

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: POLICIES, PEOPLE AND PEDAGOGY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

Professor Dawn Penney

An inaugural professorial lecture



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Based on an Inaugural Professorial Lecture delivered at the University of
Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand on 12 July 2011

This lecture endeavours to capture how my involvement in curriculum developments and initiatives in physical education internationally, over more than 20 years, has collectively shaped my current thinking about future directions in physical education. The title reflects the contention that individuals need to be acknowledged as key players in relation to both policy and pedagogy in physical education, and that there is a critical, yet arguably under-explored dynamic between developments in policy and pedagogy. Attention is drawn to the highly political and complex nature of physical education and sport in schools and instances in which this has given rise to ‘crisis talk’ in public and professional arenas. The contemporary contexts in the UK, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are discussed in relation to the potential for crisis talk to again be generated. To counter this, the notion of policy and pedagogy ‘as opportunity’ is presented. Five key messages are presented to educators seeking to ‘make a difference’ in physical education and in relation to young people’s lives. My emphasis is that meaningful action from a young person’s perspective needs to start with pedagogy and invariably will come down to an individual teacher, coach or ‘other provider’, but that the policy frame and context is key to creating the conditions in which these people, and developments in their pedagogy, can be supported.

Professor Dawn Penney

MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

POLICIES, PEOPLE AND PEDAGOGY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Over the past 20 years I have been privileged to be involved in some notable and personally very memorable policy and curriculum developments in physical education—as a researcher, evaluator, a member of advisory groups, curriculum writer and teacher educator. I have worked with curriculum authorities, schools and teachers in the UK, Australia and South Korea. This lecture reflects those international experiences and my somewhat complex journey to Waikato. It also reflects the way in which the initiatives and developments that I have been a part of have shaped my thinking about future directions in physical education—from both academic and professional standpoints. I hope that, whether or not you have a particular interest in physical education or sport, you will gain greater insight into some of the issues that policy makers, teachers and teacher educators are currently challenged to engage with in the field of physical education and sport pedagogy, and some appreciation of work in this field both internationally and here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Titles are always something of a dilemma for academics, and I am going to begin by explaining some of what is in, and lies behind, the title that I have chosen. Having introduced you to the ‘3 Ps’, I will outline some of the complexities associated with physical education and sport in schools, presenting it as a political game and complex field of play. I will then look more closely at some of the political agendas impacting on physical education and sport and highlight the potential for them to give rise to ‘crisis talk’ within and beyond physical education. Focusing on current policy contexts in England, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, and looking to the future, I will draw theoretical ideas and research experience together in presenting the

notion of policy and pedagogy ‘as opportunity’ in and for physical education.

So, returning to my title... It may seem incidental, but it was a conscious decision to have a colon rather than a question mark after ‘Making a Difference’. The choice reflects that I wanted to make a clear statement—and in a sense I am not posing a question. My emphasis is that individually and collectively, policies, people and pedagogy do ‘make a difference’ in at least two respects. Firstly, in relation to the sorts of opportunities for learning and participation that will arise in the name of PE and sport in schools for young people from varied social, cultural and family backgrounds. Secondly, in terms of what their experiences of PE and sport will be.

In some instances opportunities for young people will be extended and enhanced. For some children, experiences in and of physical education and sport will be positive. But I am also opening the door to recognition that ‘the difference’ that physical education and sport make in relation to young people’s lives, learning or their health and wellbeing is not always positive—and may be far from equitable.

That emphasis reflects two things that I have tried to bring to the fore in much of my research and writing over the years. Firstly, an underlying commitment to critically examine policies and practices in physical education and sport with equity and social justice in mind, and secondly, the view that, when we are looking at education, it is young people’s needs and interests that need to be at the fore of our thinking. At the end of the day their views, not ours, about whether physical education has been enjoyable, rewarding, has enhanced their sense of self and wellbeing will be ‘what counts’ in terms of the impact that as educationalists, we do or do not make to young people’s lives and lifestyles.

Their views are also what matters in relation to whether or not what may be promoted as ‘opportunities’ for learning or participation are recognised as such—and particularly by young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, from cultures deemed as ‘different’, and children who, for whatever reason, do not have the social, cultural or capital resources to develop abilities that will enable access and acceptance within physical education and sport.

