Comparison of Health and Physical Education policies with practices: An evaluation of school responses within three Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) primary schools (2005)

by Timothy Lynch

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare the ideals of the Queensland P-10 Health and Physical Education (HPE) syllabus as a curriculum policy, with what was happening in practice, the teaching of Health and Physical Education in schools. It was envisaged that through this process good practice within schools could be identified and its implementation promoted. This paper is the first research within Queensland to investigate the ideals for quality Health and Physical Education, in comparison to what is actually occurring in practice.

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The 1999 Queensland P-10 Health and Physical Education syllabus used within Queensland Education and more specifically Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE), adopted a socio-cultural approach to learning. This approach is underpinned by social justice principles which include diversity, equity and supportive environments (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999b). This approach encourages student interest and inclusive participation in physical activities, a major concern and focus within many Australian schools (Queensland Government, 2003). The syllabus favours critical, socially just pedagogies over the traditional dominant scientistic and performance-oriented pedagogy. Therefore, teachers need to be educated and prepared to use socio-critical pedagogies (Tinning, 2004). At present there is a paucity of research on the delivery of the HPE key learning area and general curriculum implementation within Queensland.

This qualitative, interpretive study is most appropriate as meanings were constructed. The case study methodology was chosen to construct meaning through capturing the context of each school. The sites for the three case studies involved: one small sized BCE primary school (less than 200 students); one medium sized BCE primary school (200 - 400 students); and one large sized BCE primary school (over 400 students). The participants included teachers and students from the respective schools.

It appears that the implementation process ceased prematurely before all schools had sufficient time and preparation to design whole school HPE programs. Teachers lacked understandings of practical ways to implement the social justice underpinnings of the syllabus and some school principals were unaware of the necessity of employing qualified HPE specialist teachers. In conclusion, when teachers have been educated and trained to deliver quality HPE learning experiences students appear to have a greater interest in physical activities. There is a need to promote a stronger marriage between these two aspects of education investigated; namely the syllabus and its implementation.

As a result this study presents scholarly contribution as a contemporary insight into HPE practice in schools within a sample of systemic Catholic primary schools, initiating links between delivery/teacher pedagogy to student participation in physical activities. Also, it stimulates further study into the correlation between ideals in policy and practical implementation. This research has the potential to help schools in BCE, education systems within Queensland, Australia and globally.

Health and Physical Education (HPE)

Throughout the history of HPE many discourses have influenced the construction and delivery of the HPE curricula within schools. These have included military, scientific, health and sporting discourses, which have been underpinned by ideologies of sexism, elitism, healthism, individualism and mesomorphism. These ideologies often permeate the hidden curriculum (Colquhoun, 1991, 1992; Hickey, 1995; Kirk, 1992; Kirk & Twigg 1993; Scraton, 1990; Tinning, 1990; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992; Tinning, Kirk, & Evans, 1993, Lynch, 2007), wherein students acquire knowledge and attitudes unintentionally while in the school environment (Kirk, 1992, Lynch, 2007). The hidden curriculum relates directly to the actual learning in practice. Therefore evaluation of HPE practice is an essential aspect for optimizing quality delivery and for giving renewal direction for promotion of active healthy lifestyles.

A socio-cultural approach underpinned by social justice principles of diversity, equity and a supportive environment has afforded HPE even greater relevance in Catholic schools. Under the HPE umbrella, physical education sits alongside health education, outdoor education, home economics and religious education (Macdonald, 2003; Macdonald & Glover, 1997). In Catholic education, the HPE learning area is strongly connected to the Religious Education (RE) curriculum and in particular the faith dimension of Catholic schools (Lynch, 2004b, BCE, 2003a). Enhancing Personal Development is an essential curriculum teaching component within Religious Education (Lynch, 2004b) and in the HPE physical activity strand students are presented with many practical and social experiences that require living and reflecting on Catholic religious traditions and gospel values (Lynch, 2004a).

In recent years, the school curriculum across Australia has placed less of an emphasis on HPE, particularly physical activity and sport (Queensland Government, 2003a), and as a result, "Australian school HPE is failing to provide children with the opportunity to develop physical competencies and be physically active" (Morgan, Bourke, & Thompson, 2001, p. 1). In Australia, children are less fit (McNaughton, Morgan, Smith, & Hannan, 1996; Thompson, Woodcock, McCormack, & Thomas, 1995), more obese (Howard, 2004; Lazarus, Wake, Hesketh, & Waters, 2000; Magarey, Daniels, & Boulton, 2001) with approximately one quarter of Australian children regarded as overweight (Howard, 2004; Sport

