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### School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTE): understanding new directions for schools and universities in Health and Physical Education

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## School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTE): understanding new directions for schools and universities in Health and Physical Education

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This paper critically analyzes a community collaborative approach for implementing Health and Physical Education (HPE) lessons within Gippsland primary schools (Victoria, Australia). The rural community collaborations reflected upon are embedded within the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) ‘School Centres for Teaching Excellence’ (SCTE) initiative and are timely with the current curriculum reform in Health and Physical Education. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on and share the experiential learning offered where the curriculum is relevant, engaging, contemporary, physically active, enjoyable and developmentally appropriate for all stakeholders; namely university pre-service teachers, primary school children and primary teachers. It is envisaged that through sharing the various dynamics involved in a SCTE program, educators may benefit and subsequently consider the suitability and possibility of establishing similar collaborations within their context.

**Keywords:** community collaboration; Health and Physical Education; partnerships; teacher education; schools; strength-based approach

### Introduction

In this paper I present a storyline, interweaving narrative threads from which emerge ideas, themes and patterns (Ewing, 2010). Thus, new directions for Health and Physical Education in university teacher education programs are advocated, optimizing strengths to enhance learning and subsequently health and wellbeing for all community stakeholders. This is consistent with the present national curriculum reform: ‘Young people will need a wide and adaptive set of knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the changing expectations of society and to contribute to the creation of a more productive, sustainable and just society’ (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012b, p. 7).

Ewing (2010, p. 17) defines reflection as the ‘deliberate and focused attempts to make greater meaning and understanding of our experience’. My storyline reflects on two community collaborative partnerships established at different periods of time. Both, however, involved the implementation of Health and Physical Education (HPE) lessons by university pre-service teachers in local Latrobe Valley primary schools, a requirement within the units offered in the Bachelor of Primary Education degree at Monash University (Gippsland campus).

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My storyline is presented via three major themes that underpin the collaborative partnerships. The first theme is 'Face value' which explores three sub-themes:

- (1) why change?;
- (2) investigating the planning for quality collaborative learning experiences; and
- (3) the appreciation of collaborative efforts.

The second major theme is 'Deeper Reflection', where three sub-themes are explored by investigating beneath the surface:

- (1) a strengths-based approach;
- (2) why the Health and Physical Education key learning area can be considered as most suitable; and
- (3) essential aspects to be considered and carefully planned for in any community partnership.

The third and final major theme is 'Sustainability of partnerships', where an honest reflection allows suggestions for enhancement in both the short and long term of such initiatives. These major themes and sub-themes shape the conceptual framework of my storyline which is diagrammatically represented in [Figure 1](#).

I am sharing my storyline to accentuate possible strengths of community collaboration, identify impediments and to advocate similar experiential learning practices in HPE teacher education.

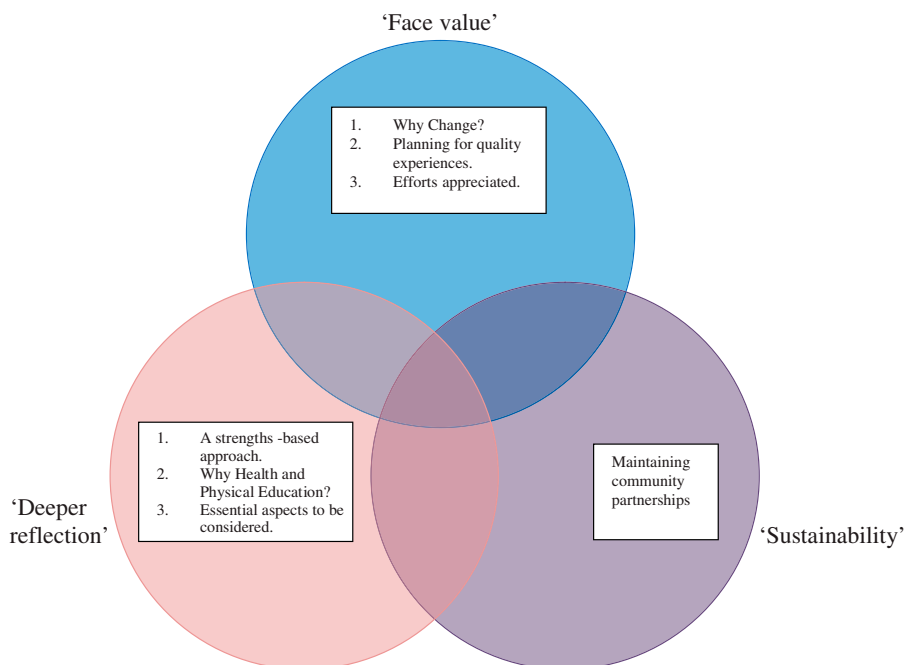


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Health and Physical Education Community partnerships in Gippsland.

