

**The implementation of the Eat Well Be Active policies:
Stories from the ground**

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Health promotion and HPE: Fusions, fissions and fractures

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Abstract

The Eat Well Be Active (EWBA) – Healthy Kids for Life Action Plan (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005a) was launched by the Queensland Government as a blueprint for addressing obesity in Queensland. Taking into account its principal focus on ameliorating obesity amongst children and young people, it is hardly surprising that schools are thrust into the lead role of implementing the EWBA Action Plan and its derivatives i.e. Smart Choices (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005d) and Smart Moves (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2007b) addressing the twin causes of obesity – a lack of physical activity and/or proper nutrition. Smart Choices and Smart Moves are just two examples of a myriad of other health promotion policies in the contested terrain of school-based curriculum, underlined by the traditional core business of imbuing students with science knowledge, literacy and numeracy.

This paper examines the mandated implementation of the EWBA Action Plan and its subsidiary Smart policies within the obesity discourse in schools in the state of Queensland, Australia. In the context of health promotion, the interaction between the health and education interfaces is explored. With reference to Basil Bernstein's pedagogic device (1996, 2000), the current study analyses the nexus of hegemonic relationships between the recontextualising field of the state education department and the schools in the secondary field.

Data was collected in 12 schools (both primary and secondary) in a low socio-economic metropolitan area with a focus on the effects of the mandated implementation of the EWBA policies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key personnel (i.e. principals, deputy principals, heads of HPE departments as well as HPE teachers and classroom teachers) involved in driving the promotion of physical activity and nutrition policies within the school.

From the results, the reception of the policies in the secondary field is lukewarm at best. Five major barriers were cited by the respondents as impediments to the policies' implementation. These impediments include i) time, (ii) core business, (iii) funding, (iv) restricted powers and (v) mindsets. It appears that there exists a disjunction between the recontextualising and secondary fields in terms of policy implementation. The results seem to suggest that the policy intent and implementation of the EWBA policies are misaligned. In order to address this misalignment and the slippages of the EWBA policies, a comprehensive strategy targeting agents, embodied within the policy making process, in all three fields of the pedagogic device is warranted.

Key words: public health policy; policy implementation, accountability, physical education, Bernstein, pedagogic device

Introduction

If the authenticity of official reports is accepted, overweight and obesity is a serious, chronic medical condition that is becoming an increasing problem in Australia (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2007; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). According to the World Health Organisation (2006) overweight and obesity is fast becoming a pandemic issue, resulting in increased healthcare costs and fiscal liabilities for the state (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). In Australia, over 50% of all adults and almost one in four children are identified as overweight or obese (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007; Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005a). Recent data estimate that the cost of obesity alone to the Australian economy was A\$58.2 billion in 2008 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) and this figure does not include the costs of overweight. Experts believe that the primary determinant of childhood overweight and obesity is characterised by the energy imbalance between the caloric consumption and energy expenditure (World Health Organization, 2006; Yudkin, 1959).

On the weight of this evidence, the prevention and management of this condition, especially among children, remains a top priority for the Australian and the Queensland governments. Likewise, on the global front, the perception of escalating rates of obesity has dominated concerns about the health of children and young people in English speaking countries as well as developed countries in Europe and Asia (Evans, Rich, & Davies, 2004).

In Queensland, the state government takes an active interest in advancing the cause of health promotion, especially among the paediatric population. The Healthy Kids Queensland Survey was commissioned by Queensland Health (QH) in 2006 as part of the Queensland Government's commitment to promoting healthy weight in Queensland's children and young people through the advocacy of improved nutrition and increased physical activity (Abbott, et al., 2007). This baseline study was part of the Queensland Government's continual efforts and string of policies in alleviating the obesity problem prevalent among Queensland children and young people.

Perhaps the most definitive policy representing the determination of the Queensland Government in solving the childhood obesity problem would be the *Eat Well, Be Active* (EWBA) – *Healthy Kids for Life* 2005-2008 Action Plan (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005a).

With the implementation of the EWBA Action Plan, there was added impetus to increase the awareness among Queensland youth concerning their dietary and lifestyle choices. Several key initiatives, relating to nutrition and physical activity, which were previously launched (e.g. the *Smart Choices: Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools*, *Smart Moves: Physical Activity Programs for Queensland State Schools*, the *Go for 2 & 5* marketing campaign as well as the *Physical Activity and Nutrition Out of School Hours* (PANOSH) and the *10,000 Steps* program), now come within the purview of the EWBA campaign. This concerted approach marked the advent of Queensland's most explicit campaign to target obesity.

The Smart Policies

Public health campaigns have been staged in almost every corner of the globe, spanning countries over the five continents for example in Africa (Evans *et al.*, 2009), North America (Gerberding & Marks, 2004), Australia (McBride, 2000), China (Xia, et al., 2004), and the United Kingdom (Crawshaw, Bunton, & Conway, 2004). While these campaigns have met with varying degrees of success, it is noteworthy that these international campaigns have been united through their common drive to ameliorate the obesity situation posed by a combination or totality of the "big four" concerns – (i) unhealthy food in schools, (ii) limited

physical activity in schools, (iii) unhealthy food in family life and/or (iv) lack of physical activity in family life (Van Staveren & Dale, 2004). The EWBA Action Plan and its derivative policies (i.e. Smart Choices and Smart Moves) specifically address the first two concerns.

Smart Choices (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005d) was formulated to address the nutritional value of school-based food and drinks supply and was identified as a key action area under the Education Queensland and Queensland Health Joint Work Plan 2004-2007. Under Smart Choices, foods and drinks are classified into three categories according to their nutritional value – Green, Amber and Red (Figure 1) where the supply of Red foods is restricted to two occasions per term. “The Smart Choices strategy reaches further than the tuckshop, to also include vending machines, school excursions, school camps, fundraising, classroom rewards, school events, sports day and curriculum activities ... *the strategy won’t apply to foods and drinks supplied to students by their parents from home* (my emphasis)”(Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005c). By 1 January 2007, implementation of the *Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools* will be mandatory in all state schools (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005b).



