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The curriculum future of Health and Physical Education in Australia: How influential can a national professional association be?

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Abstract

Amidst Federal government advances towards a National Curriculum, this paper focuses on the prospective future curriculum position, content and requirements for Health and Physical Education (HPE) across Australia. Research that is exploring political and policy discourses relating to these issues is used as a basis from which to identify the current position of HPE as simultaneously one of marginality and opportunities. In Federal and State/Territory arenas, limited attention is being directed towards HPE amidst a dominant focus on other learning areas that have widespread acceptance and privileged status as ‘core’ curriculum components. From the perspective of the States and Territories, Health and Physical Education is not amongst what have been termed ‘fundamentally important disciplines: English, mathematics, science and languages other than English’ (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007, p.14). In the Federalist paper 2 it was acknowledged, however, that ‘Health and physical education are increasingly critical for student and community well-being’ (p.14). This paper identifies HPE as a learning area capable of presenting a strong case that it has the potential to effectively service multiple political imperatives, and more specifically, prompt greater linkages between health and education. Continued diversity in HPE curriculum across the States and Territories is highlighted, however, as posing questions, about the willingness and capacity of key stakeholders to actively advance that linkage. Further, it is acknowledged that some members of the HPE professional community may justifiably challenge the merits of pursuing enhanced policy alignment between health and education. Amidst a professional arena renowned for fragmentation, this paper explores whether and in what ways, a national professional association may be able to facilitate collaborative action that will enhance the curriculum future for HPE across Australia. The paper reports and critically analyses the action that the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) has instigated and may seek to advance in this regard. At the end of 2007 ACHPER formed a national working group with a remit to develop a national statement and national action plan in response to a rapidly changing education policy scene in Australia. The stated view of the States and Territories at that time was that ‘it is time to reassert the importance of national collaboration to promote high-quality schooling for all Australian students, whatever jurisdiction, school system or individual school is involved’ (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007, p.6). National professional associations are identified as having a potentially important role to play in facilitating, informing and mediating collaborative action with regard to curriculum provision and expectations for student learning across State/Territory jurisdictions. National and international examples are drawn upon in evidencing this potential. Revisions to the National Curriculum in England are presented as exemplifying highly effective strategic action on the part of a national professional association to secure a core curriculum presence for physical education across all years of schooling.

From this backdrop, ACHPER’s prospective role and progress to date in countering continued marginalisation of HPE in education policy and curriculum developments, is addressed. Ball’s (2007) emphasis that most policies are ‘ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs’ that are also destined to be ‘reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected’ as they are progressed towards expression in practice (p.44) is used as basis from which to identify scope and potential for the HPE professional community to counter marginality and actively inform future curriculum directions. The concepts of policy ‘borrowing and copying’ (Ball, 2007, p.44) are presented as potentially productive tools to employ in this endeavour.
Introduction

Amidst Federal government advances towards a National Curriculum, this paper focuses on the prospective future curriculum position, content and requirements for Health and Physical Education (HPE) across Australia. The emergent policy context is presented as one of policy tension and contradiction for HPE, with the current policy position of HPE consequently regarded as one of simultaneous marginality and opportunity. HPE is identified as a learning area capable of presenting a strong case that it potentially services multiple political imperatives, and most notably, has the capacity to secure meaningful linkages between health and education agendas for young Australians. It is highlighted, however, that HPE remains marginalised, overlooked and/or excluded from education debates associated with the Rudd government’s ‘education revolution’ (Rudd & Smith, 2007a) and drive towards a National Curriculum. Further, the willingness and ability for HPE professionals to collectively and strategically pursue a different policy positioning can not be assumed. HPE embraces diverse interests and history has demonstrated that reaching agreement amongst interest groups and across States and Territories will not be easy (Glover, 1994; Macdonald & Glover, 1997).

From a policy and educational research perspective, several points are central to this paper. Firstly, in undertaking research and engaging in policy action, we take on board Ball’s (2007) emphasis that most policies are ‘ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs’ that are also destined to be ‘reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected’ as they are progressed towards expression in practice (p.44). We expect this to be true of the ongoing development of the National Curriculum. Development of each of the four areas currently in progress (mathematics, science, English and history) already reaffirms that curriculum policy is always and inevitably a matter of contestation and thus, compromise, and that there will be repeated re-working of proposals in both official and pedagogic fields (Bernstein, 1996). This paper reflects our shared view that there is a need for health and physical educationalists to be proactive in engaging sooner rather than later with emergent curriculum policy.