and Recreation Queensland, 2005). Children spend less time in physical activity (Booth, Mascaskill, McLellan, Phongsavan, Okely, Patterson, Bauman, & Baur, 1997), especially in schools (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992; Howard, 2004) and also have low levels of motor competence (Booth et al., 1997; Noonan, 2003; Thompson, Woodcock, McCormack, & Thomas, 1995; Walkley, Holland, Treloar, & Probyn-Smith, 1993). Queensland children aged 5 to 14 years have the lowest participation rates in organized sport and physical activity outside school hours compared with children from the other states of Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000; Metcalf, 2004). Correspondingly, "improving the quality of HPE in schools is the best documented intervention approach to promoting physical activity in youth" (Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation, 1999, p. 9). This lack of physical activity "is responsible for about seven percent of the burden of disease in Australia, making it second highest to tobacco smoking for males and the highest factor for females" (Sport & Recreation Queensland, 2005, p. 1). It is estimated that obesity costs the National Health System between $680 million and $1.2 billion each year (Skatsoon, 2003) and therefore it is in the Government's interest to increase physical activity within the community.

In Australia and internationally it is recognised that a renewed commitment to the promotion of Health and Physical Education within schools is necessary (Queensland Government, 2003). The 1st International Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ICHPER) World Congress' theme, held in Rome in 1958, was "Child Health and the School". In May 2008 for the 50th ICHPER – SD Anniversary World Congress held at Kagoshima, Japan the theme was "Local and Global Aspects of the Promotion of Health, Sports, and Physical Activity Education: A Renewed Commitment for the Second 50 Years". Hence, this study is significant as it provides a modern day snapshot of the delivery of this essential educational learning area, thus enabling a comparison to be made with the HPE ideals identified in policies. This research enables the discernment of quality practices and enables the possible promotion.

The last 10 years in Queensland schools has experienced a shift from content-based education to outcome-based education. The focus of outcome based education is on what the students know and do as a result of their learning experiences, whereas the focus of content-based education is remembering facts and content. The acceptance of the outcome based socio-cultural approach across Australia is documented in National Statements and Profiles (Australian Education Council, 1994a; 1994b) to promote cohesion in the curriculum through national collaboration, to enable equitable sharing of resources across systems and to remove unnecessary differences that were in existence between the systems, in a nationally consistent curriculum (Marsh, 1994). The HPE syllabus was the first outcome based syllabus to be implemented in Queensland schools. The syllabus recognises that students are influenced by the different physical, social, cultural, political, economic and environmental forces (Dann, 1999). Thus, "developing in students an understanding of, and a commitment to, a socially just society" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999a, p. 3).

The devising of the HPE National Statement and Profile coincided with a Senate Inquiry into physical and sport education and provided a timely incentive for the development of the 1999 Queensland HPE syllabus (Dinan, 2000; Glover, 2001; QSCC, 1999a). The culmination of these strategic political initiatives offered possibilities for rescuing HPE from potential cultural obsolescence (Kirk & Penney, 1996). The Queensland HPE syllabus (QSCC, 1999c) is a curriculum policy, more specifically, a public incremental educational policy (Dinan-Thompson, 1998) and its implementation required primary schools to replace the outdated 1972 HPE syllabus.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, before the development of the current HPE syllabus, the HPE curriculum within Australian schools was considered to be in crisis (Tinning, Kirk, Evans, & Glover, 1994), a situation that was identified in the HPE key learning area in Queensland schools as well (Walmsley, 1998). Hence the choice of the socio-cultural perspective adopted by the syllabus was supported by Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) who considered adversity experienced within HPE at the time of the syllabus construction, to have a cultural meaning and be directly related to the influence of cultural discourses and ideologies.

HPE teachers today need to be able to deliver quality HPE lessons across the three strands of the Syllabus: enhancing personal development, developing the concepts and skills for physical activities, and promoting the health of individuals and communities. This involves teachers having the knowledge and understanding of a socio-cultural approach, of various pedagogies that can achieve this in HPE and awareness of when to choose the most appropriate pedagogical approach for particular HPE learning experiences (Tinning, 1999). Often this entails favouring critical, socially just pedagogies over the traditional dominant scientistic and performance-oriented pedagogy in HPE. Therefore, teachers need to be educated and prepared to use socio-critical pedagogies (Tinning, 2004).

The findings of the Senate Inquiry (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) into the state of Physical Education and Sport within Australian Education systems supported the inhouse discussions of crisis among HPE professionals. Two problems identified were mainly with resources and the time allocation to the Physical Education strand in HPE which resulted in a drastic decline in children's skill levels and physical fitness (Tinning, Kirk, Evans, & Glover, 1994). The third major problem was that "suitably qualified HPE teachers are not being employed to teach HPE and school sport to all children" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992, p.xiv). A fourth problem was the accreditation or formal training in HPE or sport education as a condition of employment for graduating primary school teachers (Moore, 1994) and therefore teachers often lack confidence to effectively teach HPE (Morgan & Bourke, 2005). Furthermore, the best time for children to learn and refine their motor skills is in the preschool and early primary school years (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992; Queensland Government, 2003). When generalist teachers are unable to provide a meaningful HPE program, the community questions the necessity of HPE in the curriculum (Hickey, 1992).

