

“Can’t Go Over It! Can’t Go Through It! Must Go Around It!”

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By

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ABSTRACT

Government staffing policy has shaped the implementation of the current PDHPE syllabus in NSW primary schools. After the first 5 years, it appears timely to revisit and enliven the debate about the provision of specialist Physical Education teachers. What are some of the strategic interventions that providers of teacher education have in place to address the systemic need for generalist teachers to be more specialised? This paper reports on the progress of one such strategic intervention: the University of New England’s Model of Specialization in PE within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) course through the lens of a research question: Does increased specialization in Physical Education during initial teacher education translate to greater opportunity for students in primary schools to realise PDHPE outcomes?

INTRODUCTION

This paper emerges from one place and one team within a very complex state and national education system. This place is a School of Education within a regional, rural university in northern New South Wales (NSW) where tertiary students come to gain a formal teaching qualification. The Health, Physical Education and Sports Studies (HPESS) team is a small team of three physical education specialists servicing the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) key learning area (KLA) within this School of Education. In this team and place fulfilling the role of teacher educator involves multiple ways of thinking. Professional thinking is directed to advance the teaching of physical education in schools, team thinking is to advance the teaching of PDHPE in primary education, institutional thinking is to advance initial teacher education and systems thinking is to ensure that graduates are able to meet the accreditation requirements for employment as a teacher in a NSW school. Within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree program the HPESS team must adopt the role of PDHPE teacher educator (PDHPE/TE) so as to prepare generalist teachers capable of teaching PDHPE.

The title of this paper ‘ *Can’t go over it! Can’t go through it! Must go around it!* ’ describes a process that enables members of the HPESS team to translate tension, dissent and contestation with our multiple ways of thinking from potential barriers into catalysts for positive change. In line with the conference theme “*Creative dissent, constructive solutions*’ this paper case studies the HPESS pathway as one constructive solution to dissent with government staffing policy; shares recent developments and reports the progress of the research designed to inform future practice.

BACKGROUND

For more than 150 years, the New South Wales state government has preserved the status of primary school education as a ‘public good’ through the provision of public education (The Public Schools Council, 2005). Accordingly, education is both non-excludable (no-one can be excluded from enjoying the benefit of the good even if they cannot pay) and non-rival (consumption of the good by one individual does not reduce the quantity of the good available to others) (Dixon and O’Mahony, 2004). These quorum features of a public good are currently legislated within the NSW Education Act (1990). Irrespective of the parents’ choice of public or non-government school, this Act preserves the future entitlement of children in NSW to ‘a high quality education that meets students’ needs, including quality teaching and a decent standard of resources’ (The Public Schools Council, 2005:2).

Central to this paper is the notion that Physical Education as a subset of Education should also be a ‘public good’. Is it? Is Physical Education in NSW accessible to all primary aged children irrespective of the school they attend or their class allocation? Is there an adequate supply of teachers capable of teaching K-6 PE to meet the present demand? If some children have access to specialised teaching of Physical Education because their parents have chosen a non-government school, does this reduce the quality or quantity of the public good available to others? Is the current staffing policy mandating the employment of generalist rather than specialist teachers in government primary schools consistent with the rights of every child to access a high quality education? Is it realistic and achievable within initial teacher education programs to prepare generalist primary teacher to meet the expectations of their profession?

Researchers working specifically in the context of NSW primary school physical education since the implementation of the K-6 PDHPE syllabus have described the standard of PE

teaching in NSW primary schools as questionable. This status reflects reports that “the majority of teachers in NSW primary schools are not providing opportunities for students to achieve syllabus outcomes across the breadth of the syllabus” (Webster 2002:7). Classroom teachers often experience inadequate pre-service education and thus lack confidence to teach PE (Morgan and Bourke 2004: 12). These findings contribute to a view that “the expectations on generalist teachers to be experts in all areas of the curriculum appear to be unrealistic” (Webster 2002: 5).

The present situation appears incongruent given the setting characterised by centralised controls and public funded government administration. In such a setting, school subjects in NSW including physical education become encapsulated within a succession of legislative, fiscal and administrative laws, policies, procedures, programs and practices. These mechanisms reflect a systemic need for fiscal accountability of public expenditure advantaged by economies of scale, organisational systems to support a mass public enterprise, centralised control over the quality and accessibility of the public good and protection of the legal and individual entitlements of the child.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of some of these centralised mechanisms shaping the nature and quality of primary school Physical Education in NSW and the impact of these mechanisms on the professional practice of PDHPE/TE preparing teachers specifically to serve in NSW Government schools.