Secondly, we contend that the development of the official National Curriculum texts will involve significant elements of policy ‘borrowing and copying’ (Ball, 2007, p.44). Furthermore, we regard this as a strategy that the HPE community may usefully employ if it wishes to influence those texts (Penney, 2007).

Amidst our concern with what to many international readers will seem an inherently local affair, relevant to a particular sub-set of an educational community, we also emphasise the need to constantly engage with the ‘wider policy context’ and the undeniable dynamic between the ‘global and local’. As Ball (2007) has highlighted, internationally, we continue to see ‘the increasing colonisation of education policy by economic imperatives’ (p.39), and in the current global economic climate, we can expect economic discourses to continue to infiltrate, underpin and inherently transform official educational discourse. In his 2007 commentary Ball referred to ‘the new orthodoxy’ that Carter and O’Neill (1995) identified amidst education reform internationally and drew attention to five elements of that orthodoxy. All, we suggest, seem increasingly evident in the ‘education revolution’ being advanced by the Rudd government and point to policy directions that we need to critically engage if we are to have any meaningful input to emergent policy.

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1 Dawn Penney is leading a research project supported by the University of Tasmania, exploring the alignment between education and health policy in the context of moves towards a National Curriculum. At the end of 2007 Dawn was asked by ACHPER to chair a national working group to develop a position statement and action plan for HPE in a National Curriculum.
1. Improving national economics by tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade.
2. Enhancing student outcomes in employment-related skills and competencies.
3. Attaining more direct control over curriculum content and assessment.
4. Reducing costs to government of education.
5. Increasing community input to education by more direct involvement in school decision making and pressure of market choice.


It should be apparent therefore, that we approach policy as a highly complex, dynamic process in which contestation is to be expected, but also a process to be seen as presenting opportunities to those concerned to have a voice in National Curriculum developments. Following Gale (2003) we therefore acknowledge that the playing out of the process requires us to consider ‘the who and how of policy’ and the dialectic between them. With interests in the curriculum future of HPE, we see a need to explore but also potentially contest ‘the boundaries of ‘who’, ‘where’ and ‘what goes on’ (Gale, 1999; 2003) in the production of National Curriculum texts. Not for the first time (see Penney, 2007), the prompt is for engagement with ‘the policy game’ and furthermore, engagement with the recognition that policy actors have the scope to contest and transform (at least to some degree) the rules of the game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Gale, 2003; Penney & Evans, 2005; Penney, 2007).

Finally, we stress that the development of a National Curriculum is undoubtedly, a high stakes game in relation to the curriculum future(s) of HPE across Australia. It is a game that we contend requires us to look to new orientations and relationships on the part of educational researchers and other professionals in the HPE field to develop stronger connection between policy, research and professional arenas. We therefore, advocate for more research which has a ‘forward-looking impact’ (Walker, 2002, cited in Somekh, 2007) in relation to policy and practice in HPE. As Moss and Huxford (2007) reflected, debates about research-policy relations ‘often assume that what is required is more transparent transfer of good from one domain into the other’ (p.72). We support a shift in focus that enables an exploration of the opportunities inherent when we acknowledge the complexities of both arenas, seeks more fluid relations between them and furthermore, extends the debate to consider research-policy-professional community relations and seek improvements in the ‘connectivity between the three domains of policy, practice and research’ (Morris, 2007).

The paper thus focuses on the scope and potential for the HPE professional community to counter its current policy marginality in and through collaborative action. The concepts of policy ‘borrowing and copying’ (Ball, 2007, p.44) are presented as potentially productive tools to employ in this endeavour. Attention is on the role that the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACPER), can play in facilitating, informing and mediating collaborative action with regard to curriculum provision and expectations for student learning across State and Territory jurisdictions.