Australian Education – Brisbane Catholic Education

Catholic schools educate approximately one in five school students in Australia (Australian Education Union, 2003;

MCEETYA, 1995) and therefore influence a large percentage of Australian school students. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) is responsible for the five autonomous Catholic authorities within the state of Queensland for which Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) is one. The QCEC has authority and collaborative responsibility in policy making and action in areas in curriculum and social justice matters (QCEC, 2006).

Implementation challenges for the socio-cultural HPE P-10 syllabus were investigated by BCE, and according to the *Position Paper on Health and Physical Education* the challenges include (BCE, 1998):

1. A commitment to Social Justice challenging us to develop HPE programs that are resistant to the forces that undermine the dignity of the individual- unequal opportunities, abuse of power, greed, socio-economic disadvantage, sexism, unhealthy competition, racism and inappropriate structures;
2. A commitment to Participation challenging us to make special provision for all students to have access to appropriate HPE programs, regardless of ability, gender, class or culture;
3. A commitment to Stewardship challenging us to ensure just and effective use of resources. HPE should have adequate human and material support, distributed equitably regardless of ability, sex or culture; and
4. A commitment to Responsiveness challenging us to reflect critically on teaching, learning and assessment practices in HPE to ensure they remain effective, appropriate and in harmony with changing school policies and structures. (p.4).

Within Brisbane Catholic Education a team of three people were selected to support the implementation of the 1999 Health and Physical Education Syllabus, Sourcebook and Initial In-service materials (BCE, 1999). "It was anticipated that by the end of 2001, teachers would be working from School Curriculum Programs based on the new outcome-based syllabus in Health and Physical Education" (BCE, 1999, p. 3). Within BCE "efforts to ensure that public policy best suits each school context demands local 'reshaping' of the policy" (McDonald, 2000, p. 4). Such reshaping was carried out through the adoption of *Whole School Curriculum Programs (WSCP)* which "are a translation of current Queensland syllabuses, guidelines and courses through the lens of the Learning Framework and needs of students within a specific BCE school community" (BCE, 2003b, p. 4). The responsibility of which was that of school administrative teams, namely the Principal and Assistant Principal.

Since the end of 2001 there has no longer been any Health and Physical Education Officers employed by BCE (BCE, 2006b) or any professional development provided to teachers within this learning area. Although BCE (2005) published the *Strategic Renewal Framework 2002-2006* to guide and inform school communities in the renewal of all curriculum areas, there was no specific detail as to how this was to be accomplished nor the degree of importance that could be afforded the HPE learning area. This would imply that HPE syllabus policy implementation support has ceased and that equity is evident in HPE practice as the various national, state, and system specific policy documents recommend. There are presently 13 Religious Education Curriculum Officers/ Moderators employed by Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE, 2006a) to support schools but regrettably no Curriculum Officers for the HPE key learning area.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the practice of the 1999 HPE Syllabus and policy documents in three BCE primary schools of varying enrollment numbers. Another purpose is to identify good HPE practice for the benefit of the ICHPER-SD Journal of Research readers.

The overarching general research question that guided conduct of this research was: How is the key learning area Health and Physical Education being taught within three BCE primary schools?

The specific research questions were:-

1. How are teachers in these BCE schools implementing the HPE curriculum documents?
2. What readily accessible resources do schools have to assist with the implementation of Health and Physical Education?
3. What are teachers' perceptions with regard to the HPE Key Learning Area?
4. What are the students' perceptions of the HPE Key Learning Area?
5. What implementation strategies are required to optimize HPE practices in BCE schools?

Research Design

This qualitative, interpretive study is most appropriate due to the significance of constructed meanings developed from the interpretation of shared experiences and perspectives. The perspectives differed depending on the context of the school and the experiences of the participants within the school. From within an interpretivist theoretical perspective, a symbolic interactionist lens was applied for the purpose of investigating how Health and Physical Education is taught. Symbolic interactionism as a perspective "focuses on the human being and tries to understand human behaviour" (Charon, 1998, p.12). The key assumptions of symbolic interaction are that "people transmit and receive symbolic communication when they socially interact, people create perceptions of each other and social settings, people largely act on their perceptions, and how people think about themselves and others is based on their interactions" (Neuman, 2000, p.60). The symbolic interactionist lens was applied during interviews, observations and document analysis involving teacher and student participants.

The methodology chosen to construct meanings through capturing the context of each school was 'evaluative' and 'multiple' case study (Merriam, 1998). The research questions, the data to be generated and the resources available indicated that this qualitative study was best suited to a small-scale sample with a deep understanding, rather than a large-scale validation. The sites for the three case studies involved: one small sized BCE primary school (less than 200 students); one medium sized BCE primary school (200 - 400 students); and one large sized BCE primary school (over 400 students). The three case studies were selected as representative of their different demographics, pertaining to their

size as measured by enrollment numbers, their geographic location and their socio-economic status.

