

## **Subject-related discourse as a context for the implementation of a HPE key learning area at a school site**

**Ross Brooker\*, Doune Macdonald^ Lisa Hunter^**

(\* Queensland University of Technology; ^ The University of Queensland)

Contact:

Ross Brooker

School of Human Movement Studies

Queensland University of Technology

Victoria Park Road

KELVIN GROVE QUEENSLAND 4059

Telephone: 61 7 38643651

Facsimile: 61 7 38643980

Email: r.brooker@qut.edu.au

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Adelaide, 29 November - 3 December, 1998.

### **Abstract**

In the Queensland school context, there had been no change to the official Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum for the compulsory years of schooling (1-10), for a long period of time. For example, the most recent syllabus for years 8-10 was published in 1987. Following the national curriculum initiatives which lead to the development of statements and profiles for 8 key learning areas, a trial health and physical education key learning area (KLA) syllabus was prepared and accepted for trial in the second half of 1997 in a limited number of schools. The KLA syllabus presented a different (from the previous syllabus) conception of HPE in terms of the knowledge base, the emphasis on outcomes, and the focus on the processes of learning. For schools (secondary in particular), the syllabus presented particular challenges in terms of how a syllabus which drew upon a number of traditional subject areas could be implemented into a subject-based structure. For strongly bounded subject departments in secondary schools with well established staff allegiances, the dilemma has been how to work with other departments on the one hand while protecting subject allegiances on the other. For teachers, the challenge has been to their existing conceptions of HPE and to their pedagogical practices. Drawing on a year long study in a secondary school, this paper illuminates aspects of subject-related discourse that have influenced the implementation of a KLA in a school site.

## Introduction

In contemporary school education in many western countries, the process of implementing centrally formulated curriculum policy into pedagogic practice in schools is a frequent occurrence. In the context of pursuing economic rationalist objectives for schooling, the curriculum offerings for schools are constantly under review and change, to a point where curriculum making is a regular part of schools', and in particular teachers', daily routines. For example, in Australia and the United Kingdom in recent years, a significant focus has been on the implementation of national curriculum initiatives. Such initiatives, in many instances, have organised school knowledge in different ways (eg. 'key learning areas' which have brought together knowledge from a number of traditional subject discipline areas) and they have been presented to teachers and schools in unfamiliar packages (eg. outcomes-based syllabuses).

While the thinking that has occurred in the primary context of the production (Bernstein, 1986) of these contemporary discourses for school knowledge (eg. school systems) may be considered 'innovative', the readiness of the secondary field of reproduction (schools) to develop pedagogical practices which respond to such innovative thinking is problematic. For example, the key learning area syllabuses have been designed to promote the integration of discipline knowledge and yet in high school contexts where they are to be implemented, structures are such that knowledge is partitioned into well defined discipline-based categories (subjects). Similarly, the implementation processes typically follow the traditional and dominant 'top-down' model where a small number of teachers are 'in-serviced' by the syllabus developers. It is then the responsibility of the 'enlightened few' to make sense of new text to other relevant staff in schools, who together translate the text into pedagogical practices. The problematic nature of this approach to curriculum making (Common and Egan, 1988; Goodson, 1994; Sparkes, 1990) is likely to be accentuated in circumstances where teachers are being asked to implement an initiative in which the organisation of knowledge is unfamiliar and the development of a new pedagogical discourse in schools is required.

The purpose of this paper is to report from a year long empirical study which investigated the ways in which existing subject department structures would shape the pedagogical practices that emerged through the reproduction of a HPE KLA syllabus into high schools with subject-based curriculum structures. Firstly, an overview of the HPE KLA is provided. The literature related to the implementation of curriculum policy into subject-based secondary schools is then reviewed. Drawing on a preliminary analysis of data from the study, the paper explores the nature of the subject-related discourse which contextualised the implementation a key learning area syllabus into a secondary field of reproduction characterised by subject oriented curriculum structures. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings of the study for future curriculum making.

### The HPE Key Learning Area syllabus

The late 1980s, under a federal Labor administration, was an era of unprecedented collaboration and cooperation and between state, territory, and national governments in the field of education. Constituted under the banner of the Australian Education Council (AEC), state, territory and federal ministers of education agreed in 1989 to reconceptualise the curriculum for the compulsory years of schooling across Australia as eight key learning areas, one of which became known as 'Health and Physical Education'.