Not an educational priority

‘Marginalised’, ‘not yet on the agenda’ and ‘overshadowed’ are all appropriate descriptors of the positioning of Health and Physical Education amidst Federal government moves towards establishing a National Curriculum. The positioning is arguably not surprising, nor unprecedented. To many of the profession it is perhaps expected. Yet, the position needs to be acknowledged as inherently precarious, leaving the curriculum future of Health and Physical Education across Australia far from clear. In 2007 Penney drew attention to the similarity of the pre-election curriculum agendas and priorities of the then Federal Government and Federal Labor opposition, and notable alignment of the Council for the
Australian Federation (2007) with key elements of those agendas (Penney, 2007). Federal Labor openly stated its belief that ‘the starting point for a national curriculum is the core areas of maths, the sciences, english and history’ (Rudd & Smith, 2007b, p.18). A key policy pronouncement from the Council for the Australian Federation (2007) articulated similar thinking. Health and Physical Education was not amongst what were deemed ‘fundamentally important disciplines: English, mathematics, science and languages other than English’ (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007, p.14). In the Federalist Paper 2 it was acknowledged, however, that ‘Health and physical education are increasingly critical for student and community well-being’ (p.14). Yet, post the Federal election, subsequent developments in the progression towards a National Curriculum have done little to indicate that this acknowledgement will be reflected in curriculum policy. The prioritising of learning areas deemed to be of the highest academic status has been reaffirmed, with the work of the National Curriculum Board at least in the short-term, confined to English, mathematics, science and history. It has been acknowledged that this is a first phase, with a second phase set to see geography and languages other than English (LOTE) addressed. When, how and arguably, whether Health and Physical Education will be accorded the attention of the National Curriculum Board (as it morphs into the National Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, NCARA) remains to be clarified.

Health and Physical Education is thus, seemingly very much ‘at the margins’ amidst clearly very significant, far reaching policy and curriculum development. Questions are therefore posed about whether the position is one that is justified and, furthermore, can and/or should be actively countered by the HPE professional community.

**Identifying and pursuing a counter position**

In the lead up to the Federal election, Rudd and Smith (2007b) stated that ‘A national curriculum should define a core set of skills and knowledge, including those things we agree all young Australians are entitled to. It cannot and should not be an all encompassing directive’ (p.5). As Penney (2007) argued ‘While accepting the latter point, we should surely be highlighting that an education that will enable young people to lead a healthy and active lives is one of “those things we agree all young Australians are entitled to” and that needs to be reflected in Labor’s plans for education’ (p.20). Pre-election, Federal Labor stated that it was ‘determined to improve the health and wellbeing of our children in order for them to lead happy, fulfilling lives’ (Rudd, Roxon & Macklin, 2007, p.12). The health and wellbeing of young Australians remains, undoubtedly, a key health agenda. Their health and wellbeing is, after all, fundamental to the economic future of the nation. Yet young people’s health and wellbeing is simultaneously, a concern that is being sidelined in education policy arenas. This is despite the eleventh biennial report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2008) acknowledging that;

> People’s knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about health can influence their health behaviours, and consequently their present and future health status. The likelihood of an individual being motivated to adopt health-enhancing behaviours—rather than behaviours which are not conducive to health—is in part a function of the level of knowledge, attitudes and skills which the person has in relation to health risks. (p.129)

> The ability to acquire knowledge about health enables a person to recognise health problems (in themselves or others), make choices about behaviours, and access health services when required. (p.130)

Arguably, HPE has unparalleled potential to present a case that it has the potential to service multiple political imperatives, and more specifically, secure a direct linkage between health and education policy development in foregrounding a focus on education for the health and wellbeing of all young Australians.
The preamble to the draft National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) reaffirmed that;

- More than ever before, the successful learning and development of young people to at least year 12 or equivalent is for almost all young Australians a prerequisite for a healthy, productive, rewarding and fulfilling life (p.3);

and that;

- For all Australians education provides a crucial foundation for intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and well-being. Effective education extends beyond the school gate, helping build young people’s sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future (p.4).