The researcher in "qualitative research is often the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7), noting the differences between what was planned and what actually occurred (Anderson, 1990). There was only one researcher operating as data gatherer and analyser during this interpretive study. "In qualitative research the investigator is taken to be actively involved in the process of data collection and analysis and needs to be aware of the flow of this process" (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 54). The methods engaged so as to enable precision of details within the chosen theoretical framework were interviews: semi-structured and focus group, questionnaire, reflective journal, observations and document analysis (table 1). The participants were teachers and students from the respective schools and the research questions guided conduct of this research and generated data.

Table 1. ***Research Framework within which the specific methodology has been selected***

Epistemology	Constructionism
Theoretical Perspective	Interpretivism - Symbolic Interactionism
Research Methodology	Case Study
Data Generating Methods	Interviews; Semi-structured Interviews; Focus group Reflective journal Observation Document Analysis

Methods

In the three schools, participants were chosen intentionally as representatives of each school/case. HPE specialist teachers were key participants to interview. If the school did not employ a HPE specialist then the sports coordinator/ HPE lead teacher was interviewed. These key participants together with three classroom teacher representatives, one each from the early years, middle years and upper years of the school respectively, were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. These research questions encompass issues of syllabus implementation, available resources and teachers' perspectives. HPE lessons (Physical Activity Strand) were observed to supplement the issues raised in the semi-structured interviews. A variety of lessons were observed to represent the three sections of the school, early, middle and upper years. Samples of student participants from the observational classes were chosen for focus group interviews.

The student participants were also chosen to be interviewed to seek their responses. There were three focus group interviews within each school/case. One focus group with representatives from a class in the early years, one with representatives from a class in the middle years and one with representatives from a class in the upper years of the school. Maximum variation representation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) involved "identifying and seeking out those who represent the widest possible range of the characteristics of interest for the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 63). A maximum variation representation process was employed, by means of a questionnaire, to select four student representatives with a high interest level in physical activities (two boys and two girls) and four student representatives with a low interest in physical activities (two boys and two girls). The questionnaire results were confirmed by each focus group's respective classroom teacher. As Case Study One school had a total enrollment of less than 200 students, there were fewer students in each sample class from which to choose student representatives. Therefore, the focus group within this case study school was reduced in number from eight to six student representatives (table 2). A maximum variation representation process was used, by means of a questionnaire, to select two students with a high interest level in physical activities (one boy and one girl), two students with little interest in physical activities (one boy and one girl) and two students with medium interest in physical activities (one boy and one girl). All interviews were conducted by the researcher.

Table 2. ***Research Participants per case/school***

Data Generating Strategy	Semi-Structured Interview (Total Teachers)	Interview Focus Group (Total Students)	Observations of Teachers	Observations of Students
Case Study One School (less than 200 students)	3	18	3	65
Case Study Two School (200-400 students)	4	24	1	81
Case Study Three School (over 400 students)	4	24	1	83
Total	11	66	5	229

Data Analysis

An interpretivist data analysis strategy was used for the purpose of this research study. Each case study investigates a different context and the narrative/descriptive analysis strategy was deliberately chosen to enable the communication of these stories (Merriam, 1998). As an interpretivist is committed to hearing the stories of the participants, their perspectives of the world they experience (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The researcher attempted to capture the stories by interpreting the culture of the school through reported experiences, understandings and other collected data, resulting in a learning episode for both reader and researcher (Glesne, 1999).

Each individual case was analysed using Wellington's (2000) simplified version of the *'Constant Comparative Method for Analysing Qualitative Data'* and was described. The general stages include immersion, reflection, analyzing, synthesizing, returning and presenting. Cross-case analysis was presented at the end of

the analysis of each case. Repeating the same analysis process, Wellington's stages were used to analyse the data across the case studies. Hence, in an attempt to answer the research questions, units of meaning were formed, coded, and categorized with other similar units. There was one researcher who conducted all interviews and analysis. The interviewer was a doctoral candidate who was guided through the process by regular consultations with experienced research supervisors.

Verification and Ethical Issues

There were two ethical clearances that were granted before this interpretive research was conducted. They were an ethical clearance from Australian Catholic University, which involves presentation of a research proposal to the University Research Projects Ethics Committee; and from Brisbane Catholic Education. Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymity were assured during the study as pseudonyms were assigned to protect the privacy of the participants and schools.

The research questions, the data to be generated and the resources available indicated that this qualitative study was best suited to a small-scale sample with a deep understanding, rather than a large-scale validation. The three case study schools were purposefully chosen to represent a cross-section of BCE primary schools and participants were chosen intentionally as representatives of each school/case.