Table 1
A Snapshot of PETE as a Product of Systemic Thinking

Products of Systemic Thinking in NSW	Implications for PDHPE/TE in NSW
<p>The NSW Education Act (1990) Enacts the legal right of a child in NSW to receive an education of the highest quality irrespective of ability to pay in well- resourced schools.</p>	<p>Compulsory school education creates a demand for sufficient generalist teachers to service public schools enrolments in addition to the staffing needs of non-government schools.</p>
<p>NSW Board of Studies (BOS) Established under the Education Reform Act (1990) this statutory authority is independent of the government department responsible for education. The BOS develops the broad state wide core curriculum with a KLA framework As such the NSWBOS determines the social and cultural origins of the knowledge that is produced, reproduced and legitimated in the school curriculum (Colquhuon, 1990).</p>	<p>The KLA framework identifies PDHPE as a core curriculum area mandatory in both public and non-government schools. PDHPE includes active content strands, outcomes and indicators formerly identified as PE.</p> <p>PE is identified (at least notionally) as a public good.</p> <p>Outcomes described by the BOS become the official discourse.</p>
<p>NSW Department of Education and Training (NSWDET) is the administrative body responsible for the provision of public education. This includes the role of staffing public schools. Under NSWDET policy only fully qualified generalist primary school teachers can be employed to teach in public primary schools.</p>	<p>The NSWDET staffing policy excludes employment of specialist PE teachers in NSW government schools. Consequently all teachers in K-6 public schools are responsible to teach PE.</p> <p>Non-government schools are able to make their own staffing decisions and may elect to employ specialists PE teachers.</p>
<p>NSWBOS Syllabus Documents Syllabus documents become the official discourse or “a set of ideas and rationales which not only define what the curriculum and teaching ought to be, but also provide a philosophy of action, a way of thinking and talking about the place and purpose of the subject in the broader curriculum (Evans and Clarke 1988). The NSW K-6 PDHPE Syllabus was published in 1999 for mandatory implementation in 2000.</p>	<p>The K-6 PDHPE syllabus (1999) currently has outcomes framed in the language of specific statements of desired (as opposed to expected) student achievement. This provides K-6 teachers not adequately qualified to teach PE an opportunity to define PE as a private good. Outsourcing to outside providers is commonplace.</p> <p>During professional experience (practicum) component of ITE, student teachers maybe supervised by teachers with no training or experience in PE.</p>
<p>School Based Curriculum Policy: “Primary teachers are allowed flexibility in content selection and time allocation because policies concerning curriculum implementation are decided upon at the school level’ (Morgan and Bourke 2004).</p>	<p>Thus “physical education may not be practiced as intended by the syllabus” (Webster 2002:2).</p> <p>Some public schools provide quality PE allocating sufficient time for outcomes to be met. Others do not. Variation exists between classes.</p>
<p>Annual Reporting of Schools in NSW: The 2004 Performance Audit on DET schools found “schools are given significant scope to ‘pick and choose’ indicators of their achievement thereby allowing them to choose not to report adverse information” (Sendt 2004).</p>	<p>The system supports a culture that discourages reporting areas of need of deficiency.</p> <p>The community is increasingly focused on numeracy and literacy standards as measured on state wide tests. There are no mandatory basic skills tests in PE.</p>
<p>NSW Institute of Teachers Act (2004) Mandates processes and procedures to ensure high standards of teaching in NSW. New Scheme Teachers (post Term 4 2004) are accredited using the Professional Teaching Standards.</p>	<p>Teachers accredited before this Act may still require professional development to gain the knowledge and skills required to teach toward the PE outcomes.</p>
<p>National and State Inquiries The system utilises reviews and reports on a range of issues concerning school education resulting in a series of recommendation to the appropriate agency.</p>	<p>Recommendations in relation to PE have rarely been acted upon. Example: Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and Arts (SSCERA 1992:76) with its major recommendation for an increased time allocation to physical education in primary schools.</p>

Table 1 outlines three areas of concern for PDHPE/TE:

1. PE in NSW public schools is neither non-excludable or non-rival since it is accessible to some rather than all, dependent on the ability of a provider (government or family) to pay and bound by issues of an adequate supply and demand of qualified generalist teachers. As such PDHPE as a KLA can be considered more of a private good and progressively moving toward greater privatisation.

2. The hopes and promises of advocates of PE are framed as ineffectual rhetoric because the mechanisms to ensure accountability of access, equity and quality continue to be impediments to change. This is most evident at the point of curriculum implementation at the interface of child and teacher.

3. It appears that NSW has insufficient primary schools and generalist teachers to model physical education as intended by the syllabus. This is a concern for PDHPE/TE wanting pre-service teachers to engage in professional experience during their studies. This is evidenced anecdotally when student teachers report an inability to experience PE teaching during practicum as PE is not taught by their allocated supervising teacher or school. These concerns are not new, echoing the voices of those in the profession over time. Despite the ongoing concern, few recommendations that support the introduction of specialists have been taken up (Morgan and Bourke 2004). These concerns are even more poignant given the current political environment in which:

“Public policy governing the balance between education as a public and private good has been moving in a radical direction by international standards as increasing amounts of public funds are directed to the non-government sector” (NSW Public Education Council 2005:5).

There is a tension between those authorities wanting to assure that every child has a fully

qualified teacher and those wanting the market to decide which children get fully qualified teachers (Kanstoroom and Finn, 1999; Cochran-Smith, 2004). This tension is manifest in variation between systems, schools, stages, class and individuals.

The potential for variation in the delivery of PDHPE in NSW has been addressed in teacher education pre-service courses that allow greater flexibility for prospective teachers to complete a major in PE. A promising finding from recent research into these groups was that teachers with recent pre-service training that included increased specialization in PE placed a higher priority and emphasis on PE activities in Year 1 and Year 2 (referred to as Stage 1 in NSW). ‘These teachers indicate that PE is a high priority in their schools. Teachers give more emphasis to PE and are more confident to teach a broader range of physical activities’ (Webster 2002:2). This increases the likelihood that syllabus outcomes would be addressed.

