education forms a foundation for positive patterns of behaviour and is the best way to access and systematically engage children and youth in a rounded and healthy lifestyle" (2015, p. 44).

The notion of a quality PE programme was defined and endorsed by the Senate Inquiry in Australia in the early 1990s. One recommendation from the Senate Inquiry was that all children be provided with quality physical education opportunities, requiring "as a matter of priority, all physical education programs be conducted by, or under the supervision of, qualified physical education teachers, particularly at primary school level" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992, p. xxi). Today, this recommendation remains as it has not come to fruition; "every primary school has a tertiary qualified health and physical education teacher who delivers physical education classes to all students and supports classroom teachers to engage students in physical activity throughout the school day" (AHKA, 2019).

Hence, having a quality HPE programme in the primary school requires access to a specialist physical education teacher, or what Cale and Harris refer to as a well-qualified professional (2019), for "several Australian studies have described the lack of qualifications and confidence of classroom teachers to deliver PE programs, [is] mainly due to inadequate teacher training" (Lynch, 2015; Morgan & Bourke, 2005, p. 7). Teachers can influence, for good or ill, students' views about the value of physical education (Solmon & Carter, 1995), particularly students' beliefs about physical activity (Lee, 2002). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasise the importance "to encourage young people to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, that are enjoyable, and that offer variety" (CDC, 2013). Furthermore, "Quality physical education is both developmentally and instructionally relevant for all children" (NASPE, 2007, p. 3).

Quality instruction is a vital aspect of any PE program, yet other aspects to consider during the design and development stage of a programme are enjoyment and fun for the participants (Garcia et al., 2002; Sport England, 2019; Sport Wales, 2015). If children enjoy learning through movement, they develop optimistic views about being physically active (Henderson et al., 1999; Sport England, 2019; Sport Wales, 2015) and they "will be predisposed to engage in it" (Garcia et al., 2002, p. 3). Therefore, the way the programme is implemented is paramount

to it being enjoyable, engaging and successful. It is suggested that teachers "think through the mind of a child" (Morgan, 2005, p.16) to make games and PE lessons engaging and a positive social experience (Pangrazi, 2000) which underpins the 1999 Queensland HPE syllabus' socio-cultural approach, imbued as it is with strong social justice principles (QSCC, 1999).

Consequently, 'fun', 'participation' and 'engagement' elements need to reach all children, in a class of diverse student interests and abilities; this is easier said than done. The provision of quality school PE is not just for those children who excel in sport or in the competitive arena, but also for those who prefer individual activities such as bike riding, bush walking or swimming: "we need to offer something for all of them" (Boss, 2000, p. 5). Physical activity benefits especially the unskilled and obese youngsters as these children need to discover suitable physical activities that they enjoy (Pangrazi, 2000). This approach to PE is described as the 'new PE' (Boss, 2000) with an emphasis on the neo-HPE curriculum which requires teachers to adopt a socially critical perspective "for understanding 'new kids' and the context of 'new times'" (Tinning, 2004, p. 251). Hence, contemporary HPE teachers need to incorporate critical pedagogy into their teaching practice (Tinning, 2004).

Inclusive programs can be implemented by "assigning open-ended tasks that allow kids to progress as far as they can individually, and modifying traditional team sports so that teams are much smaller and everyone gets more opportunities to practise skills" (Boss, 2000, p. 4). This replaces the relay races or large groups with minimal equipment, where many children are spectators waiting for their turn (Boss, 2000). Subsequently, classes require sufficient equipment to enable this new pedagogy to be enacted. It was a recommendation of the Senate Inquiry that funding for HPE be comparable with other key learning areas (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992).

Schools play a vital role in the promotion and development of physical activity across a wide range of sports with a diversity of children (Cale & Harris, 2019). "Only schools currently provide an environment where children can experience and learn about a full range of physical activities and choose those to which they are best suited" (Moore, 1994, p. 24). Hence, for quality programs to be implemented in the primary school it is essential that they have sufficient equipment and facilities for these to occur. Because of the skills and expertise necessary to implement these programs specialist PE teachers are preferred (Clarke, 2000).

