CHAPTER 7

History of the Physical Dimension

A glance through history illustrates that from the dawn of civilisation, primitive man had to be very physically active to survive (Duncan & Watson, 1960). During ancient times, PE was given considerable emphasis by the Spartans, where PE was state-regulated, age-determined and involved similar experiences for men and women, boys and girls (Phillips & Roper, 2006). However, PE has always been philosophically associated with more than just the physical dimension. The following literature has been amended from Lynch and Soukup (2016).

The Athenians first acknowledged the power of the physical dimension to enhance and influence the other health dimensions; intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual. Similar to the Athenians, the Romans recognised the benefits of physical education for quality of life, but the Romans preferred milder forms of exercise (Phillips & Roper, 2006). It can be argued that the purpose of PE for the Athenians and Romans during this ancient time was similar to HPE today, underpinned by wellbeing—to educate the mind and the body embedded within all dimensions of health. Hence, this chapter connects with the whole child development element; Community connections (strengths-based); and the movement priority element of being, belonging and becoming physically educated (cf. Figure 1.2).

Whipp encapsulates the historical and present implications of the HPE ideal closely associated with 'wellbeing'.

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> In the past, the Greek ideal; "Mens sano incorpore sano", stressed the importance of having a healthy mind within a healthy body… This communique highlights the importance of a comprehensive educationally-based and strategical approach to wellness that values the role of the health and physical educator. (2015, p. 111)

As addressed throughout the book, holistic HPE is not a new concept to education, but it has more recently been given greater recognition to the contribution that the learning area makes in developing the whole child and the important role the physical dimension plays in wellbeing. The significance of the physical dimension across all other dimensions of health was heightened by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The process of objectifying the body was evident in the second century AD when Galen opened the human body. Galen didn't believe he saw anything, but he only saw what he believed (Kirk, 1993). Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) was the first to give an accurate description of the muscles and their functions, which was not published until the end of the eighteenth century (Broekhoff, 1972). In 1679, Borelli metaphorically explained the human body as a machine and "paved the way for the emergence of rationalised systems of physical exercises" (Kirk, 1993, p. 14).

During the Middle Ages PE held fluctuating relations with the Catholic Church, which was very influential on European culture. The Church "permeated every aspect of culture—scholarship, politics, economics, and even one's private life" (Mechikoff & Estes, 2002, p. 104). While there were occasions where PE was not supported by the Church (Lynch, 2004), it was advocated through key figures during this period; St. Dominic (1170–1221), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and Pope Pius II (1405–1464) (Feeney, 1995). This association with the Church strengthened the affiliation between PE and the spiritual dimension of health (Lynch, 2015). Present-day research findings suggest that "potential for spirituality can be capitalized by assuring HPE curriculum is delivered in a quality manner" (Lynch, 2015, p. 217).

Europe has had a large impact on the PE discipline. An Italian teacher, Vittorino da Feltre (1378–1446) first introduced holistic PE as an essential part of the school curriculum, necessary for the 'ideal citizen', encompassing body, mind and spirit (Phillips & Roper, 2006). Another European educator, Johann Friedrich GutsMuths (1759–1839) was accredited for professionalising PE. Germany, at this time, along with

Sweden and Denmark perceived PE mainly as military training. Hence, the focus for PE was on drilling and exercising, coercion, discipline and control rather than enjoyment (Kirk & Twigg, 1993). GutsMuths developed a PE syllabus at Schnepfenthal Educational Institute, Germany. This syllabus became a platform for PE teaching and consisted mainly of gymnastics (Phillips & Roper, 2006). Sweden's Per Ling (1766–1839) was the first to promote the medical benefits of PE, often associated with scientific discourse and advocated the various health dimensions.

In late modern history, since the mid-1800s governing bodies otherwise known as organisations grew in numbers to represent people's interests. William G. Anderson was considered the founder of what is today known as SHAPE America (Society of Health and Physical Educators), having established the organisation in 1885. In 2014, AAHPERD's (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance) board became SHAPE America. This was the 7th name change of AAHPERD since its original founding as the Association for the Advancement of Physical Education (AAPE) (Yang, 2015). PE has augmented significantly since Per Ling to the present day and "in many respects has thrived since the 1960's" (Kirk, 2013, p. 974).

Exploring PE globally, considering the growth stated by Kirk and understanding that associations were representative of groups of people; one cannot ignore the impact of the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance (ICHPER-SD). Acknowledging that there is no one representative voice for the PE field, there is no denying ICHPER's influence. ICHPER was established so educators "could work together on an international basis… an association which was not representative of any one country, or system, or one method of physical education" (Hircock, 1988, p. 73). ICHPER-SD was initiated by AAHPERD [SHAPE America], founded in 1958 in Rome, Italy, and the first ICHPER world congress was 'Child health and the school'. The title of this world congress proposes that health dimensions of PE were promoted. According to Corbin, this was consistent at this time, "central to the 'new physical education' was the education of the whole child" (Corbin, 2016, p. 14).