## **Face value**

### ***Why change?***

Community partnerships were introduced in this context for two reasons: 1) to provide pre-service teachers with a meaningful learning and teaching experience; and 2) in an effort to provide children in rural schools with the goals established at the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008). The goals established at the Melbourne Declaration were 'about equity and social justice and improved learning outcomes for our most disadvantaged and isolated students' (Ewing, 2010, p. 127). This comprised a national document endorsed by all Australian states and territories (Macdonald, 2013). A commitment to action in achieving these goals includes: promoting world-class curriculum and assessment; and improving educational outcomes for the disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. A large percentage of the Gippsland region population is comprised of socio-economically disadvantaged groups and all six rural schools involved in the collaborations were located within these areas (DEECD, 2011).

The community collaborative partnerships were espoused by the DEECD School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTE) initiative in April 2012. This is an initiative being trialed in Victoria in efforts to strengthen teacher education.

The School Centres for Teaching Excellence initiative seeks to improve pre-service teacher education programs through stronger partnerships between schools and universities and a better integration of theory and practice. Seven partnerships between different Victorian universities and regions became operational in 2011. Early evidence indicates the further development of site-based or 'clinical' models of teacher education and extended practicum quality and design. (DEECD, 2012).

The SCTE initiative is part of the Victorian government education department's efforts to strengthen teacher education (DEECD, 2012) and subsequently, to enhance quality education in schools. Learning and teaching involving 'quality experiences' is a powerful aspect for research which suggests that 'quality of teaching has the largest impact on student learning outcomes, other than a student's socioeconomic background' (DEECD, 2012, p. 5). SCTE promotes elements that contribute to enhanced education and the HPE lessons within the Gippsland primary schools directly espouse the following:

- relevant and well-designed curriculum and assessment are essential to prepare young people to participate productively in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and society;
- acting early and providing support for those with greater needs will prevent disadvantaged students falling behind; and
- a coordinated and joined-up education system with strong partners across government and from business, community and non-government organisations will support better student outcomes. (DEECD, 2012, p. 5).

The present national curriculum reform is a general framework and will not warrant change by itself. 'State and territory school and curriculum authorities are

responsible for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum' (ACARA, 2010, p. 25) and it is what occurs in the local contexts of schools and classrooms that determine curriculum change. Hence, preparing teachers during university educational courses plays a major role in practices within schools in the future. However, history suggests that few reforms actually make it into classroom lessons (Cuban, 1990), and no improvement can then be made. This is where the SCTE initiative has impetus as it forces the theory to meet the practice and, in doing so, university courses to best prepare university pre-service teachers for their chosen career. This has been bluntly exhorted by education departments in recent times: 'Universities must better prepare teachers for the classroom' (DEECD, 2012, p. 6).

Preparation seems logical, but can be easily forgotten by the tertiary education sector's attempt to attract and appease clientele in the competition for enrolment numbers (and subsequent funding) in the present uncapped market. Such measures may possibly be influenced by offering units that prioritize students' perceptions of enjoyment and interest rather than best preparing them for becoming teachers in schools. This is a concern as a survey conducted by McKenzie, Rowley, Weldon, and Murphy (2011) found that less than 30% of principals felt that graduate teachers had acquired important skills for effective teaching and learning.

Another benefit that this initiative offers is the professional development for teachers in schools. Teachers can reinforce or be introduced to the latest educational practices through working collaboratively with university pre-service teachers and vice versa. Whipp, Hutton, Grove, and Jackson (2011) found that teachers working collaboratively with external providers (in this case university pre-service teachers) is associated with positive perceptions about the value of the physical activity, enables teachers to develop confidence and is less stressful.

### *Planning for quality experiences*

As stated earlier, there were two separate initial teacher education units involved in this SCTE Health and Physical Education initiative. The first community collaborative partnership occurred in Semester One, 2011, and involved university pre-service teachers providing children from local rural primary schools with swimming and water safety lessons. These lessons were embedded within the primary education unit EDF2611 'Experiencing Aquatic Environments', were free of charge and furthermore, the only school swimming lessons experienced by particular children. The second community collaborative partnership was conducted the following year, in Semester One, 2012, and involved the university pre-service teachers in unit EDF3619 'Sport and Physical Activity Education' conducting sport skill lessons for children from local primary schools. While swimming and sport skills are planned to continue within the collaborations established, at present the university units in the Primary Education course are offered biennially.

The focus on the educative outcomes of the HPE learning area deliberately began small with a long-term plan developed to involve more schools, children and a wider range of health and physical education. This realistic plan was manageable and supported by the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education.

The priority for Health and Physical Education will be to provide ongoing, developmentally appropriate opportunities for students to practise and apply the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to maintain and enhance their own and others' health and wellbeing. (ACARA, 2012a, p. 4).