Each of you reading this will have your own memories of school physical

education and/or sport and views about how, in the long run, those experiences have shaped your feelings about participation in physical activity or sport, and your desire and ability to engage in a range of movement experiences or take up so-called ‘opportunities’. I speak as someone who experienced both feelings of ability and belonging in PE and sport—but also of failure and inadequacy.

The emphasis I place on ‘making a difference’ in PE and sport for young people, and my desire to engage with the what, the who and the how associated with that difference, reflects those personal experiences. It also reflects interests inspired by sociologists of education, particularly Basil Bernstein, by people at the fore of education policy sociology in both UK and Australia – including Stephen Ball, Bob Lingard, Jenny Ozga, and Trevor Gale, and people in the physical education field who have led and supported critical lines of inquiry over several decades and furthermore, been invaluable colleagues over the years—amongst them John Evans, Brian Davies, Doune Macdonald, Jan Wright, David Kirk and Richard Tinning.

THE ‘THREE PS’ IN MY TITLE: POLICIES, PEOPLE AND PEDAGOGY

A focus on policy has in many respects defined my work in physical education. It has been an interest and passion that often brings a wry smile; how can anyone get excited about policy—and particularly policy in PE? But policy matters in PE and more specifically, the developments and initiatives that my career has connected with internationally, including the development and revision of the *National Curriculum for Physical Education* in England and Wales, senior secondary physical education syllabus and course developments in England, Queensland and Western Australia, and the ongoing development of the Australian curriculum, have all captured and held my interest. They continue to do so because I see both the content and processes of policy and curriculum development as significant in relation to physical education and sport in schools.

In talking here about some specific policy issues and policy developments, I will be approaching policy as a political, complex and contested process. I will also be talking openly about people—as policy ‘actors’, as advocates

or as adversaries, with the emphasis that texts alone are never what really ‘makes the difference’. How policy documents or announcements are read, received and understood, what the reactions and responses to policy and curriculum developments are in any given political, social, school and community context—that is where ‘the rubber hits the road’.

That brings me to the third ‘P’: pedagogy. In education and in physical education it is a term that is defined, conceived and, in the eyes of some, misconstrued in various ways. Different ways of thinking about learning, and about learners, generate different thoughts on pedagogy. Teachers may be working from a quite different understanding of pedagogy to policy makers. Which is all very well but does little in terms of responding to a question that I know my mum, if no-one else, will still be pressing for an answer on. What exactly are you referring to? I find it useful to adopt Watkins and Mortimore’s (1999) stance that a ‘basic premise’ to begin a definition of pedagogy is ‘any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another’ (p. 3). As a branch of pedagogy, sport pedagogy relates to a range of contexts that you will recognise—health and physical education lessons, after-school sport, and physical activity and sport in club and community settings. Adopting Watkins and Mortimore’s stance, pedagogy includes teacher-student interactions in physical education classrooms—and much more. It encompasses, for example, decisions made about what will feature in a physical education curriculum, in any given lesson and in after-school sport, as well as how we approach teaching or coaching and the roles and relations we are intending students or athletes to have in the process. It also prompts us to look at the thinking that underpins decisions about both what learning we are concerned with and how we plan to approach it—as teachers, coaches, teacher educators, parents or other volunteers with some responsibility for learning in a school or junior sport setting.

Pedagogy is, then, inherently about particular conceptualisations of knowledge and power relations in education (Gore, 1990; Penney & Waring, 2000) and therefore also about pedagogical rights within physical education and amidst particular education systems and structures—and the wider political and social contexts within which they are set and to which they relate (Bernstein, 2000). To recognise this dynamic relationship between pedagogy and society,

and to view pedagogy as social, cultural and political practice, is then to acknowledge the lack of neutrality in what, in Bernstein's language, is the 'mode of transmission': the interpretation and enactment of curricula and the act of teaching or coaching. It is a view that positions teachers and coaches as political and social actors.

Throughout, I will therefore be emphasising linkages between my 3 Ps and, in so doing, endeavour to capture the relationship between what I term policy action and pedagogic action. Furthermore, I stress that both need to be understood as existing within, and in a dynamic relation to, social relations and inequities external to education (Frandji & Vitale, 2011) that as educators, I believe, we have a responsibility to engage with.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN SCHOOLS

A political game and complex field of play

International events such as the Olympic Games or the recent Rugby World Cup here in Aotearoa New Zealand never fail to provide a reminder that political interest in sport is alive and well. There is perhaps less awareness and understanding of the extent to which physical education or school sport is openly political. As a policy arena 'physical education and school sport' is far more complex than many people might imagine. Politicians, educators, parents and members of the public have various expectations for what young people will learn as a consequence of participating in physical education and sport.