More specifically, the commitment to ‘supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident individuals and active and informed citizens’ (MCEETYA, 2008, p.5), acknowledges that young people fulfilling those visions will ‘have a sense of optimism, self-esteem and are able to manage their emotional, mental and physical wellbeing’ and ‘have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lifestyles’ (p.5). The draft National Goals for Schooling included ‘Health and physical education’ in listing learning areas that must be a focus in the curriculum. Yet, we suggest that whether and/or how HPE’s potential contribution to the pursuit of the stated goals will be realised in curriculum requirements applicable across Australia, remains far from clear.

It is in this complex, dynamic, and we would argue, somewhat contradictory policy context, that we pose a number of questions to the HPE professional community and educational research community.

- Is marginality in education policy a position that we wish to accept or counter?
- Is there the collective will and capacity to counter it?
- What strategies do we need to adopt in order to do so?

Essentially, these were the challenges voiced by Penney (2007) and directly presented to ACHPER as a professional association. At the time, the stated view of the States and Territories was that ‘it is time to reassert the importance of national collaboration to promote high-quality schooling for all Australian students, whatever jurisdiction, school system or individual school is involved’ (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007, p.6). At the end of 2007 ACHPER responded by forming a national working group with a remit to develop a national statement and national action plan in response to a rapidly changing education policy scene in Australia. That group has comprised a small number of teacher educators and educational researchers from across Australia3, working with limited time and resources to draft a statement that articulates principles and directions for HPE that nationally, members of the profession may be willing to embrace, and collectively commit to advancing. In the context of continued diversity in HPE curriculum nomenclature, emphases and requirements, across the States and Territories3, and a professional community that encompasses diverse interest groups, that task is far from easy. The individuals in the national working group have openly acknowledged that some members of the HPE professional community may justifiably challenge the merits of pursuing enhanced policy alignment between health and education, and have seen that not all members of the community will feel adequately represented in such a statement.

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2 Thanks are extended to colleagues contributing to the working group; Peter Hay, Phil Morgan, Russell Brown and Trent Brown.

3 For example, the learning area is referred to as Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) in NSW and Health and Wellbeing in Tasmania.
A draft National Statement for Health and Physical Education in a National Curriculum

The full text of the draft statement prepared by the national working group is included as an appendix to this paper. Notably, the statement opens with clarification for the profession, but also for key actors in national policy arenas, of the reasons why it is being developed and presented. Necessarily, it also foregrounds a number of principles that underpin the statement and anticipated collaborative action that it will provide a basis for. Notably for this paper and for the AARE Health and Physical Education Special Interest Group (SIG), those principles included the emphasis that;

- Professional associations have a responsibility to inform ongoing curriculum development undertaken by Federal and State/Territory governments and be responsive to agreed national education policy directions. They have a lead role to play in promoting advancements in curriculum development and pedagogical practices across the States and Territories and across all schools in Australia;
- Enhancing education nationally in Australia should draw upon best practice across all the States and Territories. It should incorporate flexibility to enable education in the States and Territories to be responsive to and provide for distinct local learning needs and contexts;

and that;

- Planning for and investment in curriculum reform in schools needs to be accompanied by aligned development and investment in teacher education across Australia.

(ACHPER, 2008, p.2)

Central to the statement is the notion of HPE as a non-negotiable curriculum entitlement for all young Australians, in recognition that;

- HPE is the area of the curriculum that can offer education for healthy lifestyles; that is, lifestyles characterised by and recognising the importance of health and physical education and physical activity for physical, social, and emotional wellbeing;

and that;

- HPE is the area of the curriculum that is directly concerned with the development of skills, knowledge, understandings, attitudes and values that can counter so called lifestyle diseases that are widely acknowledged as representing an unprecedented threat to the health and economic future of Australia;

(ACHPER, 2008, p.5)

The statement clarifies that ‘ACHPER is not seeking a highly regulative, prescriptive set of requirements relating to HPE curriculum’, but that rather, ‘It is seeking national collaboration to establish an agreed curriculum entitlement for all young Australians’ (ACHPER, 2008, original emphasis). It is envisaged that such an entitlement will require the development of a framework that focuses on curriculum as the basis for achieving learning outcomes that are accepted as essential for all young Australians to achieve. Accordingly, ACHPER advocates that:

- all students should be provided with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to lead healthy and active lives;
- all students should be provided with the knowledge and skills to be able to make informed decisions about their health and lifestyle and be able to seek help and support when necessary;
- all students should be provided with opportunities to develop the skills to become critical consumers of health information;
• all students should be provided with the opportunity to learn the fundamental and applied movement skills to be able to participate successfully in a variety of physical activities that promote positive attitudes to health and lifelong physical activity participation.