The swimming community collaboration involved 39 university pre-service teachers providing low ratio, quality lessons free of charge for 80 children from two local primary schools. The children were Grades 2 and 3 (Churchill North Primary School) and Grades 3 and 4 (Lumen Christi Catholic Primary School), and involved three lessons over three weeks. These were conducted in the final three tutorials/workshops. I provided the dates and times for the primary schools' free lessons to the Latrobe Leisure's swimming supervisor who used the sports center's contact with the schools to make arrangements for these. Priority was given to children in year levels who would otherwise miss out on the opportunity.

Coordinating the participating schools for the 'Friday Sports Program' was more complex as it involved approximately 200 children from six schools. In January 2012, I visited the three closest primary schools in Churchill to meet with school principals. Not having previous knowledge of the children, it was decided that upper primary (Year Five and Six) would be best suited to the Sports Education curriculum model which is the unit's planned focus. The three Churchill schools were fortunately all within walking distance of the facilities. After the three schools had confirmed their willingness to participate the invitation was extended to other surrounding schools, again visiting principals, with a total of ten schools approached.

Within the program the school teachers worked collaboratively with the mostly enthusiastic university pre-service teachers. It was accentuated from the outset that by working collaboratively we could enable the program to be supervised efficiently. Hence, Monash University provided the equipment and five pre-service teachers per group (of approximately 20–25 children). Working in partnership with the local health industry (local leisure and sports centre) the stadium and field facilities were provided at no expense for schools. [Figure 2](#) lists the details provided to school communities and the university pre-service teachers.

When planning the Health and Physical Education lessons I deliberately held the swimming lessons in the last three weeks of the semester, allowing nine scheduled face-to-face weeks for preparation. This enabled time for building all university pre-service teachers' swimming and water safety confidence and competence. It also gave me time to assess whether they were ready to implement the lessons with maximum safety. Likewise, the Friday Sports began in Week Seven of the semester. Both units were for university pre-service teachers in the second and third year of their Bachelor of Education course; they had therefore successfully completed a number of teaching placements. The swimming unit required planning three sequential swimming and water safety lessons as the first piece of assessment and constructive feedback was provided. The class-time preparation involved sharing lesson segments and activities through peer teaching and learning episodes, allowing for suggestions, possible alternatives or improvements to be offered by peers.

Within the Friday Sports unit similar preparation was carried out before primary school lessons were conducted. The university pre-service teachers were given clear guidelines and steps. They selected their own teaching groups and considered the

Monash University/Latrobe Valley Term Two Friday School Sports – Years 5 & 6

What

Friday Sports is an opportunity for the Monash University Education students (who have chosen units of interest in Physical Education) to conduct modified sport lessons for Year 5 & 6 children in the local area.

Where

These lessons will be held at the Latrobe Leisure Centre Churchill, both inside the stadium and on the Hockey Field. There is no cost for the use of the facilities and in the case of rain all sports will be conducted within the stadium.

When

The first five weeks of term two: Friday April 20, 27 and May 4, 11 & 18. Some schools will attend between 10:30 and 11:30 am, others will attend between 1:15 and 2:15 pm.

Why

The children benefit and the university students (future teachers) benefit.

How

There will be 4 sports for the children to choose from during their school's session. This will be prepared before the first week so that schools are evenly mixed together. The children will remain in their particular sport for the five weeks.

Monash University will provide the equipment, facilities and the university students who have planned a five week modified sport unit. The schools will be responsible for the implementation of their own school excursion policies (drink bottles, permission forms, first aid and teacher supervision). While the university students are very capable and have a great deal of potential, they are not qualified teachers and their experience is limited. Each school is responsible for arranging their own transport to and from the Latrobe Leisure Centre – Churchill.

Proposed Schedule – Latrobe Leisure Centre Churchill

<u>Time of session</u>	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Number of children</u>	<u>Modified Sports</u>
<b>10:30 – 11:30</b>	Lumen Christi (Yr 5 & 6)	40	Netball, Basketball Tee Ball & Cricket
	Churchill North (Yr 5 & 6)	39	
	Yinnar South (Yr 5 & 6)	1	
	<b>80</b>		
<b>1:15 – 2:15</b>	Churchill (Yr 5 & 6)	55	Netball, Basketball Football & Soccer
	Hazelwood North (Yr 5 & 6)	35	
	Thorpdale (Yr 5 & 6)	16	
	<b>106</b>		

Figure 2. Program details for schools and university students.

facilities, equipment, the various ages and abilities of the children, group interests and expertise. Groups decided on a sport, developed a sequential unit plan and then each university pre-service teacher accepted responsibility for designing one of the five weeks. Each week was to focus on a particular skill (or strategy), progressively developed through fun modified games (focus of a previous prerequisite unit) and modified version of the sports.