Fundamentally, physical education is about schooling bodies and minds. In that regard David Kirk's work remains seminal in the field in terms of the insights that he has provided into how physical education, in particular forms, has been designed to serve specific political, social and economic agendas over time. It is often easy to see the lack of neutrality in relation to what children are taught and come to learn when we engage with images from other times, countries and/or cultures. It is far more difficult to recognise that 'things could be different'—or, perhaps consider that they should be—when we are amidst that which is familiar.

Recent work by a number of scholars in health and physical education has highlighted the potentially damaging impact that schooling can have on young people. It has revealed that the impact of understandings arising from pedagogies within and beyond health and physical education may be in sharp contrast to the pedagogical intention, particularly in times and societies that appear to constantly reaffirm that only certain bodies are desirable and/or acceptable (see Evans, Davies, & Wright, 2004).

Richard Tinning (2008) has presented the idea of ‘pedagogical work’ to foreground ‘pedagogical consequences’ (over and above intentions), explaining that pedagogical work ‘is not so much concerned with what particular pedagogical practices are said to do, but rather is concerned with what knowledge(s), ways of thinking, dispositions and subjectivities are actually [produced or] (re)produced in or through particular pedagogical encounters’ (p. 417). As Tinning (2010) states, ‘all pedagogical encounters in physical activity are at their core bodily encounters. The pedagogical work of PE will always have an embodied dimension and that will often be the most significant thing that young people take from PE’ (p. 136).

If our intention is that the pedagogical work of PE will have a lasting impact on young people’s lives in terms of, for example, their sense of self and wellbeing or their participation in physical activity and sport, then the challenge for PE teachers, and for schools more broadly, is to ensure that all young people take something positive from their embodied experiences and encounters in PE lessons and in their daily lives in school. What exactly we want that ‘something positive’ to be will depend on what ‘pedagogical consequences’ are seen as important and feasible to pursue. History shows that answers to that question will certainly vary both within and beyond the profession.

So what are some of the political agendas associated with contemporary physical education and sport, and how exactly do they ‘play out’?

Internationally, physical education has been recognised as a notably ‘crowded policy space’ (Houlihan, 2000), reflecting that physical education is seen as potentially servicing multiple political agendas, including sport, culture and health. It is therefore impacted by policies arising from a range of sources.

Houlihan (2000) emphasises that the boundaries of policy in relation to physical education and school sport are extremely difficult to determine and, as many colleagues will attest, they seem to be increasingly fluid amidst equally ‘shifting sand’ in terms of who the policy players in this space are and how they are variously positioned. While Houlihan (2000) was writing with reference to the situation in the UK, the situation and dynamics that he describes will, I anticipate, ring true for many colleagues here in Aotearoa New Zealand:

Sports-related policies which take as their focus either schools or young people enter a policy arena which is already congested and targeted by different policy communities that have very different and often conflicting policy objectives. (Houlihan, 2000, p. 179)

Houlihan identified young people as ‘sharply contested policy targets’ and at the same time drew attention to the fact that ‘the variety of sports policy priorities focused on schools and young people have to operate within a broader policy context of educational reform’ (focusing for example, on literacy and/or numeracy standards, and/or seeking to address matters such as social inclusion)—with educational reform, therefore, multi-focused and not always characterised by coherence.

‘Physical education and school sport’ thus emerges as a policy space, or field of play, in which agreement on directions and priorities is destined to be challenging for whichever government ministers choose to enter into it. It is an arena that here in Aotearoa New Zealand Ian Culpan (2008) has identified as characterised by ‘muddled thinking’, ‘muddy waters’ and ‘mixed messages’. Internationally, it seems that the prospect of coherency and coordinated action is sometimes as hard to imagine as agreement on transport policy in the corridors of Whitehall, as portrayed in the BBC series *Yes Minister*¹.