Over the following years, work proceeded on the development of documents (statement and profile) for the HPE key learning area which would "... provide a framework for curriculum development by education systems and schools" (Curriculum Corporation, 1994, p. iii). The

statement was intended to define what might be taught in the area and in doing so "... outline its essential elements, show what is distinctive about it and describe a sequence for developing knowledge and skills" (Curriculum Corporation, 1994, p. 1). In the statement, the content of the HPE area is expressed through three strands. The profile, which identifies learning outcomes for various levels of schooling, complements the statement by focusing on teaching and learning progressions and providing a framework for the reporting of student achievement.

One of the interesting dimensions of the HPE key learning area is that it transcends what may traditionally be considered the content for HPE by drawing upon a range of other subject areas. As Macdonald and Glover (1997) point out, this multidisciplinary approach has implications for the relationships between school subjects and the achievement of the outcomes in the HPE key learning area: "The structure of the Statement and Profile suggests it is possible for 'traditional' subjects to contribute to the achievement of outcomes in the same strands but in a different context and with a different focus" (p. 24).

The development of a key learning area for HPE and the way in which knowledge, teaching and learning, and reporting has been conceptualised in the documents, represents a new vision for HPE in the compulsory years of schooling. While the intent of the statement and profile for HPE were endorsed by all of the ministers of education, meeting as the AEC, the nature and extent of the implementation of the framework was a matter for each state and territory. Following a review of school curriculum structures in Queensland 1994, a statutory body, the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) was established in 1996 to take responsibility for the curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling. The review endorsed the notion of key learning areas and the QSCC was given responsibility for the syllabus development in each of the key learning areas.

Drawing on the nationally endorsed statement and profile, work began to develop a key learning area syllabus for HPE that was appropriate for the compulsory years of schooling in the Queensland schooling context. A draft syllabus document, first published in May 1997, confirmed that key elements of the national statement and profile had been adopted (eg. the identification of strands; a focus on outcomes for various levels of schooling; an emphasis on the processes of learning; and the three key principles of diversity, social justice, and supportive environments). The syllabus draws together content from a range of areas (home economics; personal development; health; human relationships education; religious education; physical education; and outdoor education) and reconfigures this knowledge into three strands: Promoting the Health of Individuals and Communities (may be broadly interpreted as health education/home economics); Developing Concepts and Skills for Physical Activity (physical education); and Enhancing Personal Development (personal development). The syllabus is underpinned by a social view of health and promotes the idea of an inquiry model of teaching and learning. Trialing of the syllabus began in a limited number of schools (N=62) in July of 1997 and was completed in June 1998.

Subjects which contribute to the HPE KLA in secondary schools such as health education, home economics and physical education, tend to reflect versions of interdisciplinary content knowledge which nevertheless appear to work to maintain strong classification (Bernstein, 1996). Using Bernstein's terminology, one could argue in favour of an integrated code in which teachers enter into new relationships with each other. Instead of teachers in different subjects being divided and insulated from one another by subject boundaries and loyalties, the common educational task and work situation could create conditions for unified action.

There are, however, a number of factors which mitigate against such action:

the entrenched teacher practices that inevitably develop following a long period without curriculum change; the uncertainty created for schools and teachers with the introduction of an unfamiliar structuring of curriculum knowledge; and the introduction of a new curriculum into a school context with established organisational arrangements and practices that were developed to facilitate a different curriculum structure.

### Recontextualising curriculum frameworks into a secondary school

The links between curriculum policy and improved teaching practice are complex and tenuous because, as Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1996) note, new policy of itself, cannot produce greater student learning and understandings. Further, while there is emerging recognition that the relationship between policy and practice is more than a question of addressing a lack of capacity or desire on the part of teachers (Odden, 1991), the specific relationships between policy initiatives and teachers' professional practice remains relatively unexplored and the outcomes of such research continue to be uncertain and problematic. As Odden (1991) notes, there is still a need for more information on effective strategies associated with policy initiatives which can lead to more effective teaching and learning in schools.