Teaching 'flexibility' and having realistic expectations were addressed, as too were having the confidence to adjust rules and plans as required. This was achieved by reflecting on experiences and sharing various scenarios and perspectives. Also, the university pre-service teachers shared their planning with tutorial peers. This involved walking them through the planned unit five week sequences and teaching



some of the activities. Hence, a physical ‘brainstorm’ activity took place during the workshop and feedback was offered. Time was allocated before and after the primary school lessons so that reflection, answering queries and preparation of equipment and space were maximized. Furthermore, the university pre-service teachers used online technology systems (Moodle 2 and Blackboard) for communicating and planning when not on campus.

### ***Efforts appreciated***

Early responses from stakeholders suggest that they all valued the enhanced learning community collaboration generated. The children from the local primary schools were excited, parents attended lessons in support and comments from teachers, teaching assistants, parents and the children expressed gratitude. One teacher wrote ‘My kids had a ball with the swimming. They were disappointed that it was only for the extra two weeks (one week was a holiday for this school). Like I said to you then, any time you need children feel free to approach us. We are very willing to assist’ (personal communication, 2011, July 23).

Feedback from the university pre-service teachers indicated that they also greatly valued the opportunity to teach children. Hence, the integration of theory and practice (DEECD, 2012) enhanced the quality of the experience. Within the Student Evaluation of the Teaching Unit (SETU), university pre-service teacher overall satisfaction with the quality of the swimming and water safety unit received a median of 4 out of 5 (5 being strongly agree that they were satisfied with the quality and 1 being strongly disagree) (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011a). This was a 100% increase from the last time this unit was offered at the Gippsland campus in Semester One, 2009, when the overall satisfaction with the quality of the unit median received 2 out of 5 (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2009). It is important to note that all survey feedback referred to in this paper sits within the Gippsland campus category of over 15 enrolments and 10 or more surveys completed.

Furthermore, I was commended by the Chief Executive Officer of Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA) Registered Training Organisation (personal communication, 2011, June 24) based on feedback the university pre-service teachers expressed specifically about the Swim Australia Teacher (SAT) course. The SAT swim instructor course was a pathway embedded within the unit, enabling the opportunity for the primary children’s swimming lessons to take place. The overall satisfaction for the quality of the course received 4.7 out of 5 in the SAT participant evaluations summary (1 being unsatisfactory to 5 excellent). University pre-service teachers’ value for the learning was evidenced by comments made in the ASCTA SAT course evaluations summary, where remarks included that the most helpful aspects of the course were: ‘To be able to understand how to perform the swimming strokes and be able to practise them before teaching’ (ASCTA, 2011, p. 1); ‘Explanations, videos and working with students from primary schools’ (ASCTA, 2011, p. 1); and also, ‘Being taught the correct swimming movements, then being able to practise them before micro teaching’ (ASCTA, 2011, p. 1).

Similar to the pre-service teacher feedback for swimming, the opportunity to provide learning experiences for the primary children through the ‘Friday Sport Program’ was also strongly valued. SETU completed for Friday Sports again

supported pre-service teachers' perceptions of the program's improvement. The overall satisfaction with the quality of the unit received a median of 4.56 out of 5 (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012a). The last time this unit was offered at the Gippsland campus was in Semester One, 2010, when the overall satisfaction with the quality of the unit median was 2.5 out of 5 (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2010).

School staff and children expressed their appreciation and desire to continue working collaboratively in the future. This was evidenced by schools who originally notified Monash that they were not available in certain weeks, changing their initial plans to attend the sports sessions or in one case attending half of the one-hour session to appease the children. Comments articulated by university pre-service teachers evidenced value for the learning that occurred. The best aspects of the unit included: 'Being able to take what we have learnt in the unit and actually teach primary students' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1); and also 'The practical interaction with the children was great. I felt this experience was very valuable and I had the opportunity to learn much more than listening to theory in a tutorial. This was my favourite unit this semester' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1).

## **Deeper reflection**

### ***A strengths-based approach***

Community collaborations optimized resources available within the Churchill community as well as the wider Victorian and Australian communities. Partnerships initially established (February 2011) were between: Monash University (Gippsland, Faculty of Education); Registered Training Organizations (RTO), namely ASCTA and Royal Life Saving Society Australia (RLSSA) which in the state of Victoria is known as Lifesaving Victoria; the local health industry (Latrobe Leisure Churchill – Latrobe City Council); and two local Primary schools, Churchill North Primary School and Lumen Christi Catholic Primary School. All relations with the various stakeholders were being established for the first time. The pathways established were underpinned by a strengths-based approach which 'supports a critical view of health education with a focus on the learner embedded within a community's structural facilitators, assets and constraints, and is enacted through resource-oriented and competence-raising approaches to learning' (Macdonald, 2013, p. 100).