A conscious effort was made by the researcher to be fair in the generation of data, in the interpretation of data, in the formulation of theories and in the presentation of the data. Being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields, such as education, "in which practitioners intervene in people's lives" (Merriam, 1998, p. 198). As the role of the researcher was that of both author and instrument (Patton, 1990), bias was consciously avoided and if recognized, minimised. Fairness was achieved through constant peer debriefing where experienced researchers (supervisors) critically reflected on the process of the data generation and analysis during the research. This took place in the form of discussions and proof reading of detailed research reports.

Member checks involved soliciting informants' views as to credibility of findings and these were utilized to confirm the plausibility and credibility of interpretations. Themes and conclusions were checked within the other data generating methods, for example, a finding during an observation was further explored during an interview, which as a result, strengthened the quality of the research. This addresses the issue of public disclosure of processes and gives the themes congruence and verisimilitude (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002).

Strength was also accomplished through prolonged engagement with data sources. This was achieved by observing the same class as the one from which student interviewees were drawn. That is, the class teacher was interviewed, her/his students were chosen for the focus group interview and the same whole class were then observed during a HPE physical activities lesson. The observation was not limited to that of the lesson, but rather every interaction with individuals constituted an observation. Therefore, there were consistent observations of emerging issues. The duration of engagement per case/school was over a one month period which is a considerable amount of time for the methods being employed, hence, the period of engagement for the entire research study was a 3-month period. Credibility of the study was achieved by employing triangulation, the process for using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning (Stake, 1994). The multiple perceptions were obtained from observing and interviewing some of the participants.

Findings

Summary of Case Study One school (less than 200 students)

Case Study One school teacher participants were all experienced teachers, with at least 10 years teaching experience. None of the teacher participants had specialist training in HPE and only one had received professional development in the Queensland HPE syllabus. The school did not have a specialist HPE teacher and classroom teachers were responsible for the implementation of all three strands of the syllabus. The Physical Activity strand was given the most consideration and time within Case Study One school. There was no Whole School Curriculum Program for HPE (Table 3) and concepts and skills were few and often repeated. The degree of coverage of the HPE curriculum depended on each class teacher and there was no Perceptual Motor Program in the early years of the school. All teacher participants agreed that there were connections between HPE and the Religious Education curriculum. There were no facility limitations for implementing HPE.

Table 3. ***Summary of Cross-Case Data Analysis Findings***

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three
HPE specialist	No	√	√
HPE specialist in-serviced in syllabus	No	√	No
Number of Classroom Teacher participants Professionally developed in new syllabus	1	2	2
Clear knowledge of who is responsible for the different strands	√	√	No
No extra cost involved (paying other organizations to implement syllabus)	Extra cost	√	Extra cost
Number of Classroom Teacher participants who evidenced HPE in book	1	2	0
Whole School Program	No	√	No

Case Study One school had very good facilities, however some were showing signs of neglect. Equipment was sufficient, though Health and Personal Development resources were either lacking or were in need of updating. Students enjoyed HPE and teachers

enjoyed teaching HPE, believing it to be valuable. Teachers shared that the students' had medium interest in physical activities, which was reinforced through observations and focus group interviews (Table 4). The teacher participants did not believe that the school was disadvantaged by not having a specialist HPE teacher, although observations suggested that the students' movement and manipulative skills were considerably lower when compared with the other Case Study schools. Healthy living was promoted through organisations visiting the school such as the Life Education van, Jump Rope For Heart, Dance Fever and through their sun safety rule 'No hat, No play'.

Table 4. ***Comparison of Case Study School Student Participants' Interest in HPE***

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three
Teachers' perception of students interest levels in HPE	Medium	High	High
Number of students interviewed in each focus group	6	8	8
Number of Early Years student participants whose favourite subject was HPE	0 (0%)	6 (75%)	0 (0%)
Number of Middle Years student participants whose favourite subject was HPE	2 (33%)	3 (37.5%)	0 (0%)
Number of Upper Years student participants whose favourite subject was HPE	0 (0%)	4 (50%)	0 (0%)
HPE specialist teacher	No	Yes	Yes

Summary of Case Study Two school (200 – 400 students)