(ACHPER, 2008, p.5)

Progressing towards an agreed HPE curriculum entitlement for all young Australians is acknowledged as complex, destined to be contested, but also, a matter that needs to align with key aspects of emergent National Curriculum policy, and most importantly, be planned for. Thus, the statement makes explicit an expectation that advancement will:

• involve the identification of a set core content and achievement standards for HPE that are expected of students at the end of their schooling and at key junctures during their schooling;
• direct attention towards the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment;
• maintain flexibility for jurisdictions, systems, schools and teachers to design and implement a curriculum for students to achieve the specified standards; and
• seek consistency in reporting of learning achievement in HPE nationally.

(ACHPER, 2008)

The curriculum future of Health and Physical Education in Australia: How influential will ACHPER be?

At this point we remain somewhat unclear whether ACHPER has a membership which sees a need and/or is ready actively engage with proposals that directly call for national agreement about curriculum matters. There has been little by way of response to the draft documentation circulated by ACHPER to its branches and membership. Members of the working group and the national executive retain the view that nationally coordinated action is not merely desirable, but necessary if the visions inherent in the national statement are to be realised.

To what extent and in what ways, can a national professional association facilitate collaborative action that will enhance the curriculum future for HPE across Australia? In pursuing this question, we contend that there are lessons to be learnt from experiences and action internationally and within Australia. We return, therefore, to the notions of policy ‘borrowing and copying’ (Ball, 2007), specifically as tools that may productively be employed in the context of seeking stronger representation and greater influence amidst the ongoing advancement of National Curriculum policy development. Recalling Gale’s (2003) emphasis that eligibility of policy actors will be reliant upon possession of appropriate political expertise, rather than specialist knowledge of the learning area, we also prompt renewed consideration of who can be regarded as ‘eligible policy actors’ for HPE in the context of a National Curriculum. Such expertise will be reflected, amongst other things, in the ability to bring together and effectively communicate interests that will be heard as servicing particular policy agendas and that have political currency, while simultaneously advancing other interests (Gale, 2003).

National Professional Associations and National Curricula

In considering where and from whom we might usefully ‘borrow and copy’, but crucially, also learn from, we turn first to the United Kingdom. In England physical education has attained a curriculum position that for many people internationally, would be regarded as remarkable; statutory through all four key stages of education. Key stage 4 arguably best reflects the
status gained. The statutory subjects that all pupils must study at that key stage are citizenship, English, information and communication technology, mathematics, physical education and science. The teaching of careers education, sex education, work-related learning and religious education is also statutory at key stage 4. Arts, design and technology, humanities and modern foreign languages are not accorded comparable curriculum standing (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007). Notably, in England a historically divided and politically incoherent collection of professional voices have had the insight and courage to put differences aside and have recognised the need to not merely speak with a consistent voice, but also with a voice that politicians could relate to. There are perhaps some key lessons to be learnt from England about the value of strategic compromises, alliances and professional unity to secure political support. If we then turn to Scotland, the positioning and development of ‘health and wellbeing’ within the context of ‘A Curriculum for Excellence’ (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007) may provide more specific material that ACHPER might usefully ‘copy and borrow’.

Finally, we suggest that ACHPER may productively look beyond the familiarity of the HPE learning area – and specifically, to the work being advanced collaboratively by three professional organisations with shared interest in a prospective National Curriculum for Geography. The Australian Geography Teachers' Association (AGTA), Royal Geographical Society of Queensland (RGSQ) and Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG) are collaborating ‘to develop a unified position on a national geography curriculum for Australia’ (National Geography Curriculum, 2008). More specifically they are preparing a paper titled Towards a national geography curriculum for Australia that is modelled on the National Curriculum Board’s Proposed Structures for the National Curriculum for subjects in the first phase of its work. A timeline has been set for development and consultation. There is a commitment to enable input from membership, but first and foremost, to actively progress a National Curriculum for geography. There are surely messages for ACHPER and its membership here in relation to the professional commitment, profile being accorded to this action and the pace of engagement with national policy.

