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Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this book is to offer insight into enacting holistic PE (HPE). Research findings strongly suggest that holistic QPE enhances children's wellbeing, arguably more so than any other curriculum area offered in schools. Quantitative evidence-based research indicates that physical activities optimise children's wellbeing and physical activities are unique to the physical education curriculum, defined as "education through movement" (Pangrazi, 2001, p. 5). This book supplements the prevalent quantitative research with much needed qualitative research investigating PE implementation in schools. Hence, this book is significant as it provides balance and strength to the present quantitative research findings and offers guidance as to how holistic PE for children's wellbeing is best achieved.

Qualitative data have been gathered from deep contextual studies from around the world influenced by Swedish didactical research, supplementing insights into how QPE can be best implemented. Didactical research investigates the relations between teaching, learning and socialisation by exploring theories and practice—asking questions such as who is teaching, who is learning, when and with whom. Thus, the political, economic and social conditions are acknowledged and reflected upon as educational practices are explored and scrutinised. This is significant, as while the strengths

of quantitative methods have been well suited to scientific research over the last century (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006), it is the richer and more varied insights offered by qualitative research that is commonly used in education and social sciences (Kervin et al., 2006; Lune & Berg, 2017; Merriam, 1998; Salkind, 2017). Hence, this book identifies the “what” of “physically educating” children and “how” this is best done.

It is suggested that to optimise wellbeing children are first and foremost “physically educated”. This is the nature of the learning area and educators must get this right if they are to reach all children in all schools. Hence, laying a strong “physical dimension” platform is necessary to achieve a holistic “Health and physically educated” child. Therefore, a strong, clear and comprehensive grounding in quality PE is essential for both teachers and students. For far too long in primary schools around the world, PE has been marginalised—dismissed as not a serious subject. In the future, PE will be arguably, “the most important” learning area as “there is no higher priority in life than health. Without it, all other skills lack meaning and utility” (Pangrazi, 2000, p. 18). Primary schools’ play a key role in children’s health and wellbeing and according to education policy and global guidelines, holistic PE must be prioritised.

Figure 1.1 (cf. p. 11) illustrates the dimensions of “physically educating” children and offers a framework for optimising children’s wellbeing in schools through QPE. This framework is an extension to the HPS framework, sharing similarities, but with a PE focus it is fundamentally different. Physically educating all children entails four pillars:

1. Curriculum, teaching and learning—this focus prioritises movement in lessons, enabling inclusive experiences where all children are given the opportunities to develop the necessary movement skills (beginning with FMS). While having a physical (and cognitive) focus, children are able to engage and enjoy moving which sets the platform for a lifetime.
2. Whole child development—Educators and students are aware and constantly work towards the bigger picture; the holistic “Health and physically educated” child. Evidence-based research (quantitative and qualitative) illustrates how the various dimensions of holistic PE compliment one another: spiritual; social and emotional; physical; and cognitive. All

dimensions are enhanced through QPE and the more any one of these dimensions is enhanced the more the other dimensions can benefit.

3. School implementation (organisation, ethos and environment)—the HPE curriculum area is implemented using an inclusive socio-cultural approach, consistently throughout the whole school. This requires leadership and strong communication. School leadership was a pertinent issue raised, specifically the role of principals/head teachers in deciding who they employ within the school to coordinate physical education and health.
4. Community—strength-based partnerships are developed and maintained to optimise teaching and learning resources and opportunities, subsequently optimising children's wellbeing.

For these QPE dimensions to be achieved UNESCO developed a national strategy:

1. Teacher education, supply and development
2. Facilities, equipment and resources
3. Curriculum flexibility
4. Community partnerships
5. Monitoring and quality assurance (2015, p. 23).

The four pillars/dimensions for optimising children's wellbeing in QPE, along with the UNESCO national strategy, are strongly supported by the qualitative findings within this research book.

Approaches to PE

Considering the dimensions of physical education, there are various approaches (and theories and models within) that have influenced delivery throughout history. Approaches to education and health evolve from the psychological perspectives which frame the theory of knowledge: biological, behavioural, cognitive, psychoanalytic and phenomenological. Educators understanding of the various approaches will only strengthen practice within schools as they enable teachers to identify the most appropriate

approach, subsequently influencing pedagogy within particular teaching and learning contexts.