Perhaps it is timely to concede that the logic that underpins government staffing policy is something we literally “Can’t Go Over” and the mechanisms for change available to advocates of the specialist PE teacher are currently mediums we “Can’t Go Through”. Whilst acknowledging the renewed call for primary specialists in schools at the recent National ACHPER forum (October, 2005) there is a sense that such a push in NSW may indeed prove futile (Morgan 2004). It maybe more expedient for those entrusted with the present enrolment of aspiring primary teachers to find a way to “Go Around”. The HPESS team “Must Go Around It” because it is the “generalist classroom teacher who is currently responsible for the delivery of PE programs in most Australian primary schools” (Morgan and Bourke, 2004:11; Miller, Haynes and Dickson, 2004) and it is incumbent on PDHPE/TE to prepare them for this role.

CONSTRUCTING THE HPESS PATHWAY

The specialisation pathway is a systematic positioning of physical education units that creates multiple pathways for pre-service generalist primary teachers. This pathway provides students with unit offerings in Physical Education (EDPE) in each of the seven semesters following completion of the core (mandatory) unit in the first semester of the second year. Students linking these units to obtain a specialisation will have satisfied all the course requirement within the Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree but in so doing offer to their future school the ability to teach Physical Education from a more specialised foundation.

Eleven university based learning units are presently offered along the HPESS pathway. These are offered across a range of internal and mixed modes. The twelfth unit involves work-based learning in a school based internship program. These units are:

EDPE214 Teaching Primary PDHPE: This unit is designed to provide an introduction to the K-6 PDHPE key learning area. Theoretical topics include growth and development, motor learning, skill acquisition, health education, special needs and legalities. Practical components include modules in the teaching of dance, gymnastics and games.

EDPE201 Advanced PDHPE Curriculum Studies (Primary): This unit aims to extend student knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to effectively teaching PDHPE and Sport Education. Modules include Skills to Advance the Teaching of Health/PD, Teaching and Assessing the Fundamental Movement Skills and Re-conceptualising the Primary School Sports Carnival.

EDPE243 Movement and Skill 1: This unit is concerned with analysis and instruction in a variety of physical activities. All pedagogical approaches to teaching and coaching of these activities, appropriate to school-aged children are examined.

EDPE244 Movement and Skill II: This unit is concerned with analysis and instruction in racquet sports. All pedagogical approaches to teaching and coaching of tennis, badminton and squash, appropriate to school-aged children are examined.

EDPE245 Human Physical Performance I: This unit examines the foundations of human physical performance by examining human motor development through a life time perspective. The focus is on the primary school-aged child with specific application to physical activity and socialisation into or away from physical activity and sport.

EDPE246 Human Physical Performance II: This unit is concerned with analysis and instruction in the area of team sports. All pedagogical approaches to teaching and coaching of team sports, appropriate to school-aged children, are examined.

EDPE 340/440 Scientific Principles of Sports Coaching: This unit introduces the theory, practice and socio-cultural aspects of effective sports coaching through the Level 2 General Coaching Principles Syllabus of the Australian Sports Commission's Coach Accreditation Scheme.

EDPE343/443 Health Promotion in the Schools and Community: This unit examines the nature of health promotion and the role of health promotion within schools and the wider community. Current health promotion trends and programs are studied in relation to the perceived effect on both individual and community health.

EDPE344/444 Special Issues in Health and Physical Education: This unit examines selected special and/or contemporary issues that affect health and physical education curriculum.

EDPE345/445 Advanced Studies in Health and Physical Education: This unit advances understanding of physical and health education methodology and theory, the nature of effective teaching and program implementation of curriculum as it relates to schools and applied education settings.

EDPE446 Issues in Teaching an Integrated PDHPE KLA: This unit is concerned with integrating technology into the teaching of PDHPE.

EDPE941 Health and Physical Education in the Primary School: This unit is the external equivalent of EDPE214 offered in the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) course. It examines the fundamentals of curriculum theory and teaching in PDHPE.

ED495 Internship (Physical Education Specialisation Option): This practicum of 50 days duration provides a sustained teaching experience. Following the first six weeks of regular primary school teaching duties, selected students complete a four weeks Physical Education Specialist practicum in a specially targeted primary school.

The Physical Education Specialist practicum is a critical design element of the HPESS pathway involving a partnership between the university and K-6 school. Placement ensures the student teacher a KLA specific experience in a range of grades. To be selected for this practicum, students must satisfy rigorous selection criteria. These include evidence of major studies in EDPE elective units, a high grade average across the course of their study, coaching accreditation and certification, exemplary practice teaching reports and action research in the PDHPE KLA. The university-school partnership provides the university with a degree of control over the quality of the students' internship experiences. For the school, the partnership provides access to high quality interns and opportunities for ongoing professional and staff development in the PDHPE KLA.

Curriculum design for the specialisation pathway is informed by means of adopting three different but complimentary fields of view.