Case Study Two school appeared to have a well-designed and implemented Physical Education curriculum program which both teachers and students believed to be important, beneficial, and enjoyable. The school had an experienced Health and Physical specialist teacher, providing each class with at least one forty minute lesson per week. The Health and Physical Education specialist was responsible for the Physical Activity Strand of the program and the classroom teachers were responsible for the Health and Personal Development Strands (Table 3). The teacher participants had received professional development to varying degrees related to the contexts in the 1999 HPE syllabus. Numerous physical activities were presented wide in scope and variety, utilising the school's facilities and limited space. A lack of space and grassed area was compensated for by using a Rugby field which was 400 metres from the school. Equipment and resources were considered by the researcher and teachers to be adequate. Although the Physical Activity Strand was well established, the Health and Personal Development strands required further development in a Whole School Curriculum Program. All teacher participants believed that the Personal Development strand was well connected with the Religious Education curriculum because both learning areas encouraged self belief, awareness of others and empathy. They also felt that the HPE specialist offered a range of physical activities and sports within the school which were perceived as a school strength by the teacher participants. For this reason teachers shared that the students' had high interest in physical activities, which was reinforced through observations and focus group interviews (Table 4). It was suggested by many participants that healthy living was further promoted by the availability of healthy food at the tuck shop, as well as by a school 'No hat- No play' sun safety rule, through a Walk to School Program, together with Auskick and lunch time touch football and netball competitions.

Summary of Case Study Three school (over 400 students)

Case Study Three school had a full-time HPE specialist teacher who was given one full day release from teaching to coordinate the sports program. The school has ample space, many facilities, sufficient equipment and modern Health and Personal Development resources such as books, videos and programs. The four teacher participants had varying degrees of teaching experience. The teacher participants who had begun teaching in the BCE system since 2001 were not familiar with the information in the HPE syllabus. They had not received inservice training within this learning area and indicated that they lacked confidence implementing it. This included the specialist HPE teacher. Furthermore, the beginning years' teacher had no development training in the HPE learning area (Table 3). All teachers believed that HPE connected well with the Religious Education curriculum and could be integrated successfully to enable teaching and learning efficacy.

There were mixed and contrary views held by the teacher participants in relation to who was responsible for the teaching of the three HPE strands: Physical Activity; Health; and Personal Development. Two teacher participants believed the HPE specialist was responsible for teaching all three strands, whereas the HPE specialist believed that she was responsible for only the Physical Activity strand (Table 3). The HPE specialist teacher claimed that the Year 1 children (4-5 years) were involved in the Perceptual Motor Program using a buddy system with older students. However no teachers or students could verify this. Whole School Curriculum Programs (WSCP) were mandatory within the BCE system for curriculum consistency and accountability within schools. Case study three school did not have a WSCP for any of the three HPE strands (Table 3).

All teacher participants reported that the HPE learning area was very valuable and students appeared to enjoy HPE physical activities. However, the students did not appear to be as interested in the key learning area as the teachers perceived them to be (Table 4). The students believed that HPE helped to reduce stress. The HPE specialist teacher and student participants believed that healthy living was promoted through visits from organizations such as the Life Education van, Dance Fever and Jump Rope For Heart, and the school rule, 'No hat, no play'. However, although the school had very good resources and facilities teacher participants listed all three strands in the HPE syllabus: Physical Activity; Health;

and Personal Development; as areas requiring attention.

Cross Case Summary Analysis

There were some similarities and differences between the three Case Study schools. Related to similarities, sport and physical activity had a long and proud history in all the Case Study schools. Recently all had experienced a shift towards an inclusive, socially just curriculum. The degree of shift differed between schools and was related to teacher participants' experience, knowledge and confidence within the HPE learning area; Case Study schools' facilities, equipment and space; and consequently students' interest. Other influencing factors included Case Study school partnerships and services made within the community; whether or not the Case Study school had a HPE specialist teacher; and if the school had implemented a Whole School Curriculum Program for the HPE key learning area.

Discussion

By the completion of the HPE curriculum documents implementation phase in 2001, it appears that not one of the Case Study schools was working from a WSCP for the HPE key learning area as envisaged by the Catholic employer, BCE. Only one Case Study school, Case Study Two school, evidenced a HPE program, which was designed and implemented to address the Physical Activity Strand. This data was supported by Barry, Livingstone and Millar (2005) who proposed that Whole School Curriculum Programs (WSCP) within BCE schools are "as elusive and rare as the extinct Tasmanian Tiger" (p. 3). This idiom was used to state that there were no WSCP within schools.

Within the three Case Study schools, the degree of implementation corresponded to the HPE specialist teacher's qualifications, knowledge and experience in the HPE learning area as well as the HPE specialist teacher's ability to share or collaborate this with colleagues. When one of these areas was lacking, as in the Case Study Three school, teacher participants could not come to a consensus as to who was responsible for each of the three syllabus strands.

The implementation of all three strands was an issue across all schools. On examination inadequacy appears to be due to a number of factors. It is suggested a problem has emerged with clarity and complexity (Fullan, 2001). While no stakeholders ever really doubted the complexity of shifting paradigms from content-based to OBE, it does not appear that the strategies that have been used by BCE have been successful in clearly stating expectations/challenges, nor have they reached school principals or classroom teachers. Hence, there appears to be a breakdown between the district system (BCE) and school administrative teams, namely the Principal and Assistant Principals. Datnow and Stringfield (2000) reported that a lack of strong, clear district support negatively impacted implementation, as evident in Case Study One and Two schools. Since the end of 2001 there has been no HPE Education Officers employed by BCE nor has there been any professional development within this key learning area. This helps explain why new teachers entering the BCE schooling system lack knowledge in and familiarity with information within the HPE 1999 documents.