1 The BBC comedy series *Yes Minister* was produced between 1980 and 1984 and managed to convey, in and through comedy, the somewhat ‘crazy reality’ of policy issues and policy processes in government. If you are not familiar with *Yes Minister*, extracts can be viewed via youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=on211U-F3BY>

As Houlihan (2000) described things, ‘It is within this sectorally competitive and multilayered environment that new policy initiatives have to operate’ (p. 17). While I have no dispute with this statement, I would certainly accompany it with the emphasis that it is amidst such an arena that physical education professionals have to operate—and that to do so effectively is no easy task.

This emphasis of complexity and ambiguity has been at the fore of Kirsten Petrie’s recent research and writing focusing specifically on physical education in the primary sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Petrie and Lisahunter (2011) have highlighted, generalist primary teachers face the seemingly unenviable task of not only managing multiple curriculum demands and expectations, but in the case of physical education, of also trying to understand how initiatives such as Active Schools and Kiwisport, and offers of resources from an array of ‘external providers’, can and/or should align with health and physical education in the NZC. They could perhaps do worse than to consult with colleagues in Scotland, where as Malcolm Thorburn (2009) has explained, inherent in the *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) is a policy expectation that physical education will play a significant role in addressing four capacities that are central to the CfE (to enable each child or young person to be ‘a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor’; Education Scotland, n.d, para. 1) and, at the same time, ‘dovetail with whole school initiatives and various out of school and community programmes’ (Thorburn, 2009, p. 29).

Thus, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, the PE and school sport policy space continues to attract many players with diverse interests in and for physical education and sport in schools. Those interests relate to various envisaged future/s for young people—as ‘good citizens’, future participants, prospective medal winners or world champions, or a potential health risk and cost to the nation, or perhaps a drowning statistic.

Historically, there are many instances of this complex policy context and more particularly, the power relations at play within it, giving rise to ‘crisis talk’ in physical education—generated within the profession and by external sources.

The former is perhaps most vividly represented by the ‘Australian Physical

Education in Crisis' national workshop convened at Deakin University in 1991, which proved (and was also at least to some extent designed as) a catalyst and forerunner to the *1992 Senate Inquiry into Physical and Sport Education in Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992). At that time, 'clarifying the distinction between PE and sport while at the same time not letting go of a sound linkage was a key challenge for the PE teaching and teacher education profession' (Swabey & Penney, 2011, p. 69).

Clive Pope's presentation at the 2010 National Physical Education New Zealand conference,² and previous commentaries by past PENZ president Lorna Gillespie³ among others, highlight that this challenge remains highly pertinent to the professional community and policy context here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Across the world, an episode of the BBC *Panorama* programme screened on 9 March 1987 gave a powerful portrayal of a different crisis. John Evans observed at the time that this was a 'highly polished statement on the nature and state of play in the PE profession' (1990, p. 158) but also that '*Panorama* carried, both implicitly and very obviously, contrary or counter-positional images of how physical education in particular, and education and schooling in general, should properly otherwise be' (p. 159). Curriculum initiatives, including Teaching Games for Understanding and Health Related Fitness and accompanying pedagogies all came under attack. Evans (1990) described the message as being 'as simple as it was convincing. The absence of competitive team games and the presence of egalitarian ideals serve well to damage the health of the nation's children' (p. 161).

2 See Pope, C. C. (2011). The physical education and sport interface: Models, maxims and maelstrom. *European Physical Education Review*, 17(3), 273-285. doi: 10.1177/1356336X11416728.

3 See Gillespie, L. (2004). *Physical activity in education settings*. Report prepared for SPARC by Lorna Gillespie on behalf of Physical Education New Zealand.

FAST FORWARD SOME TWO DECADES TO 2010

In the UK, in October 2010, as newly appointed Secretary of State for Education within the Coalition Government, the Rt Hon Michael Gove made an announcement that, once again, signalled overt political interest in physical education and sport of a particular sort and shifts in both policy focus and funding that appeared to have the potential to decimate structures and networks that physical education and sport communities, nationally and locally, had worked long and hard to establish.

Seemingly not much had changed in terms of a lack of appreciation that ‘competitive sport per se’ offers no assurance that particular learning outcomes will be achieved—certainly not by all students—nor any guarantee that students will gain either the desire or skills, knowledge and understandings, to extend their participation beyond PE. The new Coalition Government’s policy approach was identified as reflecting a commitment ‘to reforming sport in schools to create a lasting Olympic legacy’. The removal of funding to an established infrastructure was presented as offering schools new freedom and was accompanied by a clear statement about the perceived shortcomings in current provision of PE and sport: namely, a decline in young people’s participation in ‘traditional competitive sports’.