ICHPER-SD has influenced many countries around the world and does acknowledge an HPE approach similar to the Athenians. One such direct influence was in 1970 in Sydney, Australia, at the ICHPER-SD first and only world congress to be held in Oceania. ACHPER (Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation) was formally

known as the Australian Physical Education Association (APEA) and the name change was a direct result of ICHPER-SD's assembly. As cited in Kirk & Macdonald the Conference report stated; "the Congress indicated that 'we in Australia are now part of the international scene', and it may have been this feeling of connectedness [belonging] internationally through ICHPER along with the great success of the conference that led to the acceptance of an Australian version of this name" (1998, pp. 6–7). The influence on Australia is evidenced in the first of the ten points made in the 1970 ICHPER World Congress Resolutions:

> Health, physical education and recreation are allied and closely inter-related fields and should be coordinated in the best interests of the community. (ICHPER, 1971, p. 189)

Furthermore, as cited in Kirk & Macdonald, Elaine Murphy (ACHPER National President 1988–1993 and ICHPER-SD Vice President - Oceania) describes: "our description of physical education is just not adequate when health is such a large component (of what we do)… they wanted these words included otherwise they felt that physical education was too narrow" (1998, p. 7). ICHPER-SD "has also directed efforts towards developing countries in order to initiate and strengthen programmes and leadership within the schools and higher education institutions" (Kane, 1989, p. 107). While ICHPER-SD was a branch of SHAPE America, sharing headquarters in Reston, Virginia, USA, it is separately governed and operated. However, more recently such national and international organisations have found it increasingly difficult to maintain members and subsequently, remain financially viable. This has forced contemplation of their purpose and need during a time of technological advancements which have allowed global connections, for example, through social media. In 2019, a new organisation was established by many former members of ICHPER-SD who wanted to rejuvenate the purpose of this historically strong and proud organisation. International Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Dance and Sport (IAHPEDS) was established:

> IAHPEDS is governed by professionals from around the world, in the fields of Health, Physical Education, Dance and Sport. The home office is located in the United States, in Fredericksburg, Virginia, but has membership representation from around the world. Elections are held every four

years for Executive Committee positions, Board of Directors and Board of Governors.
As a non-profit [US 501 (c)(3) status], charitable and educational organisation IAHPEDS mission is to:

- Advance international research, learning, practices and standards among researchers, practitioners and students related to the Alliance's disciplines—to motivate individuals to adopt healthy active lifestyles.
- Advocate for quality global Health and Physical Education, Dance and Sport (IAHPEDS) in schools, higher learning institutions, systems and communities.
- Provide platforms for the sharing of information related to HPEDS.
- IAHPEDS seeks collaborative partnerships with other international and national professional organisations to expand the reach of health, physical education, dance and sport research and programming (https://iahpeds.org/, 2024).

Navigating one's health with a health-preventative focus involves connections and partnerships. This perspective offers guidance for education departments and governments when implementing HPE in schools, and sports generally within communities. Megatrends predict that in the future, education departments need to be prepared for a quality of life with limited world resources; the world economy shifting from north to south, west to east; associated healthcare costs and the responses in lifestyles and services; and the rising importance of social relationships (Hajkowicz et al., 2012). However, as the literature evidence, limited resources have been problematic for H/PE throughout modern history and remain a problem today (Cale & Harris, 2019; Commonwealth of Australia, 1992; Hardman, 2008; UNESCO, 2008; 2014). Furthermore, when faced with limited resources, educators find it easier to implement PE by adopting a behavioural approach which forms a barrier for health education (Westbrook et al., 2013).

Partnerships in HPE-related areas sit within a 'strengths-based' approach which "supports a critical view of health education with a focus on the learner embedded within a community's structural facilitators, assets and constraints, and is enacted through resource-oriented and competence-raising approaches to learning" (Macdonald, 2013, p. 100).

An example of a strengths-based approach is Antonovsky's salutogenic model which involves:

- A focus more so on the promotion of healthy living rather than on preventing illness;
- The viewing of healthy living as multidimensional and encompassing physical as well as social, mental, spiritual, environmental, and community dimensions;
- Consideration of health as something dynamic, always in the process of becoming;
- Viewing health as something more and also something else than the absence of disease;
- Acknowledging humans as active agents, living in relation to their environment; and
- That health is not regarded as an end goal in itself, but rather as an important prerequisite for living a good life. (McCuaig et al., 2013, p. 113).

Adopting a strengths-based approach from a salutogenic perspective, specifically through partnerships advocates preparation for life and well-being where knowledge and skills can be transferred and adapted across contexts (Lynch, 2016).