There is evidence (eg. see Cohen and Ball, 1990) that there is a complex interplay between teachers' beliefs and their existing practices which impacts on policy implementation. Paris (1989) has found that the beliefs and assumptions of administrators which shape interpretations of policy are sometimes in conflict with the beliefs, assumptions and practices of teachers. Fullan (1992) has identified elements which exist in the interplay between policy initiatives and teachers' practice and these have been grouped into characteristics of the intention for change, factors operating at the district level, and school factors. It is the school factors which are of interest in this study and in this grouping Fullan has identified elements such as teacher-teacher relationships and teacher characteristics. Concerning this latter set, Hall & Galluzzo (1991) have noted the importance of teachers' perceptions, their concerns, and the roles of significant leaders in the school in influencing policy implementation and its impact on practice. Subject departments in secondary schools are key sites in which these factors become focused.

The significance of the 'subject' as an enduring symbol of the fundamental structure of the secondary school curriculum cannot be underestimated. A look at the history of curriculum making indicates that the compartmentalisation of discipline knowledge into subjects has proved to be a very "successful principle" for the organisation of the secondary school curriculum (Goodson, 1992, p. 57). Traditionally, the outworking of the principle in curriculum making "the translation of an academic discipline, devised by 'dominant' groups of scholars in universities, into a pedagogic version to be used as a school subject" (Goodson, 1988, p. 177). This strong collection classification (Bernstein, 1996) ensured that high status disciplines resulted in high status for the school subjects which were based on those disciplines.

The structuring of school subjects around specialised discipline knowledge has resulted in the formation and maintenance of secondary school subject departments which are strongly bounded and staffed by teachers with specialised knowledge. Subject departments organised in this way are examples of strong classifications which are characterised by internal cohesion. An important consequence of staff being differently specialised and tied to "their category and its organisational base" is that pedagogic relations between staff from different subject departments will be weak which limits the opportunity for "public discussion and challenge" (Bernstein, 1996, p. 25). This point is reinforced by Siskin (1994) who argues that subject departments

... are not just smaller pieces of the same social environment or bureaucratic labels, but worlds of their own, with their own 'ethnocentric way of looking at' things. They are sites where a distinct group of people come together, and together, share in and reinforce the distinctive agreements on perspectives, rules, and norms which make up subject cultures and communities. (p. 181)

Hargreaves (1994) suggests that in school contexts where there is a "hegemony of subject specialism" (p. 235) and subject boundaries are strongly maintained, a balkanization of teachers' work culture develops. He suggests that balkanized cultures have four particular qualities. These are:

1. Low permeability.... sub-groups are strongly insulated from each other.... What teachers know and believe in one (subject) department or division, for example, can become quite different from what teachers know and believe in another.
2. High permanence.... sub-groups tend to have strong permanence over time.
3. Personal identification.... people become especially attached to the sub-communities within which most of their working lives are contained and defined.... Induction into a subject or sub-culture is induction into a particular tradition with its own common understandings about teaching, learning, grouping and assessment.
4. Political complexion. Finally, balkanized cultures... are repositories of self-interest as well. Promotion, status and resources are frequently distributed between and realised through membership of teacher sub-cultures. These goods are not distributed evenly, nor are they contested by different sub-cultures on equal terms. (p.213-215)

According to Hargreaves (1994), balkanized secondary structures are poorly equipped to create educational change.

Based on their research focused on the relationship between subject departments and the implementation of National Curriculum policy, Ball and Bowe (1992) have identified four concepts, capacity, contingency, commitment and history, for understanding the processes of change and subject departments. They explain that:

The concept of capacity refers to both the experiences and the skills of the members of the department in responding to change.... Contingency draws our attention to the factors which may advance or inhibit the possibilities of change - staffing, ... student recruitment,... plant and facilities etc. Commitment refers to the existence of firmly held and well entrenched subject or pedagogical paradigms within a department. History refers to the... existence (or not) of a history of curriculum development and change. (p. 112)

As a way of explaining the complexity and uncertainty surrounding the site where policy and practice meet, Macdonald and Glover (1997) allude to the fact that each subject department is positioned by a unique set of contextual circumstances and characterised by uncertain relationships. They suggested that