Figure 1 Food and Drink Spectrum Poster (Queensland Government, 2005b)

More recently, Smart Moves (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2007b) was introduced as a companion strategy to Smart Choices under the flagship policy of EWBA with the objective of increasing physical activity levels among school children. This policy came into ordinance following the recommendations in the review

report “Future Development of School Sport and Physical Activity” (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2007a). Key recommendations of the review report include “All principals are to annually report on their allocation of school sport and physical activity through the school improvement and accountability framework” (Recommendation 1); “All state primary classroom teachers are to undertake professional development in the delivery of physical activity” (Recommendation 5) and “All primary schools are to allocate 30 minutes of physical activity per day as part of the school curriculum” (Recommendation 8) (pp. 2-3). These recommendations culminated in the materialisation of Smart Moves, mandating physical activity as part of the curriculum where all primary school students need to be exposed to at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day and for secondary school students at least 2 hours a week.

The introduction of Smart Moves as a physical activity audit heralds a new era where schools are being held accountable for the physical activity of students. All state schools are mandated to develop a physical activity action plan to address the six key components of Smart Moves (Figure 2) as part of their annual operating plan and these physical activity action plans must be in place by the beginning of July 2008, ready for full implementation of Smart Moves from December 2008 (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2007c).



Figure 2 Six key components of Smart Moves (Queensland Government, 2007a)

Role of schools in health promotion

Schools generally, and HPE in particular, have a history of being recruited for health promotion purposes (see Kirk, 1992). In writing about the situation in the United Kingdom, Kirk (1992, p. 125) commented that, “The calculated use of physical education as a means of

contributing to the health of school children was restricted mainly to state elementary school system ... stretching back to at least the mid 1800s.” More recently, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (National Health and Medical Research Council, 1997, p. 15) reported:

The school is the one setting where all ... children can be reached, and through which their health concerns can potentially be addressed. *Schools clearly have the potential to be major settings for maximising the health of Australia’s children and adolescents.* Schools also have the policy mandate to support action to promote the health of young people, and, importantly, they have the opportunity (and often the capacity) to do so (my emphasis).

This situation – the explicit use of schools as legitimate vehicles of health “evangelism” in tackling, in this instance, the “obesity epidemic” has increased in prevalence in recent times. Schools are charged with the task of promoting health and reducing obesity rates amongst children and young people through both their own initiatives and the myriad of public health policies that have bombarded them in recent years. We are living in “New Times” (Hall, 1996) and times have certainly changed since the days when the NHMRC declared that “while there is an expectation that schools will address health as one of the eight national key learning areas, *there are no demands made on them* by the education sector to change specific health behaviours or to improve the health status of their students” (National Health and Medical Research Council, 1997, p. 3 my emphasis).

With the plethora of public health policies for the betterment of the citizens and among them children and young people, it is inevitable that schools are increasingly utilised as an effective platform for the dissemination and application of these policies (e.g. drug education, mental health, sex education etc.). Indeed, there exists no conduit more fitting than schools in the dissemination and materialisation of public health policies, given the sheer numbers of students and the compulsory time they spend in schools everyday (Murnan, Price, Telljohann, Dake, & Boardley, 2006). As Cox and Billingsley (1996, p. 514) asserted “Schools are community institutions, and as such, play an important and influential role in improving the status of the nation’s health as a whole”. Good eating habits and the pursuit of a “healthy lifestyle” should be cultivated from the early years and research has shown the impact of health promotion to be greater and more effective among children and young people than the adult population (Kelleher, et al., 1999), the latter who will experience greater inertia in modifying their daily practices or what sociologists termed as *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990).

With the introduction of accountability measures within public health policies such as Smart Moves and Smart Choices in Queensland, schools and their teachers are increasingly finding their responsibility of improving the health and well-being of their students an onerous task. This sentiment was noted ironically by the same NHMRC (1997) document aforementioned which noted befittingly, “Health is up against strong competition for curriculum time, teacher attention and resources” (p. 2). Though made ten years ago, this statement is still apposite and pertinent to the state of health promotion in schools today. In view of an influx of public health policies jostling for attention in the already overcrowded curriculum, the current study is motivated by the need to examine the uptake of public health policies by schools. At the same time, we seek to investigate the responses of the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum and the teachers to these health policies.

Before I continue to the next section, I would like to insert a caveat. My purpose here is not to criticise the authors of the Smart policies, neither am I here to prove that the Smart policies are not achieving their stated objectives. This paper is an attempt to capture the

complex interplay of interests and conflicts between the recontextualising and secondary fields, within the processes and enactments of the Smart policies.

Bernstein's pedagogic discourse

Bernstein (1990) posited that insufficient attention is paid to “the complex of agencies, agents [and] social relations through which power, knowledge and discourses are brought into play as regulative devices; nor any discussion of the modalities of control” (p. 134). This criticism suggests not only the absence of social relations in discourse but also highlights the failure to provide any systematic interrogation of the “common denominator of all discourses, education and the modalities of its transmission” (Bernstein, 1990, p. 134).

Thus, within the understanding and appreciation of Bernstein's work, I postulate that an examination of the mechanisms of the health promotion discourse within the binary relationship of government institutions and schools is warranted for gaining insights into the uptake of public health policies (informed by research) by schools and how these policies affect the schools and the larger community. This investigation would be best served by his theory of the pedagogic device (Bernstein, 1996, 2000).