1. An interpretive point of view is responsive to the political and economic reality that students must be prepared specifically for a predefined role within a system,

- organization or setting characterised by a mandatory syllabus with prescribed outcomes and indicators. Examples include EDPE214 and EDPE941.
2. A critical point of view ensures that students are educated sufficiently to be able to both appraise and critique the system, syllabus, outcomes and indicators in which they are expected to practice. Examples include: EDPE201, EDPE244 and EDPE345/445; and
 3. An emancipatory point of view empowers students to be agents for positive change, to offer leadership in the construction/reconstruction of the future of physical education in primary education and advocates for innovative practice. Examples include ED495 and EDPE344/444.

Constructing sections of the pathway to reflect three very different points of view intends to:

“prepare teachers who know how to ‘fit’ into tightly aligned standard-driven schools and school systems, but also know how to raise the questions about whose interests are being served, whose needs are being met, and whose are not being met by those systems?” (Cochran-Smith, 2004:205).

This position facilitates the HPESS team’s determination to ensure university based initial teacher education pursues higher ideals than teacher training alone and advances the human resource potential for those advocating physical education to be a public good.

By graduation, the specialisation pathway creates the opportunity for distinct groups of pre-service teachers characterised by variations in preparedness to teach PDHPE. Figure 1 shows the positioning of these groups along a generalist-specialist Physical Education continuum.

These groups are best described as: generalist primary school teacher; generalist primary teacher with PE specialisation and PE specialist-generalist primary teacher. Currently, the UNE does not cater for students aspiring to be a specialist physical education teacher.

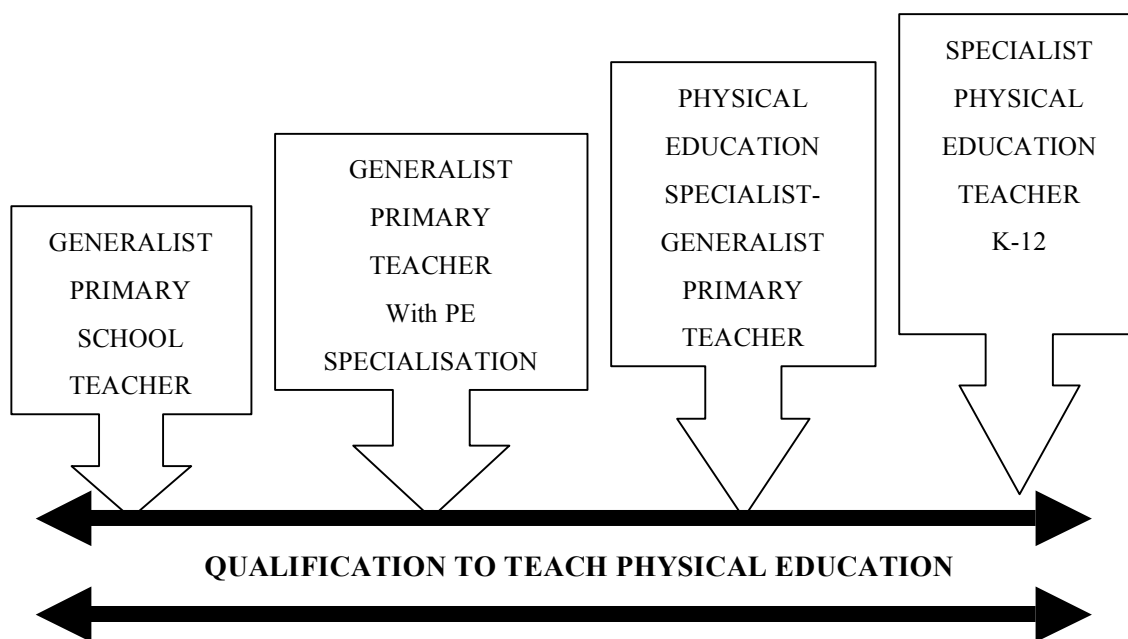


Figure 1
The Generalist-Specialist Physical Education Continuum

In future, these groups may be a source of interest to primary school principals if, as recommended in the Vinson Third Report (2002), they are given more discretion to fill identified school staffing needs through advertisement. A precedent has already established when a government school creatively used existing staffing entitlements including release from face-to-face teaching to fill a perceived need for a science specialist (NSW Public Education Council 2005:112). Should this merging of creative solutions occur in the context of PDHPE it would certainly establish a legitimate ‘way around’ the impediments posed by the existing staffing policy.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WITH THE HPESS PATHWAY

An integral and ongoing aspect of the work of the HPESS team is directed toward the development of the specialisation pathway. Maintenance is inevitable in the dynamic environment of a School of Education, itself sensitive to both market forces and democratic imperatives. Economic rationalism, for example has recently created tension between the perception that University Faculties offering many low enrolment units is untenable and the perception that offering diversity of subject, greater specialisation and choice is an educational advantage. The crowded curriculum in school education impacts on the School of Education by creating the need to establish teams of subject specialists to service each KLA. These teams compete for students, curriculum time, teaching space and resources within the School. Those teams working on learner centred rather than subject centred curriculum frameworks in foundational units provide one avenue for cross KLA teaming but membership of these teams reduces the teaching time available to staff the unit offerings of the specialisation pathway.