Within the Bachelor of Primary Education course at Monash – Gippsland campus, pre-service teachers selecting 'Experiencing Aquatic Environments' as an elective are required to hold a current teacher of swimming and water safety qualification by unit completion. This is a requirement mandated by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) (VIT, 2012) for registration as a primary school Physical Education teacher. Hence, pathways created included the opportunity for the pre-service teachers to obtain swim instructor qualifications in ASCTA – SAT, RLSSA Bronze Medallion (BM) and RLSSA Resuscitation (RE) courses. Students were required to have current resuscitation accreditation to obtain a SAT swimming instructor qualification, which could also be awarded during the unit workshop structure. ASCTA is Australia's peak professional swimming body and courses are recognized by International Federation of Swim Teachers Association (IFSTA), thus providing a world-class curriculum for all stakeholders in support of the

commitment to action in achieving the Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008).

The unit at Gippsland campus previously required that pre-service teachers complete a swimming and water safety instructor qualification during their own time and present evidence. It was common practice for students in the past to obtain an Austswim qualification at the cost of approximately \$400 which lasted three years. Redesigning the unit workshop program involved a focus on set unit objectives which simultaneously created pathways aligned with the Registered Training Organizations' (RTOs) swimming and water safety course units of competency. The students had the option of supplementing workshops by completing the ASCTA SAT CD-ROM and assessment to gain qualification.

The SAT swimming qualification cost students \$100 and lasts four years. SAT was nationally and internationally recognized as an equivalent qualification to Austswim. The Bronze medallion cost the students \$15.70 and the Resuscitation cost \$10.50. These expenditures were significantly reduced from the usual prices of approximately \$125 and \$50 respectively. It was evident that ASCTA and RLSSA clearly valued the opportunity to promote swimming and water safety, especially within rural areas such as Gippsland.

The sport skills community collaboration links were established in January 2012 between: Monash University (Gippsland, Faculty of Education); the local health industry (Latrobe Leisure Churchill – Latrobe City Council); and six rural primary schools:

- Churchill Primary School
- Hazelwood North Primary School
- Thorpdale Primary School
- Churchill North Primary School
- Lumen Christi Catholic Primary School
- Yinnar South Primary School.

Adjustments were made from the previous delivery of the unit: university pre-service teachers designing and teaching lessons amongst peers to experience learning and teaching to implementing the Friday Sports program for primary school children. This program ran over five weeks and was the first program of this nature to be conducted within the Latrobe Valley area (Gippsland).

Although relations had been previously initiated with the sports center and two of the local primary schools through swimming (Semester One, 2011), these did require further development. For four of the schools involved it was the first time they had collaborated with Monash for physical activities and, in many instances, the first time within any curriculum area. The local leisure and sports center expressed their support for the sport activities involving the local primary schools by subsidizing the cost. Monash were charged for two netball courts only and used three courts and the hockey field. This enabled my vision of involving local primary schools during the unit at no or minimal cost.

Comments made by university pre-service teachers within the SETU evaluations of the units advocated meaningful learning experiences through the strengths-based approach. The best aspects of the units included 'Obtaining my SAT certificate and CPR certificate. Overall, fun and educational, with a teacher with clear, precise

explanations and relating the coursework to field based examples' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011b, p. 1). Other students commented as follows: 'The practical elements of the class, improving swimming skills, learning CPR and being able to practise teaching children while at university with the support of the lecturer' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011b, p. 1); 'Being able to implement our lesson plans with children from primary schools' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011b, p. 1); and 'The practical side was very rewarding and confidence building in both personal and social spheres' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011b, p. 1). Another comment synthesized various aspects:

Learning how to teach swimming and the opportunity to teach kids how to swim in prac. All aspects that we learnt about related to teaching primary kids (which hasn't happened in the last two years of PE). Tim's explanations and teaching was fantastic with the use of his prior experiences etc. And also his hard work to help us reach success in all tasks. (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011, Q11)

In the ASCTA SAT course evaluations summary, students remarked that the most helpful aspects of the course included 'observing other teaching' (ASCTA, 2011, p. 1); and 'The "teacher-student" format ensured the material was thoroughly covered with hands on experiences' (ASCTA, 2011, p. 1). SETU comments for the Friday Sports unit suggested the best aspects included 'having the children from local primary schools coming in so we could work with them and put our lesson plans into action to see what worked and what didn't' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1). Also, 'The chance to take our own class was a great opportunity' (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1).