The engagement of Bernstein's pedagogic device (1996, 2000) as a theoretical framework in the field of HPE is not novel. Previous research has utilised facets of Bernstein's sociology in curriculum reform and innovations. For example, Kirk and Macdonald (2001) have adapted Bernstein's work on the social construction of pedagogic discourse and his pedagogic device (Bernstein 1996, 2000) in their work on locating the teachers' position in the reform process. More recently, MacPhail (2007) utilised Bernstein's pedagogic device to critically appraise teachers' perspectives on a particular curriculum innovation in Scottish secondary school physical education. However, to the best of my knowledge, the interface between public health and education has not been previously explored from a Bernsteinian perspective. With the inundation of public health policies in schools, it is therefore critical that policy implementation on the ground is examined to ascertain policy fidelity. Next, I shall endeavour to locate the various stakeholders of the EWBA initiative within the three fields (primary, recontextualising and secondary) of Bernstein's pedagogic device (1996, 2000).

Locating teachers within Bernstein's pedagogic device

To illustrate the workings of the pedagogic device (Bernstein 1996, 2000) in contemporary Australian society, the primary context is concerned with the production of new knowledge/discourse which is often undertaken by researchers/academics from institutions of higher education and private research organisations (Bernstein, 2000; Castells, 2000). The common factor between these two entities is the possession of specialist expert knowledge which is utilised to inform the process of policy formulation. In the instance of the EWBA initiative, this knowledge and expertise comes from the health professionals and organisations (e.g. doctors, nutritionists, WHO etc.) who have been leading the fight in advocating for a healthier lifestyle and the academics who have been researching on the possible harmful effects and problems posed by the present obesity “epidemic”. The knowledge produced is then recontextualised by the state departments of education and training, curriculum authorities, specialist education journals and teacher education institutions as well as, I shall claim, health authorities (e.g. Queensland Health). Following that, the recontextualised knowledge is then cascaded down to the primary, secondary and tertiary schooling institutions where reproduction of the knowledge occurs. In each of these contexts, specific agents and their agencies operate according to the rules intrinsic to the three fields (Kirk, Macdonald, & Tinning, 1997).

According to Bernstein (1973), the three message systems of schooling are curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Together, they embody the “structure and processes of school knowledge, transmission and practice” (Sadovnik, 2001, p. 4). In Bernstein’s own words (1973), “Curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid realization of the knowledge on the part of the taught” (p. 85). In terms of the studying the EWBA policies uptake in schools, we may view the process of its implementation with reference to Bernstein’s three message systems of schooling. First, the research surrounding the challenges posed by the “obesity epidemic” was generated by the academia arena, private research organisations and World Health Organisation. Subsequently, these issues were highlighted and formulated by the relevant government departments into policy documents which were then translated into curriculum documents (e.g. Smart Moves) for implementation. Next, we see the teachers incorporating the curriculum into their pedagogies (e.g. 30 minutes of physical activity every day) and finally, as I have done in this study, forming a feedback loop for the evaluation of teachers’ experiences in the policy implementation process. The figure below (Figure 3) depicts the inter-relationship between the three fields of the pedagogic device (Bernstein 1996, 2000) within the EWBA context.

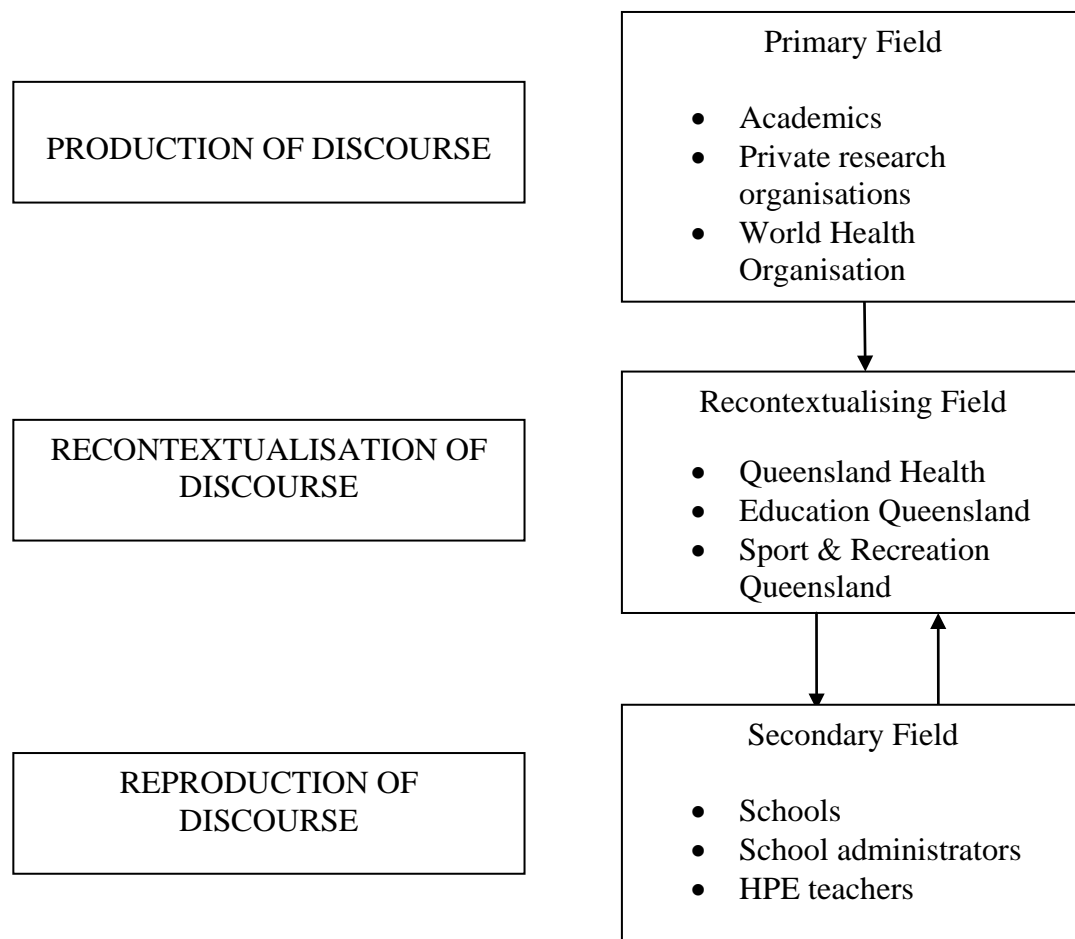


Figure 3. Schematic representation of Bernstein’s pedagogic device (examples of agents and agencies operating within each field in relation to EWBA)

