



# 4

## Global Policy: Holistic Health, Wellbeing and Physical Education Evolution

When considering quality physical education (QPE) implementation in primary/elementary schools and subsequent child wellbeing, the promotion of health is of major significance. Hence, this chapter relates to various elements of QPE (cf. Fig. 1.1), including curriculum, teaching and learning; whole child development; school implementation; and strength-based community partnerships. The health within Physical Education (PE) has impacted many parts of the world as evidenced by curriculum policy as the Health, Wellbeing and Physical Education (H, W & PE) revolution has and continues to grow globally. Furthermore, the World Wide survey of school PE found that countries of “Best Practice” had a common theme relating to “promotion of health and healthy lifestyles” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2014, p. 10). Hence, when considering QPE implementation in primary/elementary schools around the world, the promotion of health is of major significance.

Holistic HPE is described by Lynch and Soukup (2016):

The introduction of the sociocultural approach saw a philosophical shift using a “holistic” discourse in PE. This holistic view was influenced by an

inclusive ideology and in some regions of the world was relabelled HPE. This shift has occurred on numerous occasions throughout history, but most recently began as a complex counter discourse to those associated with the “body as object” [dualism] philosophy. The whole child view was “informed by critical pedagogues and pedagogy in Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s” (Cliff, Wright, & Clarke, 2009, p. 165). This holistic discourse had important implications for PE teachers and students, “because its attention to social and cultural influences on health put it in opposition to notions which locate responsibility for health almost solely in the individual and their decisions” (Cliff et al., 2009, p. 165). This discourse changed perception of the body as a separate object, to that of the “whole person”; body, mind, spirit and well-being, along with their social and cultural context.

The volume of holistic HPE literature found in international, peer-reviewed journal articles and research books suggests that Australia has led the way in HPE nomenclature and curriculum reform (Lynch, 2016). In Australia, the HPE framework document is described as an “ideal” policy document (Hickey, Kirk, Macdonald, & Penney, 2014), more specifically, it is a public incremental educational policy (Dinan-Thompson, 1998) that has gradually been enacted by Australian schooling systems over the last 20 years (Lynch, 2005, 2014; Macdonald, 2013).

Policies are a matter of the “authoritative allocation of values”, the operational statements of values, or “statements of prescriptive intent” (Kogan, 1975, p. 55). The HPE national curriculum provides a flexible framework conceptualised as text (Penney, 2014). “Public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (Dye, 1984, p. 1). Text or written curriculum is defined by Goodson (1988, p. 9) as:

- an important part of a consolidated “state” system of schooling;
- setting “standards” and defining statements of intent; and
- providing clear “rules of the game” for educators and practitioners, parameters but not prescriptions.

Australian Education Departments’ health and wellbeing outcomes, frameworks and statements all directly relate to the Health and Physical Education (HPE) learning area:

In Health and Physical Education students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to support them to be resilient, to develop a strong sense of self, to build and maintain satisfying relationships, to make health-enhancing decisions in relation to their health and physical activity participation, and to develop health literacy competencies in order to enhance their own and others' health and wellbeing. (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012, p. 2)

The holistic health and wellbeing shift is not unique to Australia, as it is identified by other developed countries. A holistic HPE philosophy has been adopted by the USA (Lynch, 2016), Canada (Kilborn, Lorusso, & Francis, 2016) and parts of the UK. In the USA, similar to Australia, each state controls education policy and curriculum implementation; hence, it differs in quality between states and between schools. While there is no national curriculum as such, there is a National Framework for Physical Activity and Physical Education known as the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programme (CSPAP). The National Framework CSPAP is supported by National Initiatives which has included “Let’s Move! Active Schools” (LMAS), “Presidential Youth Fitness Program” (PYFP) and the “CDC’s (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) State Public Health Actions Program”.

In the UK, Wales has also introduced wellbeing and “showed a greater commitment to cross-curricular links” (Griggs, 2012, p. 4). In Scotland, health and wellbeing includes: physical education, physical activity and sport; mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing; planning for choices and changes; food and health; substance misuse; and relationships, sexual health and parenthood (Griggs, 2012). Other nations such as New Zealand have a “Health and Physical Education” key learning area—“where the focus is on well-being of the students themselves, of other people, and of society through learning in health-related and movement contexts” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2019).