### ***Why health and physical education?***

There are three key reasons why I argue HPE as a learning area is most suitable and should be prioritized for community partnerships. The first reason is the ability for this key learning area to promote 'health literacy' which assists all stakeholders to understand structural barriers to achieving health and wellbeing (Macdonald, 2012). The second reason is that it advocates the enjoyment associated with learning in, through and about movement and the third is for the exemplary role Health and Physical Education enables in promoting equity in education.

#### *Health literacy*

It can be justifiably argued that HPE should be given a major priority in today's education, as it is necessary for holistic lifelong health and wellbeing. It is an issue greatly valued by governments responsible for costs involved with the wellness of citizens, especially considering the influence of hypokinetic diseases and the strong correlation research indicates physical activity plays in enabling optimal health and quality of life, including maximizing children's learning (Corbin, Welk, Corbin & Welk, 2011; Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 2011). Hence, 'a broader notion of "health literacy" address[es] the capacity of individuals to understand and act on messages not only in health-related settings, but also in the social communities in which they live' (Macdonald, 2013, p. 101).

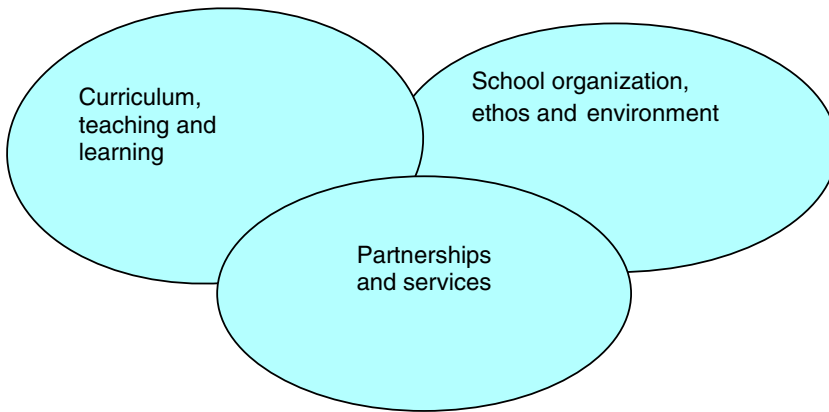


Figure 3. Health Promoting Schools Framework Model (World Health Organization, 1994).

Schools are identified as key settings for ‘health literacy’, defined by the World Health Organization as ‘an individual’s ability to gain access to, understand and use health information and services in ways that promote and maintain good health’ (ACARA, 2012a, p. 4). My previous experience involved implementing HPE programs in primary schools using the Health Promoting Schools model, which espouses health literacy:

Health promoting schools are schools which display, in everything they say and do, support for and commitment to enhancing the emotional, social, physical and moral well being of all members of their school community (Centre for Primary Education, 1998, p. 2).

The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) concept was developed to promote health in education (World Health Organization, 1996). The HPS model describes the broad, holistic framework for the implementation of health education beyond the boundaries of the classroom (Queensland Government, 2003), offering ‘a suitable approach because it encompasses a range of influences internal and external to the school environment’ (O’Dea & Maloney 2000, p. 4). The HPS model comprises three overlapping elements: (1) curriculum, teaching and learning; (2) school organization, ethos and environment; and, (3) partnerships and services (Figure 3).

Furthermore, the model draws parallels with the Minister of Education-designed ‘commitment to action’, which acts as a stepping stone for implementation of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). This includes:

- (1) developing stronger partnerships;
- (2) supporting quality teaching and school leadership;
- (3) strengthening early childhood education;
- (4) enhancing middle years development;
- (5) supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions;
- (6) promoting world-class curriculum and assessment;

- (7) improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds; and
- (8) strengthening accountability and transparency.

The HPS model and the ‘commitment to action’ offered direction for the creation of community pathways and partnerships. This was evidenced by the university pre-service teacher comment that the best aspect in the Friday Sports unit was ‘Spending time teaching kids and seeing them grow along with ourselves’ (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1).

#### *Enjoying learning through movement*

Health and Physical Education is the only learning area in the school curriculum that focusses explicitly on developing movement skills and concepts children and young people need to participate in physical activities with competence and confidence. The movement knowledge, skills and dispositions students develop in Health and Physical Education will encourage them to become lifelong participants in physical activity (ACARA, 2012a, p. 4).

Comments made by university pre-service teachers within SETU evidenced optimal movement and value for movement. The best aspects included ‘Doing lots of practical work’ (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011b, p. 1); and ‘Swimming with the children’ (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2011b, p. 1). The ‘practical component’ (ASCTA, 2011, p. 1) was expressed as a strength and the Friday Sports program was regarded as the best aspect of the ‘Sport and Physical Activity Education’ unit. Further statements included: ‘Being hands on and teaching students’ (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1); ‘Doing Sports Ed with the Grade 5 & 6 students’ (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1); and ‘Seeing the kids enjoying themselves and having fun’ (Monash University Faculty of Education, 2012b, p. 1). Hence, movement was a focus of learning and a medium for learning (Macdonald, 2013).