Data Collection

These data represent part of a larger set generated by the larger EWBA evaluation study. The larger study generated multiple sources of data relating to the implementation of EWBA initiatives and the capacity building ability of the communities (Bush, Dower, &

Mutch, 2002) in three different regions of Queensland while this specific study is specifically focusing on the schools and their implementation of the EWBA Action Plan and its derivatives. The participants were drawn from a myriad of twelve schools (6 state schools, 5 state high schools and 1 private school) from an education district operating in a low socio-economic metropolitan area with multi-cultural populations. Invitations to participate in the study were sent out to all the schools in the education district and schools which responded favourably were followed up.

The data sources comprise of hour-long semi-structured formal interviews (Patton, 2002) conducted with key stakeholders (i.e. principals, deputy principals, heads of department and HPE teachers) in the formulation of the students' health and well-being framework, the implementation of health-related policies (i.e. Smart Choices, Smart Moves etc.) and the structuring of the HPE curriculum in their respective schools. Interview questions were centred around the participants' experiences of implementing the mandated health policies targeted at schools and the impact of these policies on their work. At the same time, their views concerning the responsibility of the health and well-being of children in their positions as educators were solicited during the interviews. In addition, I interviewed two senior officials from Education Queensland regarding the implementation of the EWBA policies (i.e. Smart Choices and Smart Moves) within their administrative purview. The interviews were digitally taped and later transcribed verbatim. Detailed notes were also recorded as soon as possible after the conclusion of each interview.

As an aspect of respondent validation or member checking (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006), transcripts were sent to the interviewees to ascertain the veracity of the interviewees' representation. Thereafter, the data was coded and subsequently content and thematic inductive analysis based on the principles of constant comparison (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) were conducted using NVivo 8, a software designed to analyse qualitative data. The research protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Queensland and Education Queensland and pseudonyms were used in the discussion of results below to mask the identities of the participants.

Results and Discussion

The issue of mandated health policy implementation in schools is a double-edged sword: it can mean both empowerment and enmeshment. Given the increased focus on HPE as a possible solution to the obesity problem (Gard, 2004; Johns, 2005; Kirk, 2006), I would argue that HPE and school-based physical activity in Queensland is experiencing its "heyday" in terms of the espoused elevated status accorded to HPE within the obesity discourse. This is suggested by the fronting of the EWBA action plan and its subsidiary policies (i.e. Smart Moves and Smart Choices) by a cabinet minister from the Queensland Government. As compared to previous public health campaigns in Queensland, this is perhaps the first campaign which explicitly addresses the provision of nutrition and physical activity of children and young people state-wide. However, in practice, the allocation of more time and resources to HPE does not commensurate with the high level of publicity surrounding the Smart policies. On the other hand, the engendering of legal provisions for stipulating the amount of physical activity highlights the unenviable task educators face in trying to carve out time from an already overcrowded curriculum and the relatively little support schools felt that they had received as will become clear.

This feeling of enmeshment is clearly discernible from the responses of the agents operating in the secondary field (i.e. teachers) during the interviews. Three key themes have emerged from the data. They are titled: (i) the vacillation of the policy making process (ii) barriers to Smart policies implementation and (iii) fractures and dislocations: the

fragmentation of the Smart policies. The following sections will discuss each theme in more detail.

(i) The vacillation of the policy making process

Teachers denounced the EWBA policies as transients, alongside many other educational policies, which they felt were “here today, gone tomorrow” and are dependent on the political flavour of the day. This observation is pertinently encapsulated in the following quotes:

And in terms of educational change, people at my age probably get to the point where you see educational change flagged, and *before it actually gets implemented, another educational change takes its place*. That has been a continuous cycle for the last 25 years. Change is there all the time. Things change everyday. And if you are one of those poor unfortunate souls who respond to the fact, that you are expected to write some new programs, and you spend a lot of time addressing the new syllabus and you do all the processes, and then at the same time you finish that process, another change comes in. And you have got to start the process again. You can understand why people get a little bit resistant. (Head of Curriculum, Westminster State School)

A lot of people including myself were sceptical of the project. *We didn't know if it was going to stick around, a lot of things in education don't*. I just look at it as another thing that we had to do. (HPE teacher, Chestervale State School)

I think the idea is great but I feel a bit cheated in a way because I feel it's a bit of reaction, a government reaction that as soon as things aren't good at that, like as soon as we've got fat kids, back to the schools, you do something about it. As soon as we've got any social problem, it comes back to the schools to fix it up. It's a matter of overcrowding the curriculum all the time for teachers and *the knee-jerk reaction that comes above, from government, as soon as there's a social issue out there, the schools have got to address it* and our curriculum is already overcrowded, we already can't fit everything in. So for us to be continuously asked to address social issues is ... angers me a little bit. (Deputy Principal, Stanford State High School)

Evident from the above, there is a hint of scepticism, especially among the more experienced teachers, when I enquired about their views on the mandated implementation. Resistant and indignant sentiments such as these, though not dominant, prompt us to think about the challenges posed by what Wright (2001) labelled as “bastard leadership” – leadership characterised by its changing policy concerns of government, and the vicissitudes of the educational arena, “rather than commitment to substantive and situated values or principles” (Ball, 2006, p. 13). While some might argue that teachers are essentially educational state agents (Mackay & Sutherland, 2006) employed to carry out the work of the state in schools, I argue that teachers are not “roly-polys” of the state and are highly unlikely to shift their deeply entrenched ideologies according to the ever-changing political dogmas and agendas of the incumbent government. From previous research, we learnt that entrenched knowledge and practices often override the innovative ideal (Eisner, 2000) and that teachers' values and perceptions are deeply influential in the interpretation and implementation of a reform (Hall & Hord, 2005).