It is important to recognise that at any one time subject departments are likely to be in different phases of development and thus vary in their readiness or approach to change possibilities and processes. Some may be expanding while others might be defending their position or status and inevitably this throws people into new relationships within work situations and institutions. (p.25)

While the challenge of implementing policy into a single subject department is significant, the complexity of the process is magnified with the involvement of further subject departments. Macdonald and Glover (1997) found that although "collaborative cultures" were evident in schools they tended to be "limited to intra-departmental collaboration" (p. 28). Based on Macdonald and Glover's observations from their involvement in the trialing of the national statement and profile for HPE two Australian states, it is clear that further research on the policy-practice interface is warranted in sites where the HPE key learning area is being implemented. They concluded that

... to date teachers have felt more comfortable drawing upon and developing traditional and discrete subject content knowledge in which they have expertise. We are left with a question of how best change can be managed both within and across subject boundaries in ways that ensure personal satisfaction and integrity of identity for teachers and the maximisation of meaningful learning outcomes... As the implementation of the national initiatives becomes more imperative and widespread... we can expect to see evidence of the backlash of contrived collegiality in some school contexts and genuine collaboration in others" (Macdonald & Glover, 1997, p. 28)

Clearly, the existence of school subject departments with their strong classifications underpinned by "historical and political strength" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 236) have implications for curriculum reform that is not subject-based. The "symbolic enshrinement of subjects" has been characterised as a "... perfect device for conservation and stability and stands to effectively frustrate any more holistic reform initiatives" (Goodson, 1992, p. 57). Such initiatives would need to overcome the "conflict and competition between... departments" which are an "endemic feature of their existence" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 236).

### Research process

The HPE KLA Syllabus was trialed for 13 months in 1997-8 in 62 schools in Queensland. The participating schools came from a range of schools across the three schooling systems (state, catholic and independent) and elected to participate in the trial. Throughout the trial teachers in schools have worked with a number of drafts of the Syllabus. Due to the Syllabus changes and the short time span, teachers have usually developed units of work with selected year levels rather than adopting a year or even a term approach.

Data for this paper has been drawn from a preliminary analysis of a year long study of the implementation process in a school site. The case study was a year long investigation of the implementation process in a year 8 level in one state secondary school. Two subject departments, Health and Physical Education (and Home Economics (HEc) were involved in the trial. The HPE department consisted of a head of department (HOD) (male) (who was responsible for the implementation of the trial in the school) and three teachers (one female, two male) all of whom were directly involved in the trial. The HEc department also consisted of a head of department and three teachers, all of whom were female, but the pattern of staff involvement was quite different to the staff in HPE. In HEc one teacher was responsible for the development of the units and materials, the other two teachers taught from the prepared materials and the HOD was not directly involved.

In order to maintain sensitivity to the development process in the school, the five staff (4 HPE, 1 HEc) directly involved in the trial were interviewed on a regular basis, sometimes weekly. A total of 47 interviews (40 formal; 7 informal) were conducted within staff from the two departments in a twelve month period. Two members of the school administration (deputies-principal) were interviewed on one occasion. Data, in the form of field notes, were also collected from participant observation of staff meetings on 16 occasions.

## Findings of the study

A preliminary analysis of the data has indicated that a "hegemony of subject specialism" proved to be a powerful context which shaped the implementation of the HPE KLA at a school site. A number of aspects of the subject-related discourse are discussed below.

### Commitment to established subject practices

One of the significant factors which shaped the KLA implementation process was the "existence of firmly held and well entrenched subject ... paradigms" (Ball & Bowe, 1992, p. 112). During the implementation of the KLA it was pointed out that both the HPE and Home Ec departments operated as "basically separate identities both trialing under our own situations in the school and we haven't really crossed and integrated" (HPE HOD).