It also appeared that experienced teachers were more confident and had a better understanding of the HPE syllabus than younger teachers, having been provided inservices in information contained with the HPE syllabus documents. Further, teachers can be employed as HPE specialist teachers while not necessarily having specialist qualifications and quality lessons are not always implemented, resulting in negative influences on students' perceptions of physical activity (Table 4). A study by Walkley (1992) revealed that a preservice generalist teacher could graduate and begin teaching in Australian primary schools without any training in HPE. Although it is recommended that preservice primary school teacher education include units in HPE (Webster, 2001), it appears that 15 years after Walkley's study not a great deal has changed. A number of teacher participants in this study had no HPE teacher education, and many of whom had only recently graduated from their university courses. Hence, teacher participants who had begun teaching in the BCE system since the conclusion of the implementation period in 2001 (five out of eleven) were not as familiar with information within the syllabus and indicated that they lacked confidence implementing it. Therefore, of the three Case Study schools two employed a HPE specialist teacher, only one of whom had been provided inservices on the HPE 1999 syllabus. Paradoxically, the teacher with limited pedagogical knowledge in HPE was employed in the only full time role.

This lack of PE confidence and knowledge in primary schools supports findings from a study conducted by Morgan and Bourke (2005). In this study of both preservice (r = 422) and in-service (r = 63) primary school teachers, their perceptions regarding the adequacy of their HPE teacher education were evaluated. Based on the findings of this investigation a lacunae exists for research into the delivery of HPE in Australian schools, HPE in practice. While most of the related research is dated, there have been several researchers who have suggested that classroom teachers lack qualifications to deliver quality HPE programs (Moore, Webb & Dickson, 1997; Thompson, 1996; Walkley, 1992; Webb, Moore, Gray & Jessop, 1993).

Based on the results of this study the Physical Activity Strand was the only strand that was consistently and purposefully allocated sufficient teaching time. However, some schools rely on sporadic visitations from sporting organisations to implement the syllabus, often at additional cost to students. The Case Study school without a specialist HPE teacher, Case Study One generally lacked HPE resources for all strands provided in the 1999 HPE syllabus, which is the key learning area requiring advocacy. Case Study Two school's HPE advocacy was a school strength and not only did the school utilise all resources they also overcame their lack of space by developing partnerships within the community.

Schools work effectively when there are quality teachers and their accomplishments are rewarded (Fullan, 2001). This being the case, in the present investigation, no rewards were given for teacher accomplishments in relation to HPE and sports coordination except student satisfaction. Furthermore, there was an unequal allocation of HPE teacher release time for the sports coordination role. In Case Study Three, the school's HPE specialist was provided 5.5 hours release time, equivalent to one full day per week. In Case Study Two the school's HPE specialist teacher was not provided release time, nor in Case Study One where they were responsible for teaching a class. This inequality within the system occurred

since 2001 when there had not been a HPE consultant within the three schools.

The present BCE system infrastructure with 13 district Religious Education curriculum officers employed to service schools and no HPE curriculum officers suggests that the unique Catholic mission can only be achieved through the key learning area of Religious Education. This is a paradox, given that the Church seeks to integrate the Christian message into people's lives by finding God in the everyday (Hutton, 1999). Data generated supports that the HPE learning area is strongly connected to the Religious Education (RE) curriculum and in particular the faith dimension of the RE syllabus (BCE, 2003a). The literature suggests that HPE has been neglected as a key learning area throughout history, whereas it should be embraced as a powerful medium providing students with many practical and social experiences living and reflecting on the Catholic tradition and gospel values (Lynch, 2004a). This research challenges Catholic education to rethink priorities and encourages them to provide support at system level for the HPE key learning area.

Conclusion

It appears that in BCE schools the HPE syllabus implementation process support ceased prematurely before all schools had sufficient time and preparation to design comprehensive school HPE programs. Furthermore, the data generated from this study clearly suggests that a WSCP for HPE is necessary for quality delivery. Teachers lacked understandings of practical ways to implement the social justice underpinnings of the syllabus and some school principals were unaware of the necessity of employing qualified HPE specialist teachers.

Teachers needed to grasp outcome-based education before they could embrace the socio-cultural approach that the 1999 HPE syllabus adopts. This appears to have been an obstacle for the implementation of the 1999 HPE syllabus, as teachers firstly required a paradigm shift in their curriculum and pedagogical thinking. Data generated in this study suggests that it was not just a matter of educating specialist teachers in new critical pedagogies but rather educating inexperienced teachers in all HPE pedagogies and quality teaching practices.