Asian nations have experienced a shift towards H, W & PE; this includes the largest and most populous country in the world—China. In 2001, China shifted from its traditional sports performance-oriented PE curriculum to a more holistic PE and health curriculum. “Not unlike recent changes in Australia, New Zealand and the UK, this process has seen

a heightening of the emphasis on health” (Hickey & Jin, 2010, p. 19). According to Jin, the Chinese shift towards a H, W & PE holistic approach, “challenges many aspects of traditional PE theory and practices, and requires PE teachers to change their professional perspectives and pedagogic approaches” (Jin, 2013, p. 15). Jin researched teachers’ perspectives of PE curriculum reform in China and found barriers:

All eighteen PE teachers expressed their support for the fundamental goal of putting more emphasis upon health promotion in the new HPE curriculum. It is fair to say that the interviewed teachers, viewed as a group, overwhelmingly endorsed the broad direction of the new HPE curriculum. However, the data reveals a number of structural, personal and cultural factors that might prevent PE teachers from actively implementing the new HPE curriculum. (p. 15)

This drive for holistic PE curriculum reform continues to grow as the Chinese State Council promised to “further promote physical education in schools and improve students’ physical health” (The State Council, 2016). The document advocated inclusive teaching; “Schools for the physically challenged should vary their physical education lessons to fit the needs of different kinds of disabilities and guarantee every student could enjoy their right to exercise”. It also advocated community “strengths-based” partnerships.

This appears to be consistent throughout many Asian countries:

The economic growth witnessed in many countries in Asia has led to significant changes in cultural and social practices. As people become more affluent, their lifestyles and habits reflect their shifting priorities and spending power. In general, people in urban Asia have grown more sedentary in tandem with greater technological advances that offer an escape from physical work and exercise. This trend has raised the concerns of educators who have noted a declining interest in physical education and sports in schools. Educational institutions play an important role in improving the health and well-being of their students, especially through their physical education, sports and recreation programmes. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2008, p. iii)

UNESCO led the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) in the Asia and Pacific region. “To achieve the goals of the Decade, UNESCO strongly advocates[d] the development of the intellectual capacity, morals and ethics, emotional maturity and physical well-being of children and youth, enabling them to become responsible citizens and leaders of the future” (UNESCO Bangkok, 2008, p. iii).

UNESCO’s goal is to enable the promotion of better health and well-being for all children and young people. “This, in turn, will contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], particularly those related to education, health and gender equality” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 8). The SDGs apply to all countries, developed and developing (Lynch, 2016) and build on from the 2000 to 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, consists of 17 goals and 169 targets. These goals “are truly global challenges that require solutions involving all countries” (Thwaites, 2015).

Goals 3 and 4 are representative of H, W & PE. In particular specific targets 3.4, 3.d and 4.1:

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.

3.4—By 2030, reduce by one-third premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases (NCD) through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and wellbeing.

3.d—Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular, developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction, and management of national and global health risks.

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

As target 3.4 and research indicate, mental and social wellbeing is promoted by engaging in regular physical activity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014; Lynch, 2015; Parkinson, 2015; Public Health England, 2015; Richards, 2016; Salmon et al., 2011).

Furthermore, “According to the United Nations (UN) ‘partnerships’ are essential for implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and continued efforts towards equality in health and wellbeing” (Lynch, 2016, p. 1). This is supported by Elliott who suggests that at the “core of promoting children’s health and wellness in early childhood and school environments is communication and partnerships with families, and strong links between school, home and community” (2014, p. 191).

Within Asia, Singapore has “Physical Education” and Health Education is embedded within (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2016). Brunei Darussalam has adopted a new twenty-first-century national curriculum consisting of nine key learning areas, which includes HPE (UNESCO, 2011b). Extending PE to “Health and Physical Education” corresponded with the aim of the curriculum reform—to address issues relating to the whole child.

