

# Physical education in primary schools: holding on to the past or heading for a different future?

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## **Abstract**

*This paper reports on research undertaken by Petrie, Jones, and McKim (2007)<sup>1</sup> during 2006, as part of a Ministry of Education funded evaluation of the impacts of professional learning on curricular and co-curricular physical activity. While the evaluative research explored physical activity in the broadest sense, this paper concentrates specifically on the aspect of the research that focussed on physical education [PE] as a curriculum subject.*

*The paper provides a snapshot of how PE is understood and practised by generalist teachers in ten primary schools. It then identifies some of the factors that contribute to interpretations and delivery of PE, and issues that need to be addressed if PE is to move beyond the past and towards an alternative future.*

**Keywords:** primary schools; physical education; curriculum; pedagogy

## **Introduction**

Given the recent preoccupation with children and [lack of] physical activity and the role that schools and physical education [PE] programmes play in supporting the development of physically active children, it seems timely to examine what currently constitutes PE in primary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. This paper reports on research undertaken by Petrie, Jones, and McKim (2007) during 2006, as part of a Ministry of Education funded evaluation of the impact of professional learning on curricular and co-curricular physical activity in primary schools. This research involved teachers, principals, students, and parents/caregivers from ten primary schools throughout New Zealand. This paper draws on the data gathered in these schools before their involvement in a programme of professional development (PD), which included a specific focus on enhancing the delivery of PE. This baseline data provides a snapshot of PE programmes and practices in primary schools and can be viewed as representative of many primary schools which have had limited access to PE-focussed PD over the past ten years.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be accessed at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/25204/25331>

This paper begins by exploring the question: 'What is PE in primary schools?' before considering some issues associated with current programmes and practices. Having offered some provocation, I identify a range of areas for consideration as we endeavour to enhance PE practices in primary schools.

### **What is PE in primary schools?**

The varied nature and make-up of primary school PE means that addressing this question is complex; no two schools have exactly the same programme and individual teachers bring their own perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs to their teaching of PE. Nevertheless, interviews with 27 generalist teachers and surveys of over 75 generalist teachers from ten primary schools highlighted widespread similarities in programmes and practices related to PE. These common patterns are discussed below in an effort to provide a description of PE as it appears to be commonly practised in primary schools.

One of the initial difficulties in describing current practice in PE is defining what is meant by the term 'PE'. Teachers in the ten schools used the term 'PE' to encompass the range of physical activity opportunities, both planned and unplanned, that occur during class time, regardless of whether these were linked in any way to *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* [HPE curriculum] (Ministry of Education, 1999). These included: syndicate/class sport, the *Perceptual Motor Programme* (PMP)<sup>2</sup>, sports' afternoons, tabloids, daily fitness, skill-based PE sessions, and incidental physical activity opportunities such as games and 'brain' breaks. Indeed, for some teachers, weekly PE programmes consisted solely of fitness and/or syndicate sports. For others, PE also included skill-based sessions, along with sport and daily fitness sessions.

Regardless of the terminology used to describe PE, teachers in these ten primary schools understood PE to be primarily about three things:

- getting kids fit;
- preparing students for games and sport, both school and interschool events; and
- providing students with fun opportunities to play and be active.

Within these three agendas, teachers identified their role as helping students to: learn physical skills for participation in games/sport; develop their knowledge and understanding of how their bodies work and move and how to look after them; and develop positive attitudes toward physical activity.

Notwithstanding teachers' assurances that PE, in particular the physical development aspects, was important for all students, teachers unanimously reported that PE was not always delivered regularly as part of their classroom programme: They identified a range

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<sup>2</sup> PMP is a motor co-ordination programme for school age children.

of pressures or factors that compromised the time given to PE, including: the weather; whole school commitments, such as productions; and unfinished topic studies or other classroom tasks. It became increasingly apparent that, for many teachers, PE was something that happened only when all the other work was complete or the students needed a break from the classroom.

### **The PE programme**

While PE was conceptualised by teachers in a variety of ways, it became evident from their written responses (n =75) that PE programmes in the ten schools focused largely on the following three achievement aims of the HPE curriculum:

- *A2 - understand and appreciate, as a result of experience, the contribution of physical activity to personal well-being;*
- *B1 - develop and apply, in context, a wide range of movement skills and facilitate the development of physical competence;*
- *B2 - develop a positive attitude towards physical activity by accepting challenges and extending their personal capabilities and experiences (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 8).*

It would appear that these achievement aims are the focus of, and align most closely with, the established programmes and practices of primary school programmes. The research findings suggest that the one factor which drives classroom PE programmes and practice is the school/syndicate overview which identifies the 'sports' that will be taught each term. The teachers surveyed also commented on the need to cover particular topics at set times during the year so that students were prepared for school-wide events, such as cross-country and athletic sports. In urban and semi-rural schools in particular, PE also provided teachers with opportunities to prepare their teams for inter-school events. There is a range of topics which is common to all schools and which remains largely unchanged over time, apart from some advancement in level or a slight change of focus. These topics include:

- aquatics;
- small ball skills, alternatively referred to as summer games (e.g. cricket, softball, paddertennis);
- large ball skills