When an approach dominates practice, then this “reflects perceptions, values and knowledge” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017, p. 2) within society. Furthermore, they reflect the teacher’s belief about how children learn, how children are supported by families, communities and educators, as well as what is important for children now and in the future (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2015). We are reminded that schools do tend to commit to one particular approach although many educators do not (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). This is why it is pertinent that all educators continue to develop their understanding about education approaches: behaviourism, constructivism and critical.

The modern approach towards public health and health education considers determinants of lifelong health and wellbeing—some factors being more in the individuals control than others (Corbin, Welk, Corbin, & Welk, 2011). Health approaches include: the biological approach (e.g. medical model); behavioural approach (e.g. transtheoretical model of behavioural change); and the social approach to health (e.g. social model to health and social-ecological model [SEM]/socio-cultural approach). The literature acknowledging the “big picture” of health and the determinants which may or may not be in an individual’s control sit within the World Health Organization’s (WHO) definition of health: “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948).

All educational and health approaches do have a place in schools and evidence-based research suggests that there should be balance and not a prevalence of certain approaches (and pedagogies embedded within). Rather, modern day PE teachers (whether specialist or classroom) need to be able to deliver quality PE lessons across strands of Physical activity, Health and Personal Development. This often involves choosing critical, socially just pedagogies (inclusive) rather than the traditional dominant science and performance-based pedagogies for HPE, which focus on technical outcomes in movement (Tinning, 1999).

Furthermore, educators need to also be aware of the influence of external or governing bodies and ulterior motives. In particular, the term “governmentality” has been coined, which is concerned with the art of

government (Chamberlain, 2014). Thorpe warns that governmentality illustrates a “declining faith in the institutions responsible for governing education” (2003, p. 147) and investigations highlight concern for the national curriculum for England where teachers and head teachers are encouraged by government policy to discipline misbehaviour with forced exercise—which is detrimental to lifelong health and wellbeing (Curran, 2014; Department for Education, 2014).

Global Trend

Traditionally, the behavioural approach has been most dominant within education systems around the world, including physical education. This approach is renowned for being teacher-controlled and involves little student choice or interaction (Westbrook et al., 2013). However, many nations today advocate a constructivist approach to education and PE. This book adopts “education through movement” as a lens to advocate a holistic approach towards child health and wellbeing; hence, the book’s premise sits within the constructivist approach. Furthermore, the constructivist approach is synonymous to QPE where: children are active learners; participate in integrated hands on experiences with open-ended materials; and they construct new meanings (Arthur et al., 2015). In a constructivist approach, learning experiences are meaningful and engaging, and the teacher is viewed as a co-learner and facilitator of the learning process (Ewing, 2010).

A shift towards a constructivist (and critical), socio-cultural approach in education has experienced a Health, Wellbeing and Physical Education (H, W & PE) revolution—described as a growing global curriculum reform, one that is in the best interest of the whole child. This is where PE is not seen as a single 45 minutes lesson that may occur once a week but rather where the physical education lesson is acknowledged as the platform to wellbeing, infused across all curricula and extra-curricular activities within school as well as the child’s greater community. This includes the complex layers of relationships between individuals and groups, involving personal, interpersonal and environmental factors. However, research evidences that in many nations the H, W & PE revolution often only exists as policy and

fails to reach children in schools, on sporting fields, classrooms or in gym halls.

A holistic HPE requires an inclusive, developmentally appropriate and progressive infrastructure beginning within early years of primary schools. Such an infrastructure will engage and challenge all children, subsequently enhancing individual and team success, provide diverse movement opportunities and ultimately optimise health and wellbeing. This concept was supported by the inaugural ICHPER-SD world congress 1958 theme, “Child Health and the School”. However, while this shift has been around for some time, it has been slow in its global traction.

Health within physical education (PE) has impacted many parts of the world as evidenced by curriculum policy. Hence, 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” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 10). Hence, when considering QPE implementation in primary schools around the world, the promotion of health (holistic approach) is of major significance.

A growing number of nations have made the shift to a holistic HPE curriculum and these numbers are rising. Nations embracing H, W & PE include: Australia, USA, UK (Wales & Scotland), New Zealand, Singapore, Canada, China, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Philippines, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Finland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Cameroon, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, Afghanistan, United Arab Emirates, Cook Islands and Samoa.

Findings and Recommendations

A constructivist (and critical), socio-cultural approach shift must continue across all nations for children to experience optimal wellbeing. For this to occur, it is essential that holistic HPE policy becomes deeply rooted curriculum reform in every school. The book’s qualitative research findings suggest that for children’s wellbeing to be optimised the following recommendations need to be enacted:

1. PE is prioritised—acknowledged as one of, if not the most important curriculum area in schools

A quality PE school programme rather than being neglected or relegated a minor place in the school curriculum, must play a dominant role in the development of the child from the early years of primary school.