While there was a willingness shown by teachers from both departments to implement the new Syllabus, the levels of enthusiasm and commitment of various staff members to the implementation process were shaped by a range of subject-based factors. Some teachers demonstrated a strong attachment to the content of the subjects in which they taught and in some cases found it difficult to accept the changed emphasis in the KLA. For example, there was concern expressed by HPE teachers that movement and skill development were being lost in the KLA and replaced by elements that were not traditionally part of the subject, HPE:

What I'm saying is (in) that syllabus, they've changed the direction of health and physical education to health and personal development. And my job as a teacher is to do what the Department says, so I'll implement that. I mightn't be satisfied with the approach and the way it's done but I'll do it. (a HPE teacher who showed little enthusiasm for the KLA)

The influence of entrenched views about subject paradigms persisted even when teachers acknowledged that aspects of the KLA could be taught within either subject area. Teachers were prepared to accept the contested nature of elements of the KLA but insisted that their subject area had an important way of looking at those elements:

it can be interpreted in different ways, so you can teach health from the physical education point of view (but) I think they don't cover all the aspects. So at the moment ... at this school (it) has to be by both faculties. I mean I can argue the fact that we can actually take over and teach that quite well, and I'm sure they can argue the same

Subject departments in schools have preferred ways of curriculum planning which are not supportive of the collaboration required for the implementation of a KLA which draws on subject matter and pedagogies from a range of subjects. Content ideas are rarely contested and teaching strategies are not often discussed. For example, in the HPE department, the accepted planning practice was for each staff member, who had been assigned responsibility for a year level, to prepare teaching materials to be used by all teachers who taught that year level. Planning for the KLA in the HPE department followed this protocol with the result that one teacher prepared most of the units during the trial. This practice attracted some criticism as the trial proceeded. The lack of a collaborative culture at the subject department level meant that collaboration across subject areas would be less likely. The non-collaborative culture was evidenced in the KLA implementation process. When asked about the level of interaction between the two departments, it was pointed out that:

Basically M---'s (Home Ec teacher) really the only one we've dealt with. The others I don't even know what their impressions are. There's no Home Ec/Phys Ed meetings even to say 'well this is what's happening, what are we going to do in the future'. There's been nothing like that.

In the minds of the teachers there had been a distinct lack of collaboration. A HPE teacher commented that there had been "... no discussion about what we're (HPE) doing and what they're (HEc) doing, it's just talking about the KLA in general."

A lack of time was seen to be an important factor limiting opportunities for collaboration between subject departments. While it was suggested that HOD's should be collaborating, it was conceded that some collaboration between department staff would be desirable. However, in the context of uncertainty created by the introduction of the KLA, some scepticism about the outcomes of any collaboration was expressed:

It'd probably be a good idea to have some time but where do you find it. Everyone seems to be so busy, and you don't know quite what it would achieve in the end. It might just mean in-fighting, that they want it done this way. When it comes to the timetable and things like that it's just going to be a bit of fight for what they can get I suppose. (HPE teacher)

The competitive nature of school subjects was also cited as a factor which limited a collaborative effort. Subject areas competed for time allocation and for staff and therefore collaboration in this context may not be "true collaboration" but more a case of "just informing and letting them know that this is happening and if they're not willing to come halfway then the collaboration won't take place. I think it's like a free for all at times to fight for what you can get." (HPE teacher)

In spite of the reservations of teachers, staff from both departments, at various times throughout the trial expressed a willingness to work together. The rhetoric good intentions, however, rarely brought staff together to discuss the KLA. The absence of a history of curriculum conversations between the two departments combined with other structural constraints such as the timetable seemed to provide a barrier. In the year long implementation of the KLA there was only limited conversation between staff from the two departments. On a few occasions the HPE HOD met with the HEc teacher responsible for the KLA in that department and on a couple of other occasions one of the HPE teachers met with the HEc teacher. The two other HPE teachers had no contact with the HEc teacher regarding the KLA and the other HEc staff, including the HOD were not involved.

Factors which may inhibit or advance the possibilities for change

The HPE nomenclature for the KLA ensured that responsibility for the trial of the KLA was assigned to the HPE department. Such an assignment positioned the HPE department, and particularly the HPE HOD to have a greater say about, and exert influence on, the directions in which the KLA took in the school. The consequences of locating the KLA in the HPE department was recognised by the HEc HOD early in the trial:

... because most of the literature in the first place has come to the PE department, I think they have sort of taken over. Because it's just a health and PE, it's probably a natural conclusion that they tend to have it... there's no reason why we shouldn't... be able to have a leadership role. But it just has so happened here that Phil has taken over.

Observation of the implementation process confirmed the dominance of the HPE department.