The Department for Education is *ending the £162 million PE and Sports Strategy* of the previous administration, *to give schools the time and freedom to focus on providing competitive sport*. In recent years there has been a *decline in young people taking part in traditionally competitive sports* such as rugby union, netball and hockey because teachers and school sports coordinators have been too focused on top-down targets. In fact the most recent School Sport Survey showed that *only around two in every five pupils play competitive sport regularly within their own school, and only one in five plays regularly against other schools* [emphasis added].

After seven years and £2.4 billion investment from the Government and Lottery, the Department expects all schools to have embedded the good

practice and collaboration developed over this time and to continue providing two hours a week of PE and sport. (Department for Education, 2010, para. 2—3)

I will take a look at responses to this announcement in a moment. For now, I merely note that, as many scholars in the field have long emphasised, competitive sport can be a positive and rewarding learning experience or it can be humiliating and alienating; it can connect with or overlook different students' abilities, social and cultural backgrounds, interests and resources. The difference, I contend, lies in people and pedagogy.

Given my emphasis of the complexity of this policy space, it is also pertinent to note that just three months later, the same government announced a comprehensive review of the national curriculum and again presented schools and teachers with the mixed messages of flexibility (stressing simplified and less prescriptive curriculum requirements, greater professional freedom for teachers over how they organise and teach the curriculum) amidst very clear direction that competitive sport should take centre stage in PE: 'It is proposed the revised curriculum for physical education will set out a clearer expectation that all pupils should play competitive sport, and will retain the expectation that all children learn to swim' (Department for Education, 2011, Note to Editor 15).

Meanwhile, in Australia, what will take centre stage in HPE amidst the development and implementation of the new Australian curriculum, to be implemented across all states and territories, is yet to be decided. The curriculum priorities inherent in the development to date will be familiar to many. Attention has focused in the first instance on English, mathematics, science, and history, then turning to the geography, languages and the arts, with health and physical education somewhat marginally positioned, in the third phase of curriculum development.

Marginality, in curriculum terms, is a position that many physical educationalists here may well relate to, with advisory and support structures dismantled and resourcing often directed either to other learning areas or alternatively to 'other providers'. In Aotearoa New Zealand, as is the case elsewhere, a range of organisations are now offering both in-curriculum and

extra-curriculum services to schools nationally and locally.

A picture of uncertainty and perhaps vulnerability is arguably exacerbated by data from the New Zealand Secondary School Sports Council (NZSSSC), that points to a trend over the past decade of declining levels of involvement in school sport amongst young people and, in parallel, a declining, although still very significant number of teachers involved in school sports leadership as managers and coaches.

In each country, therefore, the contemporary policy context has the potential to see crisis discourses reemerge in academic and professional arenas.

Internationally, David Kirk (2010) has presented the profession with three potential futures for physical education—‘More of the same’, ‘Radical Reform’ or ‘Extinction’—suggesting that ‘more of the same’ is the most likely future scenario in the short term, but that without ‘radical reform’, ‘extinction’ is the most likely long-term scenario. Kirk (2010) justifiably raised questions about whether, in contemporary policy contexts, the profession will ‘be permitted to act...with at least some rights to self-determination and self-regulation’ (p. 122)—and identified the interdependency of physical education and physical education teacher education as key to the pursuit of those rights.

In the time remaining I want to therefore focus on the potential that is presented by the gaps and ambiguities that are acknowledged as ever present in policy, and perhaps particularly policy in physical education. Potential, that is, to at least to some extent, choose and shape a response; to actively pursue and exploit spaces for ‘policy and pedagogic action’.

POLICY & PEDAGOGY 'AS OPPORTUNITY' IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The notion of policy and pedagogy 'as opportunity' in physical education reflects the theoretical underpinnings of my work. Perhaps most notably, it brings me back to Bernstein and specifically to the potential that his theory articulated for pedagogy to either reaffirm or challenge, and potentially transform, established knowledge relations and therefore the social and power relations that knowledge (re)produces. My focus also aligns with the need that Bernstein's work highlighted for theories and research that thereby connect the micro with the macro and that acknowledge and explore the dialectics of 'relations within' and 'relations to' through an 'inner analysis'—in this case, of policy and pedagogy in physical education.