2. PE must be Quality PE (QPE)

As recommended by global policy, QPE is the ideal pedagogical way to implement PE for enhancing all dimensions of health. Thinking through the mind's eye of a child, it is intrinsically natural for all children to enjoy movement engagement for the purpose of play, games, exploring, learning, developing fundamental movement skills (FMS) and dominant movement patterns (DMP). Children want to be included; to truly belong; to be acknowledged; and to discover exciting ways to feel good about themselves and their movement. Inclusive education requires access to QPE, to equipment/facilities and to opportunities to develop skills correctly with optimal participation. It involves developmentally appropriate content and experiences, a knowledgeable teacher who cares about each child's progress, who is interested in each child's movement and enjoys working with children generally.

3. The key wellbeing development responsibility of holistic H/PE is associated with being “physically educated”

Within the dimensions of health (physical, social and emotional, cognitive 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.

This is best captured in the Australian curriculum:

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. (Australian Curriculum, 2019)

4. QPE is the only label advocated

There has been global confusion among practitioners responsible for physical education implementation, caused by the labels and branding within PE: “Physical education”, “health and physical education”, “physical literacy” and “health literacy”. As published by Lynch and Soukup (2016), the ambiguous grey area surrounding the terms PE and HPE have seen the rise and traction of new terms to represent and replace the original meaning of physical education, such as “Physical Literacy”. This theory is supported by Jurbala (2015) who shares that physical literacy has become a replacement term for holistic development. Therefore, many of physical literacy characteristics are not new and have been borrowed from PE, specifically literature relating to “QPE” and “lifelong physical education”. It is recommended that QPE be the only label used within PE, enabling much needed global clarity among educators.

5. Community partnerships are essential now and in the future

Leading “curriculum reform” countries such as Australia and Finland, explicitly advocate partnerships to help enact their holistic H, W & PE curriculum. According to the United Nations, “partnerships” are essential for optimising children’s QPE experiences and continued efforts towards equality in health and wellbeing (Lynch, 2016). Data gathered suggest that community partnerships enhance children’s physical education experiences and ultimately their wellbeing, across all research projects. The most significant finding was that partnerships (priority 4 in the UNESCO national strategy) enabled more facilities, equipment and resources (priority 2 in the UNESCO national strategy) (2015, p. 23).

6. A predominant behavioural approach to PE should be avoided as it does not acknowledge the whole child and can be harmful to children’s wellbeing

A behavioural approach to PE advocates a focus on the body as an object rather than the “whole” child, which throughout history has been underpinned by ideologies including sexism, elitism, healthism, individualism and mesomorphism. Literature and research suggest that the national curriculum for England in PE is heavily influenced by the behavioural, top-down governmental approach in education, being described as deliberate, systematic, planned attempts to change behaviour. Hence, such ideologies

are present in education systems, having short- and long-term detrimental effects on many children's wellbeing (Curran, 2014).

7. PE curriculum must be developed, implemented and evaluated-based on evidence-based research

Curriculum statements about sport and PE such as the ones located in the English national curriculum "purpose of study" for PE are assumptions. While they may be outcomes experienced at times by some children through sport, for many children, they contradict experiences. As supported by Ofsted, curriculum expectations and reform must follow evidence-based research regarding quality practice.

8. "Teacher education, supply and development" is the key to enhancing children's wellbeing

'Teacher education, supply and development' are the first listed priority in the UNESCO national strategy for QPE. Critical socially just pedagogies necessitates teachers being trained and educated in this mode of teaching (Tinning, 2004). This requires educator knowledge and ideally expertise, in the bio-physical foundations of human movement and the inclusive socio-cultural approach to implementing. Hence, teachers of today require an understanding of how to provide inclusive practice in H, W & PE, knowledge of correct movements (i.e. human movement) and knowledge of how correct movements can be mastered by children of varying physical activity experiences and ability.

9. A whole-school approach needs to be adopted for HPE implementation

The data generated suggest that a whole school curriculum programme (WSCP) for HPE increases the likelihood of quality experiences for children in schools, as it increases the rate of developmentally appropriate activities. This results in enhanced student interest; a positive effect on students' attitudes towards physical activities and holistic dimension connections. "Healthy schools" or "health-promoting schools" approaches are used by some schools to help translate the whole-school approach into practice and to enhance health and educational outcomes of their pupils. (Lynch, 2017; Public Health England, 2014).