In the Bernsteinian context, agents in the secondary field may not always be acquiescent to the rules of the pedagogic device (i.e. they may not always play by the rules) (Bernstein, 1996, 2000). Bernstein and Solomon (1999) further cautioned that the functioning of the three rules of the pedagogic device is in itself a contested terrain and does not always happen in a linear fashion. This struggle for domination among the fields was illustrated by Kirk and Macdonald (2001) in their study on teachers' participation in two large-scale curriculum reform projects within the field of HPE in Australia. They posited that the transfer of knowledge from the recontextualizing field to the secondary field is a convoluted process.

Clearly, the teachers' activity in the secondary field was no straightforward process of reproduction of the instructional discourse. In a significant sense, there was a further process of recontextualization taking place within the secondary field (p. 565).

(ii) Barriers to Smart policies implementation

When probed about their experiences with implementing health-related policies within the school environment, the majority of the teachers elected to share their experiences with regard to the Smart policies, in particular Smart Moves. Thus, for this particular section, much of the discussion will be centred round the implementation of the Smart Moves policy. While I recognise that policy realisations will differ according to local conditions, resources and personnel commitment, there seems to be strong consensus among the participants interviewed that five significant factors impede on their implementation of the Smart policies – (i) time, (ii) core business, (iii) funding, (iv) restricted powers and (v) mindsets.

Time

Time (or the lack of) is a legitimate and powerful impediment to implementing the Smart policies. Citing the overcrowded curriculum and consequently the lack of time, some teachers remain obdurate and unabashed in resisting Smart Moves even when ample resources are made available for their use:

Oh teachers are resisting it because of overcrowded curriculum. Yeah, I'm right up there for that. I'm one of the main offenders. *I'm resisting it quite well because I have no time.* I'm first to admit it. It's something that really is one of my lowest priorities in getting out there. I should be getting out there more but I'm not. We've been resourced really well for it in school. There's been a lot of money and there have been a lot of great activities, fantastic activities and fantastic resources to support. It's just the time issue we have a problem with and I think a lot of staff are the same on that one. We have time issue problems. (Head of Curriculum, Oxford State School)

Well because of the time. If we weren't being asked to do everything as well, I mean, I love doing physical education, I love taking kids out for games and getting them to feel their heartbeat, explaining to them that's good for you, that's what you should be doing everyday but *it's the time issue ...* for me and for many teachers, *we find that difficult to fit everything into a day.* (Head of HPE Department, Eton State School)

Time. *Time is the biggest problem* with everything that we do the lack of time to get everything done. (HPE teacher, Cambridge State High School)

We have already got a very overcrowded curriculum and bringing another facet, lying another facet of that over the top everyday *to do half an hour of*

Smart Moves is really pushing. Makes it very difficult and overcrowds the curriculum even more and other things like literacy and numeracy feel that and next week, the government will be telling us that our literacy and numeracy skills are not good enough and what are we going to do about that? (Head of Curriculum, Oxford State High School)

Time is at a premium in schools (Hargreaves, 1994) and Morgan and Hansen (2008) reported that most teachers perceived the curriculum to be overcrowded and felt that they were more liable to account for the delivery outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Consequently, time dedicated to PE and other initiatives, in this case Smart Moves, was sacrificed to cater to these extrinsic pressures to produce measurable performance outcomes in basic skills tests. Similarly, Mandigo et al. (2004) reported that teachers believed that the lack of time and funding, which will be addressed shortly, were the two biggest factors influencing the delivery of PE.

Core business

Despite the backing of a Queensland cabinet minister, the Smart policies could not escape from the pervasive influence of the schools' "core business" – literacy and numeracy. Although school-based physical activity interventions have been reported to be effective in increasing students' physical activity levels (e.g. Kahn, et al., 2002), in their drive to improve the competency and competitiveness of a future workforce, government agencies at every level (including schools) are guilty of overemphasising academic performance (Rink, Jones, Kirby, Mitchell, & Doutis, 2007). More often than not, other educational components such as physical education are compromised in favour of the "core business" (Datar & Sturm, 2004). Though located within an American context, Datar and Sturm's observation is paralleled in Australian schools:

While HPE may not be regarded as insignificant, it nevertheless continues to be pushed to the periphery when *educational* priorities are being considered by governments and or curriculum authorities (Penney, 2008, p. 34, original emphasis).

This disposition is clearly shared by the agents in the secondary fields:

That Smart Moves is not ... *it's a lower priority for me, it's a lower concern* when other things are not done. For me as curriculum coordinator, the push I am feeling from my administration is that I need to be really concerned about *literacy and numeracy first* and that's where I come from. I like to be able to say that we're all doing the Smart Moves thing but in reality, really, I can tell you we're all doing it but we're not because it's just not, it's almost impossible to fit it all in. Some teachers might be doing it everyday but I know certainly that some aren't. (Head of Curriculum, Winchester State High School)

There's much greater focus on NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) and literacy and numeracy and a range of other things around student performance. Health is one of the things that is important also but I wouldn't have really felt that it's a real driving force at the moment. (Deputy Principal, Harrow State High School)

Every class, every day, 30 min of curriculum time, would have been a real problem because *literacy and numeracy's our first priority*. (Principal, Cambridge State High School)