With schools often sharing the teaching of the three HPE syllabus strands, as in Case Study Two and Three schools, effective communication and effort is essential. A lack of communication and effort seemed to be a detrimental factor across all three Case Study schools during the implementation process. Case Study Three school's teacher participants had fundamental misunderstandings among them as to whose responsibility it was to implement the different strands of the HPE syllabus. Schools not having part or all of a Whole School Curriculum Program for HPE suggests that there well may have been communication problems between the employing authority (BCE) and the principals who were responsible for facilitating the implementation of the HPE curriculum and for employing specialist HPE teachers. Effective communication is essential and assumes greater importance in the absence of system-wide HPE curriculum officers.

Successful implementation is possible as manifest by Case Study Two school, having a very positive effect on students' attitudes towards and ultimately their participation in physical activity (Table 4). Case Study Two school teacher participants and the HPE specialist teacher had a good understanding of the syllabus and the socio-cultural approach needed to implement it. The school had a Whole School Curriculum HPE program for the Physical Activity strand that was diverse in physical activities and developmentally appropriate. The HPE specialist teacher used eclectic pedagogies as required and had a good understanding of the way social justice principles could permeate lessons, choosing social pedagogy often over dominant scientistic pedagogies. As a result, many students of varying interests and abilities enjoyed physical activities, suggesting that these factors influenced and enabled a marriage between policy ideals and successful implementation in practice. This was achieved despite having the least space and facilities of the three Case Study schools.

Data suggests that some graduating teachers lack knowledge and confidence to teach HPE physical activity strand so as to promote equity which underpins the socio-cultural approach adopted by the 1999 P-10 HPE syllabus (QSCC, 1999c). Furthermore, discourses and ideologies exist unchallenged within the hidden curriculum and adverse issues reemerge. The best time for children to learn and refine their motor skills is in the preschool and early primary school years, learning fundamentals of movement and skill acquisition. Case Study One and Three schools appeared to fail to do this, an issue that needs to be addressed, especially with the introduction of a Preparatory year in BCE and all Queensland schools. One recommendation would be for further professional development within the HPE key learning area.

BCE need to continue the implementation process. A relationship existed between successful implementation of the syllabus and increased student interest in physical activities. Hence, when teachers have been educated and trained to deliver quality HPE learning experiences students appear to have a greater interest in physical activities. This has the potential to increase lifelong physical activity participation which may be associated with current obesity concerns.

As this research study was only a small scale sample the data generated was limited by its nature. Hence, it is recommended that a large scale research project be conducted to ascertain verisimilitude of findings pertinent to other schools in BCE and in other education systems, within Queensland, Australia and globally. Such studies would optimize quality HPE delivery and give renewal, such as the 50th ICHPER – SD Anniversary World Congress, direction for promotion of active healthy lifestyles.

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Appendix 1

Student Focus Group Interview Schedule

Student Focus Group (Early/ Middle/ Upper)
Interview Schedule

1. Tell me your names and how long you have been at this school.
2. What do you do at lunch time? (activities)
3. What different things do you learn about in school?
4. What do you like to learn about most during school time? (favourite subject)
5. What activities do you play when you are not at school? (t.v, computer games, football etc)
6. What different sports do you do at school? (swimming etc) What sports do you play outside of school? (bike riding, netball etc)
7. What do you do during HPE/ PE? (Ever in the classroom? Have an exercise book?)
8. What do you enjoy about HPE?
9. What are your favourite games or activities in HPE? (Do you need special equipment for these?)
10. Tell me about the times when you really didn't feel like joining in the activities. (Does everyone join in?)
11. Why is HPE important?
12. What else do you do in the school to help you to be healthy?

Appendix 2

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Classroom Teacher (early/ middle/ upper years)
Interview Schedule

1. Name and role
2. Tell me about your teaching experience.
3. What has your training/ study involved for teaching? (Institution, qualifications and training)
4. Tell me about your dealings with the HPE syllabus (1999).
5. What do you like about the (1999) HPE syllabus?
6. How does the school manage to fit the demands of the

HPE syllabus into the crowded P-7 curriculum? (3 strands and 1.5 hours per week)
7. What equipment and facilities does the school have for HPE?
8. What physical activities do you think are most important to focus on in the early/ middle/ upper years?
9. How interested are the students in HPE? (attitudes towards)
10. How are disinterested students handled during HPE lessons?
11. What are the advantages/ benefits of having a specialist HPE teacher? (If applicable)
12. What are the disadvantages of having a specialist HPE teacher? (If applicable)
13. How important do you think the HPE learning area is?
14. How do the other teachers in the school view HPE?
15. What does the school do well in the HPE curriculum?
16. What areas of the HPE curriculum require attention?
17. How is healthy living promoted throughout the school? ■