Conclusion

This paper leaves the HPE professional and research communities with a question that is currently unanswered; will we ‘commit to engaging ‘with’ but also ‘for’ policy developments? In emphasising the need for proactive input to policy development, we stress the need to simultaneously pose critical questions of current developments and dominant discourses. That critical engagement should extend to questioning, for example, the enacted reality and lived experience of any agreed ‘entitlement’ (who will have access to what entitlement?), and whether in developing a National Curriculum we can address longstanding inequities in education and health of young Australians. We also recall, however, the need to acknowledge that in presenting any proposals to governments, ‘fitness for purpose matters’ (Moss & Huxford, 2007, p.64). As Moss and Huxford (2007, p.64) emphasised; ‘The policy arena is precisely predicated on working across different paradigmatic allegiances...The decisions taken are tactical and strategic in line with the larger policy purposes’. Being seen to engage with political imperatives will be paramount in debates and negotiations that follow.

References


MCEETYA. (2008). *National Declaration on National Goals for Young Australians - Draft.* Canberra: MCEETYA.


APPENDIX 1:

The Curriculum Future of Health and Physical Education in Australia:
A national statement and national action plan

The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACPER) is developing (1) a national statement on the curriculum future of HPE in Australia; and (2) an accompanying action plan for advancing implementation of the proposals inherent in the statement.

This paper presents a draft statement, directed to two key audiences:

1. ACHPER’s national membership.
   Consultation with members, facilitated by State branches, is critical if ACHPER is to effectively communicate a case for Federal and State/Territory governments to commit to Health and Physical Education as a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians; and

2. Representatives of key stakeholders in the provision of Health and Physical Education, physical activity and sport for young people.
   ACHPER acknowledges that endorsement of and delivery on a curriculum entitlement will only be achieved through collaborative and sustained advocacy by the many organisations and agencies who share ACHPER’s belief that ‘an educated nation, comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment we can make in their future’.

Feedback, providing endorsement and/or comment is being sought on the draft statement. Feedback will be utilised to finalise a position paper to be presented to Federal and state/territory government departments and curriculum authorities; and used by the ACHPER National Curriculum working group as the basis for advancing proposals in collaboration with government and curriculum authority representatives and partner agencies.
Introduction

Why is it timely and necessary for ACHPER to release a national statement about the curriculum future of Health and Physical Education in Australia?

ACHPER is developing a national statement:
- to actively and constructively contribute to the ongoing debates and developments relating to a National Curriculum and national approaches to curriculum;
- to provide a timely and considered response to the new Federal government’s policy proposals for education; and
- to present proposals and recommendations that can be the basis of ongoing productive partnerships in policy and curriculum development.

In conjunction with development of a national statement, ACHPER is committed to identifying strategies to inform and advance implementation of recommendations incorporated in the national statement.

Principles underpinning a national statement and national action plan

1. An educated nation, comprising active and healthy young people is the best investment we can make in their future;
2. HPE needs to be recognised first and foremost as an educational endeavour and experience. With this as the prime purpose, it is fundamentally distinct from either ‘physical activity’ and ‘sport’ (see clarification points below);
3. HPE should be a key element of a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. This is in accordance with repeated international declarations that have called upon governments worldwide to make this invaluable commitment to children’s education and through that, to their health and wellbeing;
4. The school is not the only, but nevertheless, a very significant setting for children’s intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. Maximising that development relies on the provision of coordinated learning opportunities in school, family and community settings. The statement and action plan is underpinned by a commitment to enhancing the coherency of policy development and implementation action across the policy arenas education, health and sport.
5. Enhancing education nationally in Australia should draw upon best practice across all the States and Territories. It should incorporate flexibility to enable education in the States and Territories to be responsive to and provide for distinct local learning needs and contexts.
6. Professional associations have a responsibility to inform ongoing curriculum development undertaken by Federal and State/Territory governments and be responsive to agreed national education policy directions. They have a lead role in promoting advancements in curriculum development and pedagogical practices across the States and Territories and across all schools in Australia;
7. Planning for and investment in curriculum reform in schools needs to be accompanied by aligned development and investment in teacher education across Australia.