Our original function is *academics* for children. That's *our number one priority*. (Principal, Edinburgh College)

The *pressure is for us to improve literacy and numeracy* through state and national tests and if we don't improve that, then we'll lose out in our funding as well. (Principal, Oxford State High School)

Funding

Both private and state schools mentioned the centrality of funding – both funding from “doing the right thing” and a lack of funding in shaping their priorities. When asked about his decision to adopt the Smart policies, the private school principal replied:

We could be really ethical here and really moral and say “It's good for the children and such” but admittedly, our school only get the federal and state funding if we do the right thing, so our funding is linked to us meeting requirements (of Education Queensland's policies). Of course, it (the policy) must be good for the children as well. (Principal, Edinburgh School)

Whether Edinburgh School's adoption of Education Queensland's policies are motivated by altruistic concerns for the welfare of the children or prompted by self-serving interests remains questionable. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no specific funding was made available to the schools to facilitate the implementation of the Smart policies. This could be an inherent problem as the quality of the children's physical activity experiences may be compromised by the lack of equipment or facilities, due to the corresponding increase of students engaging in physical activity at the same time. Further, in some low-socio economic environments where facilities are scarce, funding seems the paramount consideration:

We need a very good facility, you know, if it's raining or something, we haven't really got anywhere to go, so we're very poor in actual facilities, like a big hall or a shed or something like that. Sometimes where you might be able to work, it would be too noisy for the people in the classroom. So if you're without a hall, it's very hard to really do a great program. We do what we can but we'll be better if we have a big purpose-built hall with all the equipment in it. (HPE teacher, Westminster State School)

However, the situation was not entirely bleak. While some schools in this study relied on their limited resources from the school grant allocation and curriculum funds from Education Queensland, others made forays into seeking community and federal grants and in-kind donations from various sources, both private and governmental, to fund their infrastructure upgrading, breakfast clubs and equipment renewal. However, tales of these successful ventures are anomalies, rather than the norm.

Restricted powers

Some of the teachers felt handicapped by the lack of powers vested on them to execute the policies on the ground. The sense of frustration and helplessness with the difficulties faced in trying to get the students to participate in the Smart Moves initiative was clearly evident in following lamentation:

Main thing is about problems implementing policies is that you are often prescribed how much activity students have got to do but the government doesn't give you any extra powers to make you to do it. You can tell them, well the government says you have got to do this and if the student says, "I am not doing that!" What do we do? We can't make them. So that's why sometimes a lot of these policies that have come out are viewed a bit cynically because, like I have said, you are not given any extra power to implement them. They are telling you that this is what you have got to do yet if students say I am not doing that, where do we go from there? (Head of HPE Department, Chesterton State School)

In terms of Smart Choices, a small number of schools in this study are constantly struggling to keep the canteen's balance sheets from dipping into the red. With Smart Choices specifically stating that "the strategy does not apply to what foods or drinks students or staff bring from home" (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005c), it creates a classic catch-22 situation for the schools, where no action can be taken on students who fill their lunchboxes with "RED" foods or buy them from the local shops during school hours:

Kids leave the school ground during school hours to go out and buy these other things. We have a bit of blitz at the moment. A couple of kids have even been suspended, though we do take them seriously. We do talk to the local community shops and ask them not to serve our kids that sort of thing, but that is not always successful either. (Principal, Harrow State High School)

It's a pre-eminent issue. It has become an issue in the school. It's one which we're struggling how to deal with but we're just dealing with it consistently at the moment but we probably have kids everyday down there (the local shop) unfortunately during school time, which is obviously truancy and it is unsafe. (Deputy Principal, Winchester State High School)

While the policies were formulated in the best intentions to provide healthier dietary choices to both staff and students and to increase the level of physical activity among the student population in schools, they have precipitated policy loopholes such as those mentioned above and generated other unforeseen and undesirable outcomes of the Smart policies. These issues, which are creating havoc in the backyard of the secondary field agents (i.e. schools), may not have been foreseen by the agents in the recontextualising field (i.e. Education Queensland and Queensland Health) but they posed real concerns to those who are affected in the secondary field.

Mindsets

The shifting of mindsets proves to be a real challenge among the HPE teachers in getting their colleagues to value the Smart policies:

The biggest problem I face is getting all the staff involved ... everyone, I mean, in our PE department is really good and gets involved but getting members from across the staff to not see it as just another thing is quite hard. (HPE teacher, Chesterton State School)

The curriculum is so cluttered, like teachers are busy at the moment. I believe that in my 30 years or whatever, I have been teaching, there is more and more paperwork to be done. For many teachers, they see it as a road block. It is a harder thing to get around. So then because the road blocks are there, rather than confront it, they won't go and do the activity. (Head of Curriculum, Cambridge State School)

Hargreaves (2000) quotes four grounds which Cox contends that teachers use to justify their practices – tradition (how it has always been done), prejudice (how I like it done), dogma (this is the 'right' way to do it) and ideology (as required by the current orthodoxy). Kirk and Macdonald (2001) posited that teachers' *positionality* (personal discursive history, accumulated professional and personal experience, professional identity and subject alliances) plays a significant role in the interpretation of curricular initiatives and their understanding of what is required of them. Further, they suggested that "it was the teachers' sphere of authority and their intimate knowledge of the local context of implementation that delimited their production, ownership and transformation of the reforms" (p. 558). In the same breath, Green (1998) posited, "the everyday constraints upon the practice of teaching of PE in schools may well be more significant than any abstract 'philosophy' in determining what PE teachers do and how they do it" (p. 134) and I believe this may be the case for the classroom teachers in relation to the Smart policies. Green (2000) went on to state that "The way that teachers thought about PE had been shaped by their past experiences and had become bound up with the job itself" (p. 127). As can be seen, the binary between teachers' deeply entrenched views of the transient nature of policies and their ingrained traditions, prejudices, dogmas and ideologies about PE cannot be disentangled in a short period of time by any policy, its legality notwithstanding.