#### *Promoting equity in education*

The Health and Physical Education curriculum will draw on its multi-disciplinary base with students learning to question the social, cultural and political factors that influence health and well-being. In doing so students will explore matters such as inclusiveness, power inequalities, taken-for-granted assumptions, diversity and social justice, and develop strategies to improve their own and others’ health and wellbeing. (ACARA, 2012a, p. 5).

The ‘socio-cultural’ approach was adopted for community collaborative program motivation, design and implementation. Hence, this approach influenced university pre-service teachers when designing the three-week swimming lessons and five-week ‘Friday Sports’ units and will continue to do so as plans for future collaborations are worked towards. The ‘socio-cultural approach’ framed the preparation of lessons which recognizes that students are influenced by the different physical, social, cultural, political, economic and environmental forces affecting their wellbeing (Dann, 1999) and associated critical reflection. This approach also promotes social justice, namely through three principles; equity, acknowledging diversity and

creating supportive environments (QSCC, 1999). Quality HPE lessons were specifically planned to be fun and able to be enjoyed by all. Hence, lessons were safe and developmentally appropriate, while children's participation was optimal, inclusive and challenging. These aspects are embedded within the latest national HPE curriculum under the nomenclature 'critical inquiry', which endeavors to 'engage all students as active learners and, while doing so, question the "taken-for-granted" of how physical activity and health practices and opportunities play out locally and globally' (Macdonald, 2013, p. 102).

### **Essential aspects to be considered**

Two essential 'aspects for success' are identified within community partnerships, namely that they are:

- (1) deliberately tailored for a specific context; and
- (2) stakeholders are open to the possibility of development and success (belief).

### *Context*

Context cannot be ignored if serious efforts are to be applied to establishing community collaborations or any curriculum reform for that matter. This is recognized by the ACARA:

Jurisdictions, systems and schools will be able to implement the Australian Curriculum in ways that value teachers' professional knowledge, reflect local contexts and take into account individual students' family, cultural and community backgrounds. Schools and teachers determine pedagogical and other delivery considerations (ACARA, 2010, p. 10).

Community collaboration within the context of Latrobe Valley is strongly supported by the Discussion Paper 'A Tertiary Education Plan for Gippsland, Victoria' (DEECD, 2011) and forms present Gippsland educational objectives. This was written specifically for the context of Gippsland using recent national and state-level developments, including the Review of Australian Higher Education. This paper stated that it 'encourages building on existing partnerships and strengthening articulation arrangements between providers' (DEECD, 2011, p. 4). Also, light was shed on the difficulties faced by many stakeholders in efforts to do so; however, it was urged that such pathways were essential for the sustainability of Gippsland's education.

Positive experiences for children and their families build an optimistic image of Monash University within the community. The discussion paper listed raising aspirations and improved awareness as a targeted strategy, specifically 'school engagement/outreach programs addressing the perception of tertiary education in the primary and secondary school environment' (DEECD, 2011, p. 21).

The second essential factor that contributes to the success of curriculum reform through partnerships is stakeholders' belief.



*Belief*

Inspiration to attempt community collaboration was my 'belief' in experiential learning and teaching. From previous teaching HPE experiences, it was my belief that through combining the strengths of various community sectors it was a strong possibility that learning would be enhanced for the university pre-service teachers, could offer professional development for school teachers involved and deliver a quality experience for children from local primary schools. This stimulated the drive necessary to create the initial pathways established for swimming and water safety. Hence, an understanding of the demands, priorities and pressures of classroom teachers was advantageous.

Real change involves transformation of people's beliefs about their surroundings which can be threatening and stressful for the teachers involved (Sparkes, 1991). Furthermore, transformations often result in conflict, loss and struggle which are fundamental to successful change (Fullan, 1982). The appellation 'real change' is referred to by DinanThompson (2001, p. 9) more appropriately as 'authentic change', which includes the 'important elements of emotion and the role of interactions in teacher change'. Hargreaves (1997, p. 109) warns that if emotional dimensions are ignored during curriculum change then 'emotions and feelings will only re-enter the change process by the back door'. Therefore, authentic change takes into consideration the micro-politics which often cause change to fail (Datnow, 1998; DinanThompson, 2002; Sparkes, 1990). Community partnerships may be perceived as stressful and threatening for various stakeholders. Hence, for partnerships and relationships to be sustained requires time, understanding, effort and personable attributes on behalf of the leader, but most importantly it requires all stakeholders to believe that the efforts are worthwhile.