The stance I take reflects two decades of being involved in many research projects that have variously connected with policy and pedagogy in physical education and sport. It represents my thoughts about where researchers, teacher educators, teachers and professional associations should be directing at least some of their attention—admittedly amidst policy contexts that I am very aware are complex and challenging, and that may seem to offer all too little room for manoeuvre.

Policy and pedagogy as opportunity (to make a difference)

1. You have to be in it to win it.
2. Everyone is part of the game. No response is a response.

These first two points reflect that whatever our role, I don't believe that we can or should stand on the sidelines or pretend that our position and actions are incidental to a bigger picture. No action (and in saying that I include 'no action') is neutral, and what we do in everyday pedagogy is instrumental in either legitimating the status quo and its consequences or challenging it. 'Making a difference' can be as simple as thinking about what learning in PE is being consciously addressed in everyday teaching, or what activity contexts are being utilised and which students PE is therefore connecting with—or not. For teacher educators, the difference may lie in how they present HPE in the *New Zealand Curriculum* [NZC] (Ministry of Education, 2007) to student

teachers, and what pedagogical opportunities they identify in the text and/or amidst other policy initiatives.

Barrie Houlihan has observed that each ‘policy sector with an interest in school sport has the capacity to initiate policy and to influence the interpretation of the policy initiatives of others’ (Houlihan, 2000, p.181).

I urge the physical education community here to be proactive in seeking such influence, which is reflected in my next two points:

3. Playing for position. What will it take to win at this game? And/or to succeed in re-directing the play?
4. There are other players in the game; there is strength in numbers and therefore in making connections.

These points bring me back to the complexity of the policy field, recognising that it (and the players) are ever changing. This playing field is neither level nor stable, particularly if there is a change in government or if new agencies or organisations gain strength, political influence and resources.

But I do not take that as a reason to disengage. Rather, I see it as a prompt for policy action that recognises the power relations at play and that, first and foremost, remains directed towards a better outcome for young people. That stance was perhaps best illustrated in the early 2000s in the UK, amidst the rapid growth of the Youth Sport Trust and its success in gaining government support to lead the development of new networks and initiatives directed towards sport in schools. It was a time when the physical education professional community was challenged to respond and actively seek input to emerging policy and future pedagogy or, alternatively, be left behind. New partnerships in policy and pedagogy were central to the development of physical education and sport in schools, clubs and communities in the context of new school sport networks.

Collaboration was also arguably fundamental to securing an ongoing commitment to physical education as one of only four subjects compulsory through all four stages of the National Curriculum in England, and a cross-sector commitment to addressing quality provision of physical education and sport for young people.



A decade on, and millions of pounds of investment later, the proposed funding cut announced by the new Secretary of State for Education was met with individual and collective responses from the PE and sport community that were clearly strategic, highlighting first and foremost the investment needed—in infrastructure, people and pedagogy—if ‘more competition’ in PE and in schools is to translate into quality learning experiences for young people. Openly political action achieved some reprieve for PE and school sport to the tune of £47m funding through to Summer 2011, and £65m for the next two school years as a direct investment in PE teachers charged with the task of ‘embedding’ competitive sport in PE and in schools.

Changing political and policy arenas do require that physical education associations, teachers and teacher educators are open to new directions in development and, also, new collaborations in policy and pedagogy. That should not be taken to imply a ‘sell out’ or uncritical engagement with prevailing political agendas or wider dominant discourses. To the contrary, I urge the critically reflexive stance that Doune Macdonald (2011) has advocated amidst ‘neoliberal globalization’: her argument being ‘that while practices consistent with neoliberal ideology [including high stakes testing and the outsourcing of PE] can garner recognition for PE as a legitimate school subject, these same practices can potentially mark the deprofessionalization of PE’ (p. 37).

The sorts of relations and partnerships that I advocate for are, in my view, at the core of being a physical education professional because they centre on better policy outcomes for the sector as a whole and fresh thinking about the pedagogies and pedagogical relations that can give physical education and sport, within and beyond schools, renewed strength and coherency from a young person’s perspective.

In Australia, Professor Alan Reid recently referred to the development of HPE in the Australian curriculum as a rare opportunity to rethink the place of, and approach to, HPE in Australian schools (Reid, 2011). Reid pointed specifically to the general capabilities, which are not dissimilar to the key competencies in the NZC, as a potentially productive avenue for HPE to pursue. In both countries, this may well prove a strategic (perhaps even necessary) direction, not only for policy action but also for pedagogy in physical education and co-curricular school sport.