(iii) Fractures and dislocations: The fragmentation of the Smart policies

From the results, there seems to be a disjunction between the recontextualising and the secondary fields in terms of policy intent and policy implementation on the ground. One key example can be found in Winchester State High School, a suburban school with a high percentage of migrant student population in the implementation of Smart Choices. Although most teachers do not have much involvement in the day-to-day running of the canteen, they are strongly encouraged to model healthy eating behaviours under the Smart Choices policy. Even though the mandated implementation of the Smart Choices policy was to be accomplished by 1 January 2007 (Queensland Government Department of Education and Training, 2005b), Winchester State High School seemed oblivious to this requirement:

Smart Choices. To be honest, I haven't had much of a look at Smart Choices. I think I have got a planning document, organizing document ready around there somewhere ... Can you tell me, which one is Smart Choices? About healthy food and those stuff? I know very little ... That is one of the things we need to *move to next*. Looking at all things, you know, menus etc etc. That is going to be a challenge. That is going to be a *new challenge* for us to meet. (Head of HPE Department, Winchester State High School)

This policy “innocence” was corroborated by one of the staff members from the HPE department:

Smart Choices, the role there is probably, will be a bit bigger with our committee looking, *hoping to look at* tuckshop menus and targeting kids’ nutrition *in upcoming terms*. (HPE teacher, Winchester State High School)

As exemplified above, the results seem to suggest that with the policy and curriculum documents proliferating in schools, teachers may have become confused and disorientated by the myriad of acronyms, nomenclature and terminology that has come to signify education in Queensland in recent times.

Odden and Anderson (1986) suggested that the actualisation of effective reform lies in achieving a balance between *accountability for change* and the need for teacher support. To the best of the authors’ knowledge, to date, there exists no technique of surveillance and enforcement to ensure that the Smart policies are carried out as they were intended by the Queensland authorities. This observation was substantiated by both agents in the recontextualising and secondary fields when asked if there was any instrument of accountability to ensure policy fidelity other than the inclusion of a few paragraphs in the school’s annual operational plan and triennial school review:

No. We’re checking up on other things with teachers in the numeracy and literacy line. We’re encouraging teachers to try to do it but *there’s nobody rapping on their knuckles as yet if they’re not doing it*. Yeah, well, not that I know of. I haven’t heard of anyone having their knuckles bruised because they haven’t done it yet but it might come. (Head of Curriculum, Eton State School)

There’s an online survey which I think I did last year. Basically, you have to identify your school but not yourself individually and then sort of say how have you met each of the criteria in Smart Moves. We have to sort of address the different areas of Smart Moves and say how we address them in our school in each of the area in Smart Moves ... It’s one of those directives that have gone out but *I wouldn’t say it has been strongly on the agenda of the Central Office. It’s not one of those things you hear a lot about*. It’s on the website, there’s information available, you see it on the documents that sort of thing every now and again but *I certainly wouldn’t have felt that it’s one of the strong impetus, strong driver at the moment*. (Deputy Principal, Harrow State High School)

There’s always a new policy or guideline, like I got a new one yesterday around Indigenous education and *there isn’t an accountability loop back around* that but there’s an expectation that yes we need to implement that for our kids and I suppose that’s our professional responsibility, *nobody actually ticks to check necessarily that you’re doing it* but you know, through the focus of the accountability process through TSRs (triennial school review), that does get looked at. (Principal, Oxford State School)

No, no, *that hasn’t been a requirement*. It’s been more of, you know, here’s some guidelines, away you go but it is early days so who knows what will come next but at the moment no, it’s fairly simple. *That’s not a requirement yet*. (Principal, Cambridge State School)

So they have a document called the annual operational plan. In the annual operational plan, they would *outline* what is it they are going to do in Smart Moves this year. They also have a three-year plan and their three-year plan reflects what the journey is going to be over the three years. (Superintendent of Schools, Buckingham Education District)

Principals are *required to note* Smart Moves in their Annual Operational Plans. What this looks like in practice is an unknown to me. I imagine that some principals will provide detailed information and others, less. The authority rests in the hands of the Superintendent in each district. It will be up to s/he in terms of how principals are required to attend to the mandate of Smart Moves. This responsibility will not be taken lightly by the Superintendents. (Senior Official, Education Queensland)

The above excerpts suggest a slippage between the policy understandings of the agents in the recontextualising field and what has cascaded down to the agents in the secondary field. One plausible explanation for this policy fracture may be the inherent absence of enforcement and reinforcement measures on the ground. Bull, Bellew, Schöppe and Bauman (2004), in their review of literature on policy development pertaining to physical activity, concluded that in order for the facilitation of successful physical activity policy and actions plans to occur, there needs to be a stable base of support and sustainable resources to implement the policy and action plan. In addition, appropriate surveillance or monitoring systems need to be developed and maintained to ensure policy fidelity.

While it is prudent to note that responses to the problems posed by policy texts must be creative and localised (Ball, 2006), it is paramount to ensure policy fidelity on the ground by means other than anonymous online surveys and school reports if the Queensland Government is indeed serious about alleviating the obesity situation through improving physical activity and nutrition in schools. If left unchecked, this situation may degenerate into one which failures of the Smart policies are attributed to the schools and teachers (Ball, 2006):

... ‘blame-based tactics of policy-makers wherein policies are always solutions and never part of the problem. ‘The problem’ is ‘in’ the school or ‘in’ the teacher but never ‘in’ policies (p. 17).

Further, in order to establish a common policy understanding between the agents of the recontextualising and secondary fields with regard to the Smart policies, the Queensland Government has to do more than having a cabinet minister fronting the policies and conducting professional development workshops for teachers who are unable to attend due to other “more important” issues.