Similarly, neighbouring nation, Malaysia, also promotes a holistic curriculum, specifically in primary education they aim “at ensuring the overall, balanced and integrated development of a child’s potential – which includes intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects” (UNESCO, 2011i, p. 15). This stipulates enabling pupils to look after their health and physical fitness. HPE is embedded within arts and recreation (along with music and art) where the “elements of Health are incorporated within Physical Education” (UNESCO, 2011i, p. 16). This is a similar curriculum situation being offered in the Philippines (UNESCO, 2011k).

The first aim of education in Japan is that it should “foster an attitude to acquire wide ranging knowledge and culture, and to seek the truth, cultivate a rich sensibility and sense of morality, while developing a healthy body” (UNESCO, 2011h, p. 2). Japanese elementary schools have “Physical Education” as a subject and Health Education is embedded within (similar to Singapore). However, in Lower Secondary Education and Upper Secondary Education, the curriculum is titled “Health and Physical Education” (UNESCO, 2011h, p. 19). This is a similar curriculum structure to Nepal (UNESCO, 2011j).

Thailand also has the holistic HPE subject area in education (primary and secondary) which includes “human growth and development; life and family; movement, physical exercises, games, Thai and international

sports; strengthening of health, capacity and disease prevention; and protection from various risk behaviours” (UNESCO, 2011o, p. 22).

Cambodian education has “Health and Physical Education and Sport” as their subject area with the goal of “improving and maintaining their own physical and mental health and to contribute to the improvement and maintenance of the health of their families and wider society” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 13). Indonesia is similarly titled “Physical Education, Sports and Health” across both elementary and secondary education (UNESCO, 2011e).

In India “Health and Physical Education must be an integrated part of schooling at the elementary level” as well as at secondary schooling. The aim of the HPE curriculum is “To provide the required theoretical and practical inputs in order to provide an integrated and holistic understanding and developing positive attitudes, values, skills and behaviour related to health and physical education at the primary, secondary and senior secondary levels” (National Council of Educational Research and Training of India, n.d., p. 3). This is a similar curriculum situation being offered in Sri Lanka (UNESCO, 2011n).

In Europe, unlike Asia, there is not a common presence of holistic education in regards to PE curriculum and nomenclature. For example, in England, the curriculum area is only Physical Education. While there is Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) as a subject, it is “not statutory and therefore schools have the autonomy to decide on what and how they implement these guidelines” (Department for Education, 2016). The present PE national curriculum for England is described as a “dominant performance-oriented curriculum with its accompanying behaviourist inclined pedagogical approach” (Thorburn, Jess, & Atencio, 2011, p. 393); behavioural to the degree that “official guidance from the department of education advise teachers to use physical activity as punishment in schools - to discipline misbehaviour with forced exercise” (Curran, 2014; Department for Education, 2014). However, this does appear to be circumstantial, as the previous national curriculum draft purported a holistic approach. It proceeded the Rose Review and was suitably titled “Understanding Physical Development, Health and Well-being”. This holistic H, W & PE curriculum however was discarded in

2010 with the change of government (Griggs, 2012). Notably, it can be argued that it has planted the seed for future reform.

Furthermore, in the UK, the health and wellbeing gap created by having optional PSHE appears to have been momentarily filled by the physical literacy concept which as argued has contributed to blocking curriculum policy in PE from reaching children in schools (Lynch & Soukup, 2016, 2017); “England, Canada and Wales are listed as having the most established physical literacy initiatives” (Corbin, 2016, p. 15), but there are confusing and problematic aspects which are addressed in Chapter 6 (cf. p. 69). It is of no surprise that the children in the countries who promote physical literacy or have adopted the term in curriculum (USA) are according to Curran “among the unhealthiest in the world” (2014; UNICEF, 2007), which suggests physical literacy may be a form of reactive panic rather than proactive, strategic forward planning.

The PE curriculum in many European countries does appear to correspond to tradition which is detailed in Chapter 7. Hence, when it comes to learning through the physical, many countries in Europe (such as England) do what has always been done; change is slow or non-existent. Germany has sports as a subject in primary education and General Lower Secondary (European Commission, 2019c). France has physical and sport education, again with no connection to health (European Commission, 2019b). Greece also has Physical Education which is related to mental health (not a holistic connection to health) (European Commission, 2019d). Italian primary education has sports education (European Commission, 2019e). Iceland, Poland, Spain and Romania refer to a PE curriculum only and again have no connection to health.