Pangrazi lists the essential components of a quality PE program:

- Being guided by content standards;
- Student-centred and developmentally appropriate;
- Having physical activity and motor skills forming the core of the program;
- Teaching management skills and promoting self discipline;
- Promoting inclusion of all students;
- Emphasising learning correctly rather than outcome;
- Promoting a lifetime of personal wellness; and
- Teaching responsibility and cooperation, and promoting diversity (2001, p. 18)

It is common knowledge that "not every PE programme is a quality program. Some are little more than organized recesses" (Graham et al., 1998, p. 6), which not only fails to achieve many of the outcomes it espouses under the rhetoric of enhanced health, fitness, skill and self-esteem, but often exacerbates the very problems it seeks to overcome. It is argued that "where physical education is poorly or insensitively taught, it is more likely to have a negative influence on learners than a positive one" (Tinning et al., 2001, p. 181).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusive (EDI) practices also need to be specifically considered, planned for and enacted within QPE (health and wellbeing) lessons. For "Learning in and through movement contexts presents both unique opportunities and challenges in terms of equity and inclusion" (Alfrey & Jeanes, 2021). The 7 Pillars offers a broad framework for sporting clubs to address EDI (Play by the Rules, 2024) and include access, attitude, choice, partnerships, communication, policy and opportunities. Supplementing the 7 Pillars, Alfrey and Jeanes (2021) suggest eight strategies to support EDI:

- Have a broad and balanced HPE programme that goes beyond sport
- Engage and respond to student's voice
- Carefully consider assessment, using a range of approaches
- Embed Indigenous perspectives and practices, respectfully and with permission
- Engage in critical discussion about exclusion
- Seek out opportunities to learn about promoting inclusion

- Audit your school, class-space and lessons using the 7 pillars of inclusion
- Offer at least three levels of challenge

Hence, PE teachers need to be able to deliver and lead quality HPE lessons (EDI practice) across strands of Physical activity, Health and Personal Development. A study conducted by Lynch (2017) found that HPE implementation is achievable through leadership, underpinned by clear communication and a 'whole school' approach. This is advocated by Cale and Harris (2019, p. 13); "Specifically, a coordinated whole school approach to teaching health would help young people connect learning across a range of subjects. In addition, we can adopt teaching approaches that help pupils relate their learning to themselves and their everyday lives".

Leadership does involve the teacher having the knowledge and understanding of the various pedagogies that exist in HPE and the awareness to choose the most appropriate for each particular learning experience (Tinning, 1999). PE teachers are often required to choose critical, socially just pedagogies rather than the traditional dominant science and performance-based pedagogies for HPE, which focus on technical outcomes in movement. Hence, the constructivist approach is necessary to counteract the ideologies that have existed throughout history.

Globally, PE curriculum in schools has been underpinned by the ideologies of sexism, elitism, healthism, individualism and mesomorphism (Colquhoun, 1991, 1992; Hickey, 1995; Kirk, 1992; Kirk & Twigg, 1993; Scraton, 1990; Tinning, 1990; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992; Tinning et al., 1993). Critical socially just pedagogies will necessitate teachers being trained and educated in this mode of teaching (Tinning, 2004). Webster recommended that "pre-service education of primary school teachers include mandatory units directly related to the content strands of the syllabus, with further opportunities for teachers to specialize in PE courses" (2001, p. 1).

Life-long and multi-component education is affirmed by UNESCO, "physical education is the entry-point for life-long participation in physical activity" (2015, p. 6) and is "the most effective means of providing all children and youth with the skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding for life-long participation in society" (2015, p. 6). In summary, Quality PE according to UNESCO involves:

> movement competence to structure thinking, express feelings, and enrich understanding. Through competition and cooperation, learners appreciate the role of rule structures, conventions, values, performance criteria and fair play, and celebrate each other's varying contributions, as well as appreciating the demands and benefits of teamwork. Additionally, the learner understands how to recognize and manage risk, to fulfill assigned tasks, and to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. They learn how to cope with both success and failure, and how to evaluate performance against their own and other's previous achievements. It is through these learning experiences that QPE provides exposure to clear, consistent values and reinforces pro-social behaviour through participation and performance. (2015, p. 14)

Alderman, Beighle and Pangrazzi (2006) suggest that children's enjoyment of physical education is enhanced when teachers promote; "intrinsic motivation, perceived physical competence, and create a mastery-oriented environment" (p. 41).

As previously mentioned literature suggests that there is global 'significant ambiguity' (Griggs, 2015, p. 3) surrounding "the definition, usage and function of 'health and well-being' in the public policy realm and in the wider world". Suggestions made in the opening paragraph that the implementation of quality physical education to enable holistic health is complex and multifaceted are heightened by many associated discourses (Garvis & Pendergast, 2014), and practitioner confusion is investigated in Chapters 7 and 8.

Classroom teachers are today required to be health and wellbeing experts, but not PE experts. This is a paradox and counteracts the premise of this book—*to be a health and wellbeing expert one must also be an expert in the physical dimension*. The issue of 'how' the physical dimension is being supported and implemented within and outside of primary schools relates back to the reason for 'why' primary schools must remain as the focus—schools are key to 'inclusive QPE'.

Reflection

This chapter emphasises that to be a health and wellbeing expert one must also be an expert in the physical dimension. Within your context what have you observed that sits within quality play? What evidence is there of QPE in your context? What areas of curriculum implementation,

in relation to learning through movement, could be possibly improved? How is EDI addressed and promoted within your context?

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