A major catalyst for development has been the introduction in 2004 of a new B.Ed. program introduced at the UNE in response to the changing needs of the teaching profession. Consequently, units such as EDPE 201 *Advanced Studies in Health and Physical Education* have been re-developed and introduced in 2005. Extensive planning preceded the unit to ensure practices were advantaged by contemporary thinking about teaching and learning in higher education. The unit includes three modules: Contemporary approaches to the teaching of Personal Development/Health; Assessing and Teaching Fundamental Movement Skills; and Re-conceptualising the Primary School Athletics Carnival. Of 134 students who completed the mandatory EDPE 214 unit in semester 1, 122 enrolled in the first of the specialisation elective units for semester 2.

The pedagogical decisions related to the delivery of the unit were based on the following set of assumptions sourced from the literature. These are:

- Improving quality of learning is more important than improving the quality of teaching (Ramsden, 2003).
- The role of the teacher educator is to facilitate the students learning by establishing strategic points of intervention to enhance learning (Ramsden 2003).
- The outcome of tertiary student learning is associated with the approach to learning adopted (Ramsden, 2003; Watkins, 1983; Van Rossum & Scenk, 1984; Marton & Saljo, 1976 and 1984). Surface approaches are related to high degrees of dissatisfaction while deep approaches are associated with satisfaction with performance (Biggs, 1987).
- Effective learning in teacher education involves making relevant connections between theory and practice. “When students inside-out learning (gaining insights into their own thinking, beliefs and values) is integrated with outside-in learning (gaining insights into others’ thinking, beliefs and values) the outcome is likely to be a deep understanding of the connections between theory and practice” (Turbill 2002:76).
- Tertiary students can take responsibility for their own learning and the learning experiences of others. In the context of teacher education it makes sense to adopt a student centred learning approach since it will both engage students in learning and make them responsible for the process (Cannon, 2000).

Adopting the view that university teaching is perceived as making learning possible (Ramsden, 2003) places even greater emphasis on the creation of the learning environment. The following features of the learning environment were informed by Brophy (2002) and were adopted in the design for EDPE201. These were:

- Recognition of different learning needs

- Multiple pathways through learning
- Reflecting on theories in action
- Working with big ideas to stimulate thought
- Learning that transfers to real world contexts using authentic tasks
- Framing learning within high order questions or ill-defined problems
- Combining self-directed, peer-directed and teacher-directed learning options
- Representing key concepts in multiple ways

Given the team’s priority to improve the quality of the learning rather than the quality of the teaching in EDPE units, various models and cycles for learning in higher education were considered. Figure 2 shows the cycle especially constructed to address the specific aims of the EDPE201 unit.