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4 HPE will be the terminology used in a National Statement, reflecting the identification of HPE as a learning area in the Adelaide Declaration and more recently, in Federalist Paper 2.
Points of clarification

The terminology associated with HPE is acknowledged as varied and open to differing interpretations. Amidst this variation, ACHPER seeks clarity and agreement upon the following points:

- HPE is fundamentally about learning. HPE is concerned with the provision of learning experiences that are educationally worthwhile in and of themselves, and that seek to develop skills, knowledge, understandings, attitudes and values and that will enable young people to live healthy and active lives.
- HPE draws on a number of sub-disciplines, including physical education, health education, personal development, outdoor education and dance. Each is acknowledged as providing distinct learning opportunities. State and Territory curricula variously draw on and integrate the sub-disciplines to achieve breadth and balance in learning in HPE.
- Across Australia, as a learning area HPE embraces and extends to the notions of learning ‘in, through and about’ movement. HPE can also fundamentally be regarded as learning ‘for’ movement in diverse ways and contexts. Contexts of physical activity and sport are therefore central to HPE, but HPE is distinguished from ‘physical activity’ and ‘sport’ by virtue of its learning focus and agendas.
- Linkages with learning beyond the formal curriculum and beyond schools (in family, formal and informal community contexts, particularly associated with physical activity and sport) are a central consideration in curriculum planning, teaching and learning in HPE. HPE is a lifelong process and endeavour that has its foundations in early childhood education, and extends throughout and beyond the compulsory years of schooling. In identifying these characteristics of HPE ACHPER also reaffirms HPE as distinct from physical activity and sport. This is reflected in the first point of clarification above. Figure 1 also articulates key linkages between school and community-based provision.
- HPE has an important role to play in the advancement of skills that are variously referred to as ‘essential’ or ‘life’ skills (including communication and interpersonal skills, and problem solving) and to learning traditionally associated with other curriculum areas (including literacy and numeracy).

What ACHPER as a national professional association is committed and able to achieve and facilitate.

ACHPER is committed to:

- Partnerships as the foundation of a national statement and efforts to ensure implementation of it;
- Identifying and seeking the adoption of agreed strategies for advancing proposals and recommendations inherent in the national statement;
- Advocating and lobbying for resources to ensure implementation of proposals and recommendations inherent in the national statement. It is anticipated that the formal submission of the statement to Federal government will be accompanied by a submission for funding to support its advancement and that the submission for funding will identify and incorporate in-kind financial support from key stakeholders.

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5 Arnold’s conceptualisation has been widely employed in curriculum development in HPE across Australia and internationally.
ACHPER’s position on the future curriculum position, content and status of HPE

The outcomes that are being sought through the development, endorsement and implementation of the national statement:

This statement seeks enhanced and nationally comparable learning opportunities for all young Australians in the area of HPE. The intention is to secure a foundation from which more young people will gain the skills, knowledge and understanding to lead healthy and active lives, and support and encourage others to do likewise.

In Federalist Paper 2, Health and Physical Education was reaffirmed as an integral element of a ‘broad and comprehensive’ curriculum. It was clearly stated that; ‘Education should support the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of young people as well as their intellectual development’ (p.17). Federalist paper 2 (pages 21-22) also reaffirmed the Adelaide Declaration’s identification of Health and Physical Education as a learning area, central to a National Curriculum:

The Adelaide Declaration nominates eight key learning areas for the curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling:

- the arts
- English
- health and physical education
- languages other than English
- mathematics
- science
- studies of society and environment
- technology

For the most part this list has served schools well. Several of the key learning areas are fundamentally important disciplines: English, mathematics, science and languages other than English.

Health and physical education are increasingly critical for student and community well-being.

The arts provide rich experiences and opportunities for all students.

Technology is an important cross-disciplinary area for students of the twenty-first century.

Studies of society and environment have been criticised by a number of commentators, partly because its focus is not clear from the label. It has become increasingly clear that what should be studied under this label are the disciplines of history, geography and economics. In the statement about the future of schooling in Australia, in Chapter 4, these disciplines are made explicit under the umbrella of social science/humanities and reflect the important objectives for students outlined at the start of this curriculum section.