10. Specialist teachers are associated with quality delivery of all dimensions of HPE

When principals were commenting on key attributes of a good HPE teacher—the top five responses were: HPE curriculum knowledge and developmentally appropriate pedagogy; planning/assessment and flexibility; rapport/communication and management skills; passion/interest/enthusiasm in HPE and children and that they are a good classroom teacher also. Principals believed a course that qualifies teachers to be generalist classroom teachers and HPE specialists would be or would probably be valuable (83.2%). Only 2.4% of principals indicated that it would not be valuable. Principals very much valued PE teacher's expertise and there is a direct connection between limited HPE specialist teachers in rural and remote schools of Australia and these areas having a low sense of student belonging, relating directly to wellbeing (ACER, 2018, p. iii).

11. QPE enhances all children's development and learning.

The connection between the cognitive dimension (including metacognition) and the physical dimension has been clearly identified historically by the constructivist approach in education. "Metacognition refers to higher order thinking which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning" (Livingston, 2003, p. 3). This is supported by the latest findings in neuroscience where our brain connections, known as plasticity, actually get better with age (cf. p. 5), enabling increased cognition (thinking) capacity (Greenfield, 2012).

This book's research found that children believe that physical activities enhance their enjoyment of learning within the classroom in other key learning areas through relieving stress, enhancing motivation, self-esteem and increasing concentration. It was affirmed by some school principals' that PE led to improved academic performance and many children believed PE enables them to perform better in class.

12. Every primary school requires a tertiary qualified health and physical education teacher

Over the last 30 years (Cale & Harris, 2019; Commonwealth of Australia, 1992; Lynch, 2005) and recently in the Active Healthy Kids Australia (AHKA) report (2018), it is recommended "every primary school have 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”. Courses that qualify teachers to specialise in Health and Physical Education and become a classroom teacher specifically for primary education are rare globally but must be prioritised.

It is recommended that pre-service primary teachers have the opportunity to specialise in HPE, specifically developmentally appropriate for the primary school. Such a course enables teachers passionate in health and wellbeing, and who want to specifically teach primary aged children, to develop appropriate pedagogy and a holistic health understanding across all strands. It is also recommended that a Bachelor of Education (Health and Physical Education) testamur and course be offered within universities/initial teacher education courses. This requires funding for H/PE specifically in higher education/teacher preparation and continued professional development for teachers.

Over the years, large sums of funding have instead been invested into short-term school-based physical activity programmes, after school sports or physical activity alternatives which have been ineffective in improving children’s activity levels (BBC, 2017; Department for Culture Media & Sport, 2016; James & Brophy, 2019; Lynch & Soukup, 2017). It is time to invest for long-term health and wellbeing benefits for all children. Offering qualifications which enable primary classroom teachers to specialise in H, W & PE (holistic HPE) and be recognised for this is a present and future need.

13. School Leadership plays a vital role in optimising children’s wellbeing

Implementation of H/PE is enhanced by HPE leadership, underpinned by clear communication (Lynch, 2017). The findings of this research book support Macdonald who argues that HPE is best led by the HPE specialist (Hickey, Kirk, Macdonald, & Penney, 2014, pp. 190–191). Principals [head teachers] need to facilitate the curriculum change socially complex process (Fullan, 2001; Sparkes, 1991). This can be achieved by providing learning experiences where teachers can exchange ideas, support one another, and share positive feelings about their work (Fullan, 2001). It is through questioning interests and ideologies impacting on curriculum documents which enable opportunities for teachers to consider the micropolitics of curriculum change (Glover, 2001). Furthermore, it is

inability to do this which often causes change to fail (Datnow, 1998; Dinan-Thompson, 2002; Sparkes, 1990).

This book sits within what Greenfield refers to as “deep thinking”, “content” or “meaning” (2012), also referred to as “ideas, thinking, and constructing” (Hattie, 2009, p. 26). That is, the book is a culmination of years of evidence-based qualitative research, practical experience and internal insight, carefully crafted to make meaning. Thus, the findings build upon the abundance of quantitative research supporting children’s wellbeing enhancement through holistic physical education. The physical dimension is a powerful pathway for children’s learning and holistic development. It cannot be stressed enough that learning through movement involves children from the very beginning of primary/elementary school truly belonging, being and becoming physically educated. Hence, PE is every teacher’s friend in enhancing children’s wellbeing now and in the future.

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