First, the rationale, timelines, workings and expected outcomes of the policy have to be explicated to the executioners of the policies in schools. Second, doubts about the policies have to be clarified and questions answered. Odden (1991) has noted that success eluded many educational reform initiatives because teachers were unclear about the expected change and/or unwilling to change. Humes (2003) went on to assert that:

Teachers can be provided with all kinds of support and staff development to acquaint them with the requirements of new programmes – but that is not enough. They need to be convinced that the reforms which they are asked to implement are sound in principle and consistent with their own professional standards and values (p. 84).

Perhaps, the participants in this study are in a position to validate these claims.

Adequate explanation of why the initiative is being taken on board as policy. My belief is that if you want things to be introduced for change in education, you need to sell it first. You need to inform the stakeholders. It would be courteous, of those people who sit up there, making this policy to come down and explain it. If it is explained well, we will do it. I suppose there is a bit of concept around that many teachers are resistant to change. I don't think that that is the case. Their resistance to change is that change often happens without them being part of the process. If they have been more well-informed, then I am sure many teachers will be much more inclined to be part of the process. You have got to sell them well. Do a little bit of promotion work. (Head of HPE Department, Stanford State High School)

Yeah, there's a lot of things we're supposed to be doing but actually people who are saying that should get into schools and have a go at it and see how they go. It's all very well to say "Let's do this now." but as I explained to you, it's not that easy. (HPE teacher, Oxford State School)

While the arguments of the secondary agents above may not be completely gratuitous, we need to be mindful of the complexity of the health promotion discourse and the myriad of factors and agents involved. Thus, pinning the blame in the event of a policy miscarriage on the policy makers and recontextualising agents would be an injustice. It is unrealistic and unreasonable to expect the recontextualising agents i.e the Queensland authorities to enact yet another blanket policy to address the shortcomings of the Smart policies. The answer, perhaps, lies in supporting the schools on a grassroots level. As McLaughlin (1990) claimed:

The nature, amount and pace of change at the local level was a product of local factors that were largely beyond the control of higher-level policy makers. Local variability is the rule, uniformity the exception (p. 12).

With the assistance and support of government and non-government organisations, some schools in the current study have demonstrated the value and benefits in obtaining grassroots support.

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, the schools in this study were selected on a voluntary basis and teacher participation was nominated by the principal with regard to their involvement with health-related policies in the schools. As such, the purposive sampling denotes that the voices of the majority of the non-HPE trained classroom teachers, whom I believe to be the most affected by the Smart policies, were silenced. Additionally, this study took place in only one education district within the state of Queensland. Another limitation of the current study was that there were no observations on the implementation of the Smart policies in action in the twelve schools. As such, it may not have accurately represented the diversity and quality of PE programs in the twelve schools.

Conclusion

This paper examined how teachers' perceptions on mandated public health policies, their concerns such as an overcrowded curriculum, what they perceived as their "core business" and other barriers impacted on their implementation of the policies. Returning to

Bernstein's (1973) three-message system of schooling of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, it is apparent that while the "curriculum" and "pedagogy" aspects of the Smart policies are in place, the "assessment" dimension (in the sense of feedback and accountability) is missing. As I have demonstrated above, through the lens of the secondary field agents, the message of the Smart policies seems to be lost in translation as it migrates from the recontextualising field to the secondary field. To continue the metaphor, this dislocation in the policy joint is exacerbated by the lack of meaningful evaluation and feedback loop to the agents in the recontextualising field in terms of policy fidelity.

The best of policy intentions can be derailed by the happenings outside of the recontextualising field's locus of control. The implication from this study is that recontextualising agents need more interaction with the secondary agents and vice versa to establish an effective working relationship in order to cater for the missing "assessment" criterion of Bernstein's (1973) three-message system of schooling. The relationship between agents in the recontextualising field and secondary field was one of constant contestation and struggle, although this was not unexpected. As Bernstein (2000) stated:

Conflict is endemic within and between the arenas in the struggle to dominate modalities *and* in the relation between local pedagogic modalities and official modalities (p. 202, original emphasis).

As with many before me who discovered the policy process to be a bed of messiness and chaos (Ball, 1994; MacPhail, 2007; Ozga, 2000; Penney & Evans, 1999), thus is the case with the Smart policies in this study. What I would like to highlight is the significant tension between the recontextualising and secondary fields and the ramifications in viewing schools as conduits for the unquestioned inculcation of healthy lifestyle messages targeted at school children (Gard, 2008). If teachers are to assume lead roles in a reform effort, then it is cardinal that their support is solicited and secured (Rink, et al., 2007).

In order to ensure sustained change and to address the slippages that occurred between the formal doctrine of curricular innovation and its practice (Fullan, 1999, 2001), we have to do more than disturb the "chookhouse" with the mechanical dispatching of policy documents every now and then (Macdonald, 2003). Although this focus of this study is on the agents in the recontextualising and secondary fields, I argue that given the context of the current PE teaching environment, inculcated with the language of public health discourses in Queensland schools, the support of other agents operating in the primary and recontextualising fields must be enlisted for successful policy implementation to occur. Without a doubt, research can inform educational policymaking and practice (Hammersley, 2002) but the onus is on the agents in the primary field to generate knowledge that is engaging to both educators and policy makers (Macdonald, Hunter, & Tinning, 2007). Further, teacher educators located within the recontextualising field may need to rethink course objectives and materials to ensure the development of appropriate skills and knowledge for pre-service teachers to read these discourses (Faulkner, Reeves, & Chedzoy, 2004).

If schools are to continue being a site for health policy implementation, there is a compelling need for a comprehensive strategy that will result in the implementation of these policies being a collaborative venture laced with communal understanding and coordination between the agents in all three fields of the pedagogic device in the policy-making process.

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