



Every-body counts? Understanding health and physical education in the primary school

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Introduction

In this project we are working in two local primary schools to collaboratively re-imagine health and physical education. Little is known about what goes on in the name of health and physical education in the primary school, nor about how contemporary health initiatives are impacting on teaching and learning. This is especially important given the current positioning of primary schools as key contributors to the health and well-being of young children.

Aims

In this project we will address current gaps in understandings of Health and Physical Education curriculum and pedagogy and collaboratively explore how HPE in primary schools can contribute to equitable outcomes for a diverse range of learners. Our specific research questions are

- What are the characteristics of HPE teaching and learning in primary schools and classrooms?
- How do teachers take up, adapt and deploy innovative approaches in HPE, and with what effects on student learning?

Why is this research important?

The project affords both teachers and researchers an opportunity to explore ways an extraordinarily complex health policy environment contours teaching and learning in HPE and to reflect on what currently constitutes HPE in their particular contexts. It also enables an exploration of alternative ways that HPE could be programmed, taught and learnt in primary schools in an effort to improve educational outcomes for diverse learners.

What we plan to do

This project consists of four phases

- 1) Building knowledge about current practice—an audit of the local/national health environment and descriptive case studies of our two partner schools.
- 2) Expanding repertoires and reconstructing practice—considering the ways diverse learners' needs may be addressed in HPE.
- 3) Implementing and evaluating innovative HPE practices—what works for teachers and students?
- 4) Extending the learning to the broader community—how change in practice can be sustained and spread.

Data

Data collected will include

- interviews with teachers
- focus group interviews with students
- observations (e.g. school environment; lessons)
- document analysis (e.g. policies; curriculum; media; planning templates; student workbooks)
- reflective journaling (teacher/researcher/student)

Analysis

Our analysis of data is informed by an understanding that teachers' work is inevitably influenced by political, professional *and* personal discourses. We are interested in how these discourses contour teachers' practice and what this might mean for diverse learners in their respective schools. Qualitative strategies for analysis (e.g. thematic coding; discourse analysis; interpretive repertoires) will be used to address each of our research questions.

Our partners:

The two schools involved (Maungatapu School, Tauranga and Knighton Normal School, Hamilton) have long-established partnerships with the University of Waikato, and afford opportunities to work in contexts that are culturally diverse.

Our partners are teachers (Shane Kweon, Joel Devcich, Joanne Naera and Deirdre Duggan) who are keen to examine their own HPE practices and enhance student learning in their school contexts. The mix of teachers and researchers has been drawn together as each brings different and complimentary knowledge and experience to contribute towards the goals of the project.

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