It can be evidenced that the holistic HPE ideal has existed and evolved since the Athenians and was strong during the twentieth century, although it was referred to as 'physical education'. As aforementioned, Robbins et al. identify seven dimensions of health (HPE ideal), referred to as wellness: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, environmental and occupational. Additionally, "there is a strong interconnection among these dimensions" (2011, p. 9). Research suggests that "HPE should be embraced in all schools for its ability to offer opportunities in a holistic manner" (Lynch, 2015, p. 217). Throughout history, Physical Education has been an all-encompassing term, the one term consistently used to represent a number of discourses, ideologies, philosophies and aspects of movement development.

Exploration of the past reveals that physical education (PE) has been influenced by two philosophies: (1) the body viewed as an object and (2) the view of the whole person; body, mind, spirit and wellbeing. It is important to understand these two philosophical influences in recognition

that PE is socially constructed and subsequently semantics have evolved over time.

Literature suggests that on occasions throughout history, PE has been responsible for 'schooling' the body, where the body is viewed as an object. The body as an object occurs "in a society when man [and woman] has gained the capacity of looking at his [or her] own body as if it were a thing" (Broekhoff, 1972, p. 88). This concept is described by Kirk as a "useful and controlled body, one which is appropriately skilled with the capacities to meet the standards of acceptable social behaviour of any particular society and to make a productive contribution within the economic system" (1993, p. 13). Reiterating, the companion PE discourses to have influenced this philosophy include military, scientific, health and sporting—which portray ideologies which include sexism, elitism, healthism, individualism and mesomorphism—which is discussed in more detail (cf. Chapter 11) (Colquhoun, 1991, 1992; Hickey, 1995; Kirk, 1992; Kirk & Twigg, 1993; Scraton, 1990; Tinning, 1990; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992; Tinning, Kirk, & Evans, 1993). Wherein, students acquire knowledge and attitudes unintentionally while in the school environment (Kirk, 1992). Such ideologies are regarded as problematic as they give false messages (Kirk, 1992). The term 'schooling' the body is appropriate for this 'body as object' philosophy due to the dominant behavioural approach to health education it adopts (cf. Chapter 8).

Physical Literacy

As published by Lynch and Soukup (2016), the ambiguous grey area surrounding the terms PE and HPE has seen the rise and traction of new terms to represent and replace the original meaning of Physical Education, one such term is 'Physical Literacy' (PL). Grauduszus, Koch, Wessely and Joisten investigated school-based PL interventions and argued that "The promotion of physical literacy (PL) seems to be promising due to its holistic approach, combining physical, cognitive, and affective domains" (2024, p. 1). Hence, they have adopted the term PL to represent holistic PE. Corbin informs us that physical literacy is not a new term with references made in the early 1900s and again in the late 1950s (2016, p. 15). Earlier definitions of physical literacy referred to being able to read or write (Corbin, 2016) but "in its broadest context 'literacy' means becoming educated" (Richards, 2016, p. 1). Physical education has been

well known in the past as 'education through the physical' (Corbin, 2016, p. 14), hence, there are strong links between the semantics of 'literacy' and 'education' (Lounsbery & McKenzie, 2015).

Quality PE components were reinstated as the key qualities of the new-old term physical literacy. Common themes identified by Richards in literature include "Physical Literacy is a life-long process, that acquisition (competence) of fundamental movement skills is a core component, and that it embraces knowledge, attitudes and motivations that facilitate confident movement" (2016, p. 1). Lynch & Soukup propose that "compared to HPE, PL (physical literacy) by definition focuses on one-dimension" also that "PL has not been positioned within the international field of PE, or body of knowledge within the discipline" (2016, p. 19). Cale and Harris (2019) establish how within the UK physical literacy has also influenced physical activity and PE generally in schools. In their book, they assert to offer a holistic perspective on physical activity, but again only one dimension is addressed—the physical dimension.

According to Barnett et al. "There has been a surge of research interest in physical literacy in children and youth in the past 5 years" (2023, p. 1906). Traditionally, publications on physical literacy were often produced by government-funded organisations and departments, which are not always related to education (cf. 28). This provides some explanation of the concept's evolvement, a consequence of people's misunderstanding of the terms 'education' (constructivist) and 'schooling' (behavioural) (cf. p. 56). In Australia, initially, the limited literature on physical literacy was produced by the Australian Sports Commission (Richards, 2016) and by the National Institute of Sport Studies. Similarly, in the UK, a Primary School Physical Literacy Framework was produced by the Youth Sport Trust. Another example is the Canadian 'Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group', identified as a leader in physical literacy assessment (Corbin, 2016).