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In addition to technology, there are two other areas that have become more prominent in the curriculum since the Adelaide Declaration. First, the States, Territories and the Commonwealth have cooperated in the inclusion of civics and citizenship in the curriculum, to nurture citizenship and civic behaviour amongst our students. Second, the study of business and the development of commercial and financial literacy skills can assist students in their middle and later years at school to prepare for work in the twenty-first century.

**Toward a National Curriculum**

Since coming to office, the Federal Labor government has confirmed its pre-election commitment to advancing towards a national curriculum. To date, HPE has not been considered in relation to development of a national curriculum. ACHPER wishes to work productively with Federal, State and Territory government, curriculum authorities and other stakeholders to ensure a secure curriculum presence for HPE and to establish HPE as a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. ACHPER urges the government to formally acknowledge that:

- HPE is the area of the curriculum that can offer education for healthy lifestyles; that is, lifestyles characterised by and recognising the importance of health and physical education and physical activity for physical, social, emotional wellbeing.
- HPE is the area of the curriculum that is directly concerned with the development of skills, knowledge, understandings, attitudes and values that will counter so called lifestyle diseases that are widely acknowledged as representing an unprecedented threat to the health and economic future of Australia;
- As such, HPE should be an integral element of a curriculum entitlement for all young Australians. ACHPER is **not** seeking a highly regulative, prescriptive set of requirements relating to HPE curriculum. It is seeking national collaboration to establish an agreed **curriculum entitlement** for all young Australians.
- It is anticipated that such an entitlement will require the development of a framework that presents the curriculum as much more than a set of content to cover. ACHPER’s focus is on curriculum as the basis for achieving learning outcomes that are accepted as essential for all young Australians to achieve. ACHPER advocates that:
  - all students should be provided with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to lead healthy and active lives;
  - all students should be provided with the knowledge and skills to be able to make informed decisions about their health and lifestyle and be able to seek help and support when necessary;
  - all students should be provided with opportunities to develop the skills to become critical consumers of health information;
  - all students should be provided with the opportunity to learn the fundamental and applied movement skills to be able to participate successfully in a variety of physical activities that promote positive attitudes to health and lifelong physical activity participation.
- In line with the recommendations arising from Federalist Paper 2 (2007), it is envisaged that progressing towards an agreed HPE curriculum entitlement for all young Australians will:
  - involve the identification of a set core content and achievement standards for HPE that are expected of students at the end of their schooling and at key junctures during their schooling;
  - direct attention towards the alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment;
  - maintain flexibility for jurisdictions, systems, schools and teachers to design and implement a curriculum for students to achieve the specified standards; and
seek consistency in reporting of learning achievement in HPE nationally.

**Steps in advancing the national statement and action plan.**

Effective development, communication and advancement of the National Statement and national action plan will require national and related, aligned and coordinated State/Territory action. ACHPER recognises that *a unified front in advocating a set of agreed messages will be critical in securing political and public support for the proposals put forward.*

The draft national statement has arisen from intensive work on the part of a national working group and consultation with the ACHPER National Board. Extensive national consultation with ACHPER members and key stakeholders is the next step.

Feedback from consultation will inform the development of a position paper to be presented to Federal and State/Territory governments, curriculum authorities and other stakeholders. ACHPER will convene a national forum to address implementation of proposals and recommendations in the national statement.

A recommendation will also be made to Federal government for the appointment of a cross-departmental policy advisor to work with and promote policy connections and coherence between federal government action in the areas of education, health and sport.

The resource issues associated with a national HPE curriculum entitlement will be fully articulated and accompanied by recommendations for how the resource issues should be addressed. ACHPER’s emphasis is that there is an undeniable and significant cost involved in ensuring a curriculum entitlement. More importantly, however, this needs to be recognised as an investment in the health, wellbeing and life prospects for young Australians, and in the future of Australia – and it is critical that all concerned also consider the costs of not investing.
Figure 1 Coordinated, coherent curricular and co-curricular opportunities for young people (Adapted from Gillespie, 2006).