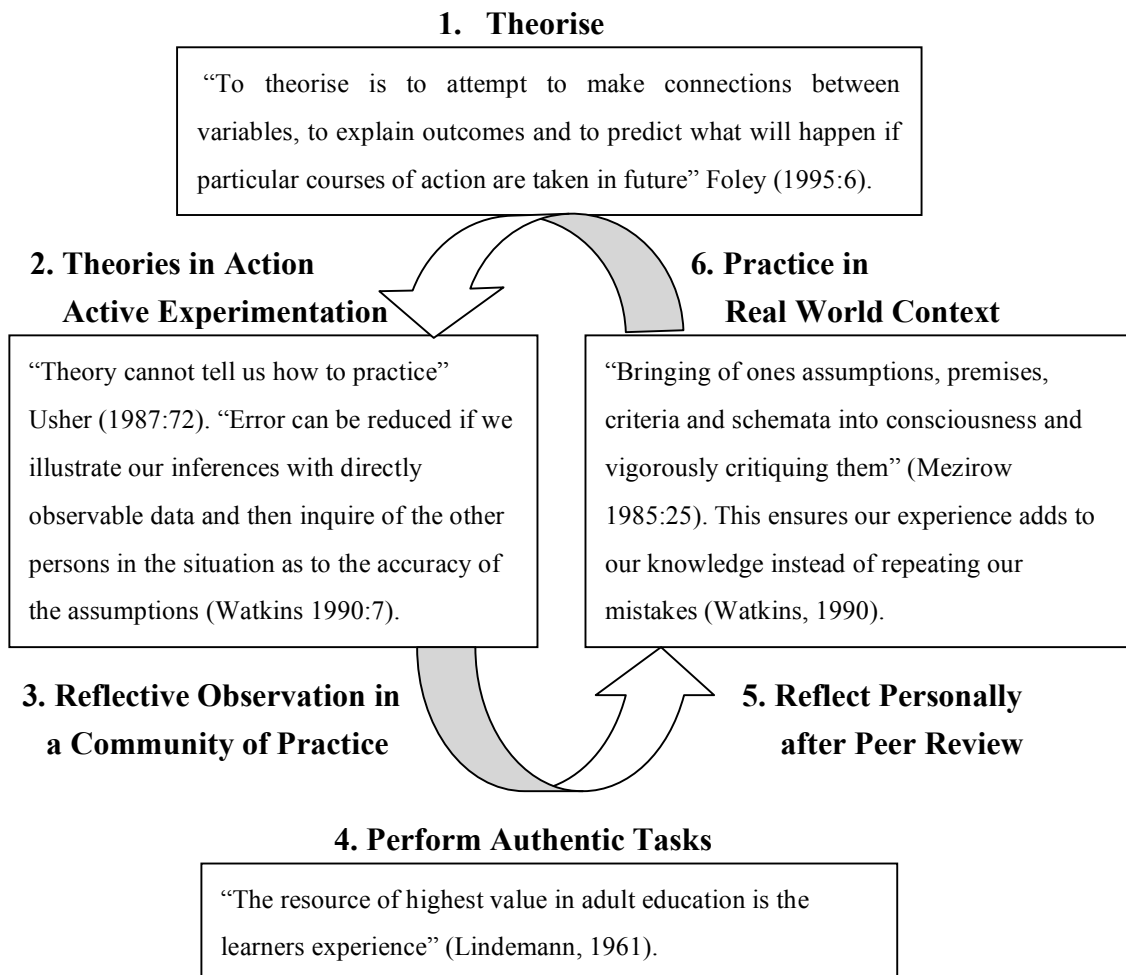


Figure 2
The Learning Cycle Designed for the EDPE214 Unit

Having established these pedagogical foundations, the challenge in writing the first of the elective EDPE unit offerings was to shift the students into a new way of thinking about K-6 PDHPE. To design teaching strategies to facilitate a shift from the interpretive point of view (adopted in the previous semester to realise the outcomes of the mandatory EDPE214 unit) to a critical point of view necessary to be able to both appraise and critique their roles as teachers of PE within a system. One of the students, Paul, summed up this transition in a voluntary personal reflection:

“I was quite reluctant and critical about the advanced physical education program as we embarked upon this adventure at the start of term. I really felt that this course was not going to be able to teach me something that the curriculum studies of physical education had not already. How wonderfully wrong I was!!...I really feel that my confidence and knowledge in PD/H education, fundamental movement skills and athletics has been quite significant and has developed my confidence in the teaching of PE significantly.”

Decisions about curriculum content and teaching approach for this unit were informed by consideration of the question: What does the generalist teacher have to know, think or do in order to teach K-6 physical education? Following are three teaching-learning strategies (TLS) designed to facilitate the shift in paradigm. Each explores the ‘perspective seeking’ as opposed to the ‘truth seeking’ possibilities.

TLS 1: Active Experimentation of Teacher as Executive

At the beginning of the unit, students were introduced to four conceptions of teaching: Teacher as Expert, Teacher as Facilitator, Teacher as Innovator and Teacher as Liberator

linked to the metaphor The Amazing Glasses (Fenstermacher and Soltis, 2004). Teacher as Expert was defined as “a person who transmits knowledge from a person with authority or expertise to an individual without authority or expertise” (Perry, 1970). For the purpose of comparison, the lecturer role modelled and critically reflected on this approach in the context of teaching emergency procedures from the Safe Living Content Strand. A rationale for preferring a student centred rather than teacher centred approach to learning for the unit was given, drawing links between teaching role and unit aim. Each individual was then encouraged to experiment with the role of ‘Teacher As Executive’ whilst working in this unit. This role was defined as “a person charged with bringing about certain outcomes with students through using the best skills and techniques available” (Fenstermacher et al, 2004:5). A modified Delphi system of co-operative learning was employed such that each individual would be responsible for both teaching and learning roles.

A student included the following in a personal reflection about the experience of experimenting with this teaching role in a student centred learning approach:

“ I had never been involved in student centred learning and even though I have read about it in theory. I was not sure how this teaching practice would work in reality. On the day of the presentations there was a huge buzz of excitement in the air. Everyone in the room seemed to be switched on and looking forward to the presentations that were about to unfold. For the first time since the commencement of my primary teaching studies all my peers seemed to be genuinely excited and interested in the subject content and not watching the clock tick by. This made me excited about creating student centred learning tasks in classrooms once I have completed my degree. I aspire to create the same kind of positive energy in my future classrooms.” Amanda

This feedback describes improved quality of learning, stronger connections between theory and practice and deep as opposed to surface learning. All resonate with the features of the pedagogical decisions listed earlier to inform the delivery of the unit.

TLS2: Theories in Action

In the context of learning the skill of programming across KLA's or content strands, students played a card game called 'Clever Connections'. The aim of the game is to connect domino-like cards with different pictures at each end by connecting common themes. The picture cards were then replaced with syllabus outcomes cards and the process was repeated. At the end of the task most students concluded that almost anything can be connected to anything else. The focus was then shifted from the ability to make outcomes connect together to the use of frameworks to give these connections meaning. Lecturers modelled the process by laying outcomes from all six KLA onto Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It was interesting that students who attended this workshop chose Gardiner's Multiple Intelligences studied in a foundation unit to teach this skill to their peers. Feedback on the Peer Review sheets noted:

"I was aware that you could make links within syllabus content, but not what those links were" Annie.

"A creative way to show the links between KLA's. The particular theories used connected really well together and it is a strategy that I would definitely think about employing" Natascha.

This demonstrates how a learning focus on improving the ability of the student to theorise can enrich the experience of performing authentic tasks. Taking responsibility for the learning of others allowed the students to make meaningful connections with their prior learning rather than the learning of their lecturer.