Nationally and internationally, co-curricular school sport contexts are frequently identified as arenas in which learning ‘for life’ can be advanced. The discourse of ‘physical education and sport’ captures that learning associated with our field is, and needs to be in West’s (2004) terms, ‘lifewide as well as lifelong’ (p. 114). Yet in the field of physical education, we have far from comprehensive understandings of learning or pedagogies operating either across the curriculum or beyond it.

In 1997 the *Moving Through Sport* plan for junior sport (Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness & Leisure, 1997) highlighted the opportunities that quality sport experiences can provide for young people to develop a wide range of skills and abilities ‘which can benefit them and the communities in which they live’ (p. 8). Since then there has been a high level of government investment in sport in schools via initiatives such as Kiwisport and, despite declines, there are still very significant levels of participation (NZSSSC, 2010). Yet there is a notable lack of research addressing the contemporary educative value and potential of co-curricular sport. Arguably, there is an enhanced need for such research amidst diversifying patterns of provision.

Turning to my final point, there is a very significant body of research that demonstrates the scope for varied and creative interpretations of the curriculum texts, syllabuses and guidance materials that accompany ‘reforms’.

5. Rules are always open to interpretation. So are policy texts. Changing the pattern of play can, in time, be a basis for a change in the rules of the game.

That research also highlights that the creativity in the reading may be directed to either no change—a maintenance of status quo by accommodating new requirements within essentially unchanged programmes and pedagogies—or, in contrast, the pursuit of new pedagogical opportunities relating to physical education and sport within the curriculum and beyond it.

If I return to the political directive from Whitehall for a focus on competitive sport, my emphasis is therefore on the need for pedagogically creative approaches to that, and more specifically, for approaches that are designed to actively challenge some of the stereotypical social hierarchies and inequities that particular sports, taught in particular ways, can very openly reaffirm.

As Anne Flintoff (2008) has acknowledged, we certainly cannot guarantee that flexibility in policy translates into innovative pedagogical responses that are underpinned by a commitment to greater equity in physical education and sport. But, I restate the position that pedagogy and pedagogical relations are going to be fundamental in determining which of Kirk's scenarios eventuate for physical education and, furthermore, which we actively pursue.

CONCLUSION

Making the difference: People in policy and pedagogy

The memories we have 'of PE' may in many instances be as much memories of particular PE teachers and their teaching. Drawing on Fullan, Sparkes (1991) emphasised '...it is teachers who ultimately act as the gate-keepers of change in our schools. It is teachers who decide to change their practices or challenge their deep underlying philosophies. It is they who are the critical mediators of change in action' (p. 16).

I echo that but also stress that others on the policy and pedagogy field of play have very important roles to play in shaping futures of, and for, physical education and sport in schools. Like David Kirk (2010) I recognise the particular significance of teacher education and teacher educators in this regard. I also point to research and researchers as potentially bridging policy and professional gaps and fostering partnerships directed towards both policy and pedagogy.

In saying that, I reaffirm the need to see policy and pedagogy as relational and to recall the interest in equity underpinning my title. Individually and collectively, within schools, in teacher education, in government arenas and in public forums, there is arguably much still to be done to address long-standing inequities in physical education and sport that in many instances remain normalised, relating variously to gender, social class, ethnicity, ability and sexuality. Meaningful action from a young person's perspective needs to start with pedagogy and invariably will come down to individual teacher or coach or 'other provider', but the policy frame and context is key to creating the conditions in which these people, and developments in their pedagogy, can be supported. Furthermore, that pedagogy, the current state of play in PE, and perhaps more importantly, perceptions of it amongst parents and government arenas will frame thinking about future policies and investment and therefore the pedagogical possibilities that we may or may not be able to pursue.

The bottom line is that individuals in many arenas can and do make a very significant difference to policy and pedagogy in PE. I have been privileged to work alongside people across the full spectrum of positions in policy and PE—in schools, PE departments, curriculum authorities, professional associations, teacher education, sport bodies and government departments—who have had in common a desire to achieve a better outcome for young people.

All have arguably epitomised that taking risks is always risky—but also essential if we are to fulfil policy and pedagogical intentions that perhaps too often, and certainly, for some students, remain unfulfilled (Tinning, 2008).

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