**Sustainability: beyond the rose-colored glasses**

Diverse teaching experiences in various roles were drawn upon when establishing community collaborations for SCTE, which assisted in continuing relations with stakeholders. The strengths-based collaborations involved HPE curriculum change for schools and university teacher education. Previous experiences would often be reflected upon to maintain realistic expectations in an attempt to overcome barriers, to better understand the complexities involved when dealing with many different individuals with at times different priorities and subsequently to enable sustainability.

I approached the two community collaborations with realistic expectations of the possible micro-political dynamics involved in establishing relationships requiring change. Interestingly, within this 'storyline' it was not such identified complexities involving relationships that were the major impediments. Generally, the willingness of stakeholders to be involved within the partnership was an imminent strength. Rather, it was the systems in place within the university, schools, leisure center and educational policies that posed the greatest threat to sustainability, often referred to as 'neo-liberalism'.

A requirement for the Presenter of Swimming and Water Safety for any provider involved completion of a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE40110) (personal communication, 2011, February 2). While this is the requirement for anyone wishing to become a swimming and water safety presenter, it did seem



something of a paradox that a university lecturer with a number of education degrees, 15 years' full-time teaching experience in schools, three years' full-time teaching experience in tertiary education and holding current teacher registration, is then required to complete further study to demonstrate unit of competencies for a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Hence, 'some policies and regulations governing funding and the delivery of training are seen by rural providers as working against their efforts to supply innovative solutions to meet the training needs of their communities' (Clayton, Blom, Bateman, & Carden, 2004, p. 5). This course requirement for the training purposes was at a cost (\$1600), was time consuming and created a definite barrier.

My choice in ASCTA SAT nationally recognized course RTO20948 was an easy one to make, but again one that was made difficult due to change caused for organizations within country Victoria (Gippsland), where policies were at times only in place for Austswim as a swimming provider (Gosper, 2012). The paradox in ideologies between capitalism of business that some providers adopt and social justice of education, specifically the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (December 2008), did not enable particular partnerships to be established.

Another problem for the community collaborations has been funding. It is surprising that there has been no funding available for either unit in Gippsland or equipment for the development of such a well-received program, despite numerous applications for internal and external funding. The Health and Physical Education community collaborative lessons are espoused by the DEECD School Centre for Teaching Excellence initiative, yet this has not prospered any financial assistance. When approaching schools situated a distance from the venue for the Friday Sports program, the cost of transport did become a major barrier. While the three Churchill schools were able to walk to sessions, other schools' only option to participate was to travel distances of up to 30km by bus. Thorpdale primary school children were required to pay \$7.50 each week over the five weeks to attend the Friday Sport sessions which was an unfortunate expense. Purchasing equipment was problematic and even more so when some equipment went missing from the community stadium. The issue with funding has been stressed by the Gonski report (ABC News, 2012) which found that similarly, 'school funding is not simply a financial matter. Rather, it is about strengthening and securing Australia's future'. Furthermore, 'every child should have access to the best possible education, regardless of where they live, the income of their family, or the school they attend' (ABC News, 2012). Strengths-based partnerships will often require financial assistance for initial course development, extension and sustainability. Plans have been made to continue to develop swimming and sport sessions within the schools and to extend HPE learning opportunities across primary schools' HPE curriculum.

As stated earlier, for these partnerships and relationships to be sustained requires time, understanding, effort, personable attributes and belief. Finding resolutions to barriers situated within policies and systems is time consuming. Time is needed to meet with schools and principals, to negotiate with RTOs, to complete further qualifications, negotiate with the local health industry, complete funding applications, to calculate one's approach to overcome obstacles, problem solve and satisfy stakeholders. This will require addressing for collaborative communities such as the

SCTE initiative to remain viable and appealing to university education faculties throughout Australia.

### Conclusion

The SCTE initiative, specifically the two community collaborations reflected upon within this storyline, do elicit patterns and themes of obstacles, benefits and required support. This storyline reflection is intended to offer guidance to various stakeholders in understanding contemporary directions and possible future priorities for Health and Physical Education. Furthermore, it can be argued through the 'futures-oriented' curriculum perspective that community collaborations optimizing health and wellbeing are ideal for implementing the new Australian HPE curriculum.

Benefits need to be given priority and the efforts necessary for establishing partnerships need to be perceived as an investment. The purpose of collaborative partnerships was to provide 'hands-on' practical, experiential learning and teaching for the university pre-service teachers and to provide quality physical activity experiences for local primary school children. From a Gippsland tertiary education perspective, Health and Physical Education perspective, DEECD perspective, Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians' perspective and rural and isolated schools' perspective, the effort of creating such pathways is vindicated. The School Centres for Teaching Excellence initiative seeks to improve university pre-service teacher education programs through stronger partnerships between schools and universities and a better integration of theory and practice. Literature, university pre-service teacher evaluations for units and feedback from community stakeholders all support the development of this initiative within the context of Gippsland.

### Notes on contributor

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