TLS 3: Socrates Teaches PDHPE

Students were introduced to the idea that a teacher has four levels of thinking (personal thinking, professional thinking, team thinking and system thinking). They were challenged by the idea that in order to advance professional thinking one must be aware of the potential of personal thinking to act as a lens on our perspectives. A practical adaptation of a 360 degree analysis was designed so that students could experience through action how perspective can change personally held beliefs about what knowledge is and how it is gained. Students were positioned at regular intervals around a circle and asked to describe what they could see of an object of interest placed in the centre. The students were moved around the circle to gain a different point of view on the same object. The lecturer then changed the object of interest except this time the point of view remained constant and the context changed. A series of low order (egg) to high order objects (discus) were introduced until the object of discussion was the primary school athletics carnival. Having completed this activity, most students were able to articulate that what we know of an object of interest changes with our point of view and context. A series of ‘situation improvement scenario cards’ (otherwise known as problem solving tasks) were introduced to change the point of view and context of students away from their own personal experiences of athletics carnivals. Students worked in teams to simulate communities of practice. Teams responding to different situation improvement scenarios then constructed a perspectives diagram (conceptual framework) to inform the planning of their primary school carnival. This carnival was implemented as theory in action.

Are these teaching learning strategies effective? “When looking at the complexity of the expertise of teacher educators, it is really quite remarkable that there is a common taken-for-granted assumption that the good teacher will also make a good teacher educator” (Korthagen, Loughran and Lunenberg 2005:110). An entry in the professional journal of one team member reads:

The challenge for me is not only to make the shift from the practice of teaching children in schools to adults in the university setting, but also fill the dual role of supporting student teachers' learning about teaching whilst modelling best practice. Teaching that models pedagogy the student teachers may employ in their future practice intertwined with andragogy to promote adult learning.

The need of the HPESS team to research its own practice is a professional response firstly, to the complex contemporary questions about the outcome of initial teacher education and secondly, to the even greater challenge of immersing K-6 PDHPE in the answers.

RESEARCHING THE HPESS PATHWAY

Research interest in teacher education has largely been driven by teacher educators' themselves (Munby, Russel and Martin, 2001). It is therefore not unusual to find teacher educators adopting the dual role of research practitioner. It is anticipated that the findings from this study will influence the direction of future teaching and research at the University of New England and beyond. The following is a brief description of the proposed research at this early stage.

Purpose of the Study

At the UNE, the HPESS team has established a specialisation pathway based on the assumption that there is a positive relationship between degree of specialisation during ITE and the quality of teaching in the PDHPE KLA post graduation. The pathway has been established for sufficient time that there are now groups of students at all positions along the pathway. This affords the team an opportunity to test the assumptions implicit in the model.

Findings from this study will contribute to a position in which future practice can be informed by research-based evidence.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 3) informing the research design adopts a developmental perspective within an interactive competency model (ICM). The developmental perspective is consistent with a scientific view of teacher growth and development. The ICM asserts that elements of competence required to fit an occupational role will be contested according to shifts in context (Hodgkinson and Harvard, 1994).