The term physical literacy constitutes different meanings to different organisations. Literature has identified the confusion that this may have on teachers and students, (Corbin, 2016; Griggs, 2015; Lounsbery & McKenzie, 2015; McKenzie & Lounsbery, 2016). Confusion among practitioners is only exacerbated by reiterative research topics usually published about physical education, being published in relation to physical literacy. For example, Rukavina and Gremillion Burdge (2024) share

that "whole-of-school approaches to physical activity and health promotion have the potential to promote physical literacy". (p. 1). Furthermore, another study "indicated that intervention integrating PL into active school recesses can promote health-related physical fitness especially for aerobic fitness and strength… and enhance academic achievement" (Zhang et al., 2023, p. 382). Lounsbery and McKenzie (2015, pp. 143–144) caution the use of physical literacy, for it is perceived as supplementing the already unclear learning area.

> the term physical literacy was adopted in the national K-12 PE standards [US] without either widespread consultation among professionals or market research. To date, its adoption has generally been substantiated on the bases that it will help to elevate the profession by providing increased clarity and by coming into line with current general education trends. We fully agree that PE needs clarity. However, to date there is no evidence that using and promoting the term physical literacy will help. There are currently very few peer review publications on physical literacy and none of these are data based.

This confusion also exists within the realm of education. In the UK, the Association for Physical Education (AfPE) defines PE in reference to the concept of 'schooling' rather than belonging, being and becoming 'educated':

> the planned, progressive learning that takes place in school curriculum timetabled time and which is delivered to all pupils. This involves both 'learning to move' (i.e. becoming more physically competent) and 'moving to learn' (e.g. learning through movement, a range of skills and understandings beyond physical activity, such as co-operating with others). The context for the learning is physical activity, with children experiencing a broad range of activities, including sport and dance. (2016)

The UK, similar to Australia, has a national curriculum, but Australia's sheer size (similar to the US) creates many barriers of consistency across all regions. Hence, individual state and territory frameworks are derived from national documents. The UK is much smaller in size (geographically), subsequently, their national curriculum appears to be implemented more consistently in comparison. The key learning area in The National Curriculum for England is titled 'Physical Education' (2024). It is important to note that this curriculum advocates quality PE (referred to as

high-quality PE) and not physical literacy (unlike the US), although as addressed, it does appear to have been influenced by the physical literacy concept (cf. p. 70). As a separate learning area, England (2024b) has Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) where it is advised:

> Schools should seek to use PSHE education to build, where appropriate, on the statutory content already outlined in the national curriculum, the basic school curriculum and in statutory guidance on: drug education, financial education, sex and relationship education (SRE) and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle.

Hence, as previously discussed, PSHE was not statutory and therefore schools had the autonomy to decide on what and how they implemented these guidelines. In the lacunae created by having optional PSHE, the UK appears to have filled the 'whole child health development' philosophy gap with physical literacy. This theory is supported by Jurbala (2015), who shares that physical literacy has become a replacement term for holistic development.

McKenzie and Lounsbery (2016, p. 1) ask "What's in a name? Is physical literacy simply a rose by any other name?". Furthermore, they suggest:

> there is lack of consensus among international physical activity/fitness experts regarding what constitutes physical literacy. If experts are uncertain about what physical literacy is, one can only imagine how confused the lay public and policy makers might be. Many already cannot discriminate among terms such as physical activity, physical fitness, and physical education, and adding yet another term (physical literacy) would only add to the confusion.

As previously mentioned, in simple terms, physical literacy is PE (Kirk, 2013). Kirk describes physical literacy as a "philosophical position on physical education" (2013, p. 975). This position relates to the holistic discourse in PE, embedded within an inclusive ideology. For example, Ardiano found that "a high understanding of physical literacy is related to the holistic development of children aged 7–12 years" (2024, p. 21). Therefore, many of the physical literacy characteristics are not new and have been borrowed from PE, specifically literature relating to 'quality PE' and 'life-long physical education'.

According to Lynch (2017) QPE:

- enhances children's health and wellbeing
- is a planned, progressive and inclusive learning experience
- requires all children having opportunities to master fundamental movement skills (FMS) preferably before seven years of age
- requires educators to have expertise in the fundamentals of movement and the inclusive socio-cultural approach

The introduction of the socio-cultural 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' philosophy. This discourse changed the perception of the body as a separate object, to that of the 'whole person'; body, mind, spirit and wellbeing.

Reflection

This chapter endorses that the holistic HPE ideal has existed and evolved since the Athenians and was strong during the twentieth century, although it was referred to as 'physical education'. What aspects of history did you find interesting? Furthermore, this chapter questions why the term Physical Literacy has evolved. What term/s are used to represent PE in your context? Is the term Physical Literacy used? Do people know what Physical Literacy is in your context? Do people find the various terms used within the PE field confusing?

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