However, there are many European countries who acknowledge a holistic H, W & PE curriculum in either nomenclature or structure. This includes: Finland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden. Ireland has Physical Education which aims to “promote the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the child” (Government of Ireland, 1999, p. 10) which is similar to Northern Ireland. Scotland’s curriculum area is titled Health and Wellbeing (European Commission, 2019f) and the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden all have HPE in nomenclature. Finland’s curriculum integrates wellbeing through all areas of teaching and learning; they have

health education and physical education as separate subject areas however acknowledge the holistic development of the child as a foundation throughout a healthy life (UNESCO, 2011d). A research review by Yli-Piipari (2014) concluded that “physical education has a solid foundation in Finnish schools and it enjoys strong support in Finnish society” (p. 1).

Finland is a progressive nation when it comes to education and has been identified as world leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The new national core curriculum (2016) has instruction based on Steiner pedagogy, embedded within a constructivist curriculum approach (cf. p. 25). Furthermore, context is prioritised, the curriculum is closely aligned with the twenty-first-century lifelong learning skills (cf. p. 28) and innovation in delivery is encouraged (European Commission, 2019a).

Hence, similar to Australia, they advocate genuine school and community partnerships through curriculum implementation: developing schools as learning communities; emphasising the joy of learning; emphasising collaborative atmosphere; promoting student autonomy in studying and in school life (European Commission, 2019a).

The guidelines for developing school culture are specified in the national core curriculum. The goal is to build a school culture that promotes learning, interaction, participation, well-being and a sustainable way of living. The principles that guide the development of the school culture emphasise the school as a learning community. In addition, an aim to ensure the well-being and safety of every pupil.

Schools must provide opportunities for experimentation, exploration, active learning, physical activity and play. Cultural diversity and language awareness are also key principles that guide the development of the school culture. The use of various languages in the school's daily life is seen as natural, and languages are appreciated. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014)

African nations are also mixed with many countries shifting towards a holistic H, W & PE curriculum. Nations such as Cameroon, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan, Malawi, Namibia and Tanzania have Physical and Health Education and advocate a holistic approach to its implementation. However, there are countries such as Kenya, Botswana, Chad, Zimbabwe and

Zambia who offer Physical Education in the primary school with no explicit connections to health (UNESCO, 2011m).

Many Middle Eastern countries have also shifted to a holistic HPE in schools. Afghanistan's primary education includes PE and health education (UNESCO, 2011f). Islamic Republic of Iran has PE and has "Science and Health" as a separate subject in their primary curriculum (UNESCO, 2011g), and recently, the United Arab Emirates has experienced a holistic HPE curriculum reform;

The Ministry of Education have designed a brand new Physical and Health Education curriculum to meet the individual needs of each student and will be implemented in all government schools from January 2017. The objective is to empower young Emirati students to take ownership of their physical education, health and wellbeing to ensure a future generation of healthy, motivated, highly educated Emiratis. (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education, 2017)

Bahrain advocates a holistic primary education; "developing the children physically, mentally, morally, socially, and emotionally, and providing them with the basic general education and skills required to be good citizens", however have PE (with no health) in the curriculum (UNESCO, 2011a). Other similar nations include Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Egypt and Qatar (UNESCO, 2011m).

Countries in Central and South America such as Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Argentina all advocate PE with no health subjects or curriculum connections. There are countries with no PE or health, such as Vanuatu in Oceania (International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance [ICHPER-SD], 2014). However, most nations in Oceania have been heavily influenced by Australia and New Zealand's shift towards holistic H, W & PE. The Cook Islands has Health Education and Physical Wellbeing (includes Physical Education and Health) (UNESCO, 2011c), and Samoa has HPE in their primary curriculum (UNESCO, 2011-l). There is clearly a global shift to a holistic constructivist approach in curriculum policy. However, there are questions raised regarding how effectively this curriculum reform is being implemented or enacted within primary schools.

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