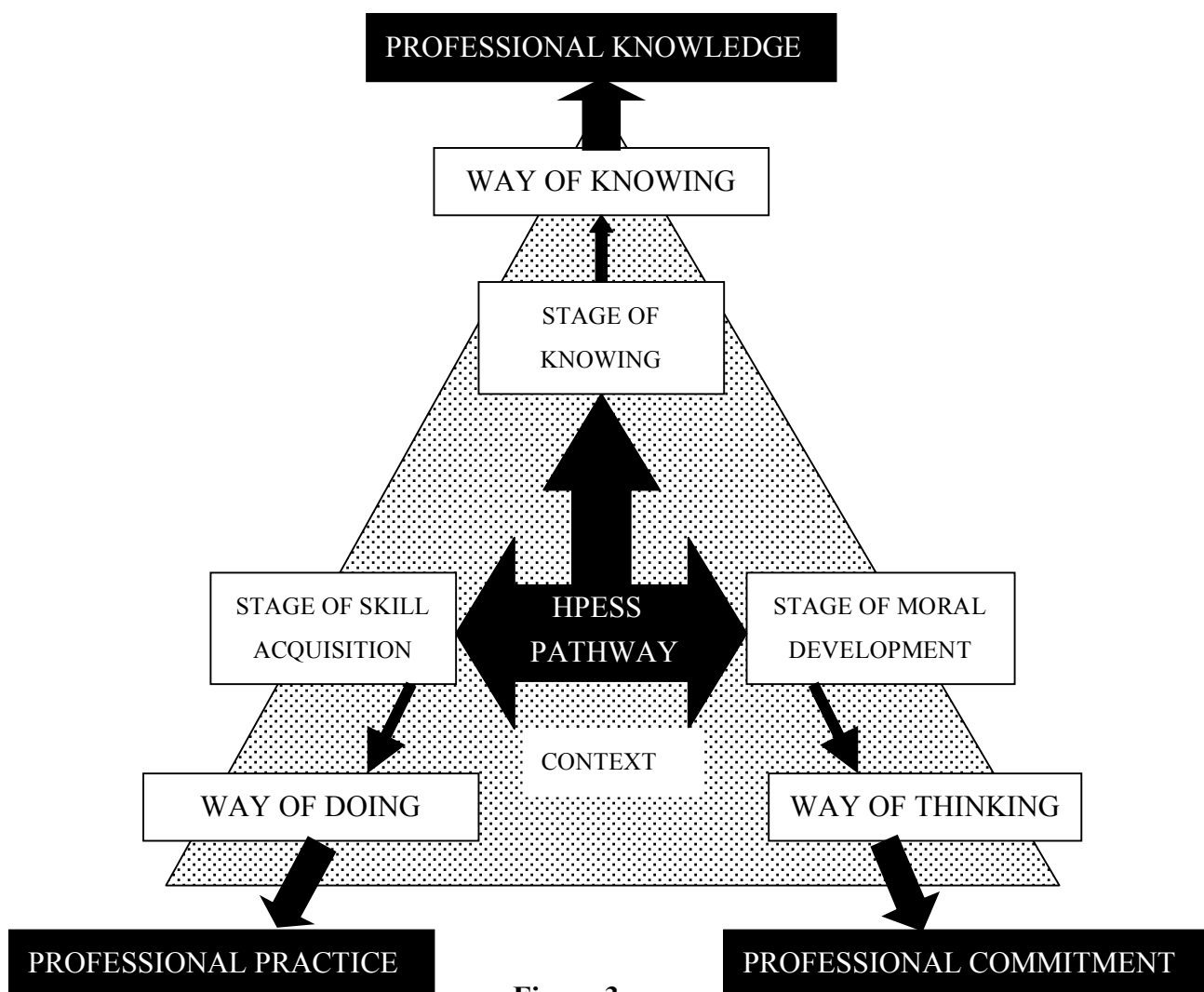


Figure 3

The Conceptual Framework Positioning the HPESS Pathway within Three Dimension of Professional Competence to teach PDHPE.

The framework explores links between the HPESS specialisation pathway, stage of development and way of thinking, knowing and doing. Integral to an appreciation of the framework is the importance of:

- A multidimensional view of teacher competence in the context of PDHPE
- Context to learning
- Limitations imposed by stage of development in three domains to the learning possibilities for PDHPE/TE.
- The three domains of professional competence as defined by the Professional Teaching Standards of the NSW Institute of Teachers.

This conceptual framework is best placed to imbed the research question:

Is there a relationship between position along the specialisation pathway and performance of the pre-service primary teacher on authentic tasks requiring engagement with outcomes from the active strands of the NSW K-6 PDHPE syllabus?

Participants

Participants will be tertiary students enrolled at UNE in the B.ED. (Primary) degree program who provide informed consent to participate in the study. Degree of specialisation at that point in their ITE will be used to assign participants into research groups (RG). Consequently, each RG will form a cohort characterised by their enrolment history and number of EDPE units completed. The RG align with the groups identified in Figure 1. That is RG1 represents the classification of Generalist Primary School Teacher; RG2 are the Generalist Primary Teacher with PE Specialisation and RG3 is the Physical Education Specialist-Generalist Primary Teacher. The three RG are:

RG1: Mandatory EDPE Unit Only

RG2: (subgroup i) Mandatory EDPE Unit and One Elective EDPE Unit

(subgroup ii) Mandatory EDPE Unit and Two Elective EDPE Units

(subgroup iii) Mandatory EDPE Unit and Three Elective EDPE Units

RG3: Mandatory EDPE Unit and Three Electives and PE Specialist Practicum

Proposed Research Design

In broad terms, the design involves a cross sectional longitudinal study using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the relationship between selected variables. Both descriptive statistics (to depict the distribution of the variable) and inferential statistics (to test differences) will be employed to test the research hypotheses.

Examples of Research Hypothesis (RH) may include:

RH1: There is a significant relationship between position on the specialization pathway and performance on authentic tasks.

RH2: There is a significant difference between the performance on each authentic task between RG1 and RG 3.

RH3: There is a significant difference between the performance on each authentic task between RG1 and RG 2.

Instruments

The researcher is keen to use authentic tasks in this study. These are tasks that the teacher would be expected to carry out in the course of fulfilling their roles as a generalist primary school teacher. Authenticity is also applied to the task because they currently exist in the formal assessment schedule of EDPE units. These may include tasks completed by the student such as unit plans, lesson plans, teaching-learning strategies, assessment strategies, reports, proposals or policies. Selected items will be standardised into a common task for the purpose of the study.

Tasks will be administered during timetabled teaching or examination times to increase the reliability of the data. The HPESS team already use assessment/feedback criteria to measure

performance on a continuum for each sub-task. These will still be written in the language of achievement familiar to the students using Likert scales but include a coding system linked directly to measures of each variable. Consistent with present practice, tasks will be assessed by a marker designated by the unit co-ordinator. Copies of tasks shall be retained by the researcher only for those students who have given informed consent. Independent assessors will then mark and code each task.

Criteria will be guided by developmental theory such as the Neo-Piagetian model of Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO). Intra-coder and inter-coder reliability checks will be conducted. Triangulation of the data will be performed with interviews of purposively sampled participants. Findings from the statistical analysis of data across a number of themes will serve to either support or refute the research hypotheses.

CONCLUSION

The HPESS specialization pathway at the UNE affords the opportunity to explore the potential of middle ground between generalist primary teacher and specialist teacher of physical education. The catalyst for this constructive solution is the inability of advocates of physical education to harness sufficient power to ‘Go Over’ the staffing policy that mandates the employment of generalist teachers in NSW public schools or sufficient control to ‘Move Through’ the legal and administrative mechanisms responsible for instituting educational change. In the absence of this power or control and unless our research gives evidence to the contrary, the HPESS pathway maybe a constructive commitment to find a ‘Way Around’ government policy and frame our work in a democratic vision of physical education as a public good.

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