The period of tenure of staff at a school was identified as a factor which influenced the implementation of the KLA. It was suggested by a HPE HOD that a lengthy tenure in one department (high permanence) in the same school had enabled teachers to develop favoured practices which were often difficult to change. This adherence to familiar practices was exemplified in the case study school where overt resistance to the development of new

curriculum practices was offered by a HPE staff member who had been at the school the longest of any staff involved in the implementation of the KLA. By comparison, the two staff members (one HPE and one HEc) with the shortest tenure (1-2 years) were most open to new ideas and were most enthusiastic about the KLA.

The personal histories of the teachers was also a factor related to tenure. The resistant teacher was the acting subject coordinator in HPE prior to the appointment of the current HOD and the study demonstrated that there were unresolved issues between the two. Of all the teachers involved in the implementation of the KLA, the Home Economics teacher was the most familiar with demands of the KLA due to the fact that her current teaching practice was closely aligned to the pedagogical process outlined in the Syllabus. The previous curriculum experiences of the other HPE teacher provided a relevant foundation for the KLA:

Well I suppose in a way that relates to what HPE was at N--- in that we didn't call it HPE, we called it health and within that it was HRE (human relationships education) which is strand 3. I mean I wasn't trying to link them across and we didn't really have an idea of the full direction of the syllabus, we were doing just pure HRE units. And so when I read some of those strands I'm thinking oh yeah I used to do units like that, purely related to that strand. So maybe it's just the fact that I came from a small school and I'm used to being thrown work and saying this is what you're teaching.

The issue of staff tenure was seen to be important from another perspective. Staff in both departments were concerned about the implications for their tenure in circumstances where a KLA structure for HPE replaced the two existing subject departments of HEc and HPE. One teacher asked "... what are you going to do? Are you going to write out a subject and say look sorry you're not teaching that any more. You go and find a job elsewhere at a private school or something."

The role of administration was considered by teachers to be a significant factor in the implementation process. In the case study school, administration were considered to have shown little more than a passing interest in the KLA. In the twelve month period of the trial "the only time they've got information" was because the HPE HOD had "given it to them." It was perceived that the administration did not understand the relationship between HEc and the KLA and this was partly explained by the fact that "Home Ec haven't been making any moves with admin to say hey listen we're part of the HPE KLA and how is that going to impact on us" (HPE HOD).

One of the key roles that staff expected administration to perform in relation to the KLA was to provide some guidance as to how the KLA would be integrated into the school's curriculum structure as this was seen by staff from both departments as major factor in the successful implementation of the KLA both in the short and long term:

The impact with Home Ec is going to be significant for one, currently they only work with half the year 8 class, so instead of 28's they've got 14's. So that's an issue. It was an invisible issue for me because when I first thought about changing I had different plans, but when I heard that half were doing it each semester, I thought it was the whole class rather than only half of the year 8 class. So that's a change in structure that somehow has to be negotiated and changed, like what are they going to do whilst half do the KLA, what are they going to do in terms of the cooking. The kitchens and the sewing machines can't cater for more than 15. And they were matched up with manual arts which have a similar thing, like it's difficult to have 30 kids sitting around in manual arts rooms doing physical work. So it was easier to have a half class.

The uncertainty created by the adoption of a KLA structure was of concern to staff as a move to a KLA structure would have implications for staff numbers in the two departments, staff workloads, and for the future of one of the HOD positions.

Staff expressed a moderate level of dissatisfaction about the lack of guidance from administration about the structural issues needed to support the introduction of the KLA:

I've talked to S--- (HPE teacher)... and we've decided that the school isn't going to do anything so we're just going to work separately but we'll look at what concepts and outcomes we're covering to make sure that we cover it all. We'll probably hopefully get back together again, but because the school isn't going to do anything I think we've just got to really work separately, that's the only way we can do it. (HEc Teacher)

A lack of clarity about the structural arrangements in the school for the KLA in the school created a tension between teaching based on expertise or teaching based on a need for self-preservation:

I don't know whether the opportunity will be there that maybe some HPE staff might say well why can't I teach strand 3. At this stage it seems to be all left to the Home Ecs, I'm not saying that I'm interested in it because I know it's sort of a little bit left field of what I mostly do, but I don't know if the structure's going to allow for that sort of freedom to be able to say well I'll teach the entire KLA. The way it seems to be going I think is that I believe Home Ec want to teach that third strand, I don't know if they are wrapped about it, but I think that's the way it's going to be, and we're just going to be fitting in where we can to sort of say that we've covered a number of those units. (HPE teacher)

#### Implications for curriculum making

The study has confirmed that the compartmentalisation of discipline knowledge into subjects has proved to be a "successful principle" for the organisation of the secondary school curriculum (Goodson, 1992) and that teachers and administrators were committed to the maintenance of existing subject boundaries. Despite the potential of the key learning area syllabus to challenge schools to adopt more innovative curriculum practices, the study has shown that balkanisation remains a dominant feature on the secondary school curriculum landscape (Hargreaves, 1994). Teachers in the study demonstrated a strong commitment to the "well entrenched pedagogical paradigms" (Ball & Bowe, 1992) in their respective subject areas and a reluctance to engage in meaningful dialogue about pedagogic practices based on a more integrated code (Bernstein, 1996). School administrators similarly displayed a reluctance to think about curriculum organisation in the school beyond the existing subject department structure.

While the study has raised a number of issues for curriculum making in school sites, the most significant concerns the absence of curriculum relations between subject departments. New ways of organising curriculum in school sites requires new allegiances to be formed to overcome the strongly classified curriculum contexts that currently exist. There is a need for the development of new lines of communication to be established so that curriculum ideas can be properly discussed, and contested. The study clearly showed that the curriculum making context in the school was characterised by "weak relations between staff with respect to pedagogic discourse" (Bernstein, 1996, p. 25). The strong commitment by staff to their subject areas and the absence of any history of curriculum conversation across subject boundaries proved to be an important constraint on the implementation of the HPE KLA.

The challenge for schooling authorities (both in and out of the school) is to develop curriculum structures and practices which can support the level of curriculum discourse that

is necessary for authentic curriculum reform to occur. In deliberations about such curriculum structures and practices the following are some of the issues that could be considered:

\*

the assignment of responsibility for the implementation of curriculum initiatives;

\*

the creation of school curriculum cultures which encourage staff to work across existing subject boundaries;

\*

more equitable power sharing arrangements between departments;

\*

the involvement of all relevant staff;

\*

the level of involvement required by the school administration;

\*

integrated staff rooms;

\*

supportive timetabling arrangements.

## References

- Ball, S. J., and Bowe, R. (1992) Subject departments and the 'implementation' of National Curriculum Policy: An overview of the issues. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 24(2): 97-115.
- Bernstein, B. (1996) *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory Research and Critique*. London: Taylor And Francis.
- Bernstein, B. (1986) On pedagogic discourse. In J. G Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bernstein, B. (1982) On the Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge. In T. Horton and P. Raggatt (eds.), *Challenge and Change in the Curriculum*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Bucher, R. & Strauss, A. (1974). Professions in Process, in M. Hammersley & P. Woods (eds.), *The Process of Schooling*. United Kingdom: Open University Press.
- Cherryholmes, C. (1988) *Power and Criticism: Postructural Investigation in Education*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Common, D., and Egan, K. (1988) The missing soul of models of curriculum implementation - educational theory. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 8(1): 1-10.
- Connell, R.W. (1985). *Teacher's Work*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Esland, G. (1971). Teaching and Learning as the organization of knowledge, in M.F.D. Young (ed.), *Knowledge and Control*. London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Goodson, I. (1992) School subjects: Patterns of stability. *Education Research and Perspectives*, 19(1): 52-64.
- Goodson, I. (1994) *Studying Curriculum*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Goodson, I. (1988) *The Making of Curriculum*. London: Falmer Press.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994) *Changing Teachers, Changing Times*. London: Cassell.
- Macdonald, D., and Glover, S. (1997). Subject matter boundaries and curriculum change in the Health and Physical education Key Learning Area. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 17(1), 23-30.
- Siskin, L. S. (1994) *Realms of Knowledge: Academic Departments in Secondary Schools*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Sparkes, A. (1990) Winners, losers and the myth of rational change in physical education: Towards an understanding of interests and power in innovation. In D. Kirk and R. Tinning (eds.), *Physical Education, Curriculum and Culture: Critical Issues in the Contemporary Crisis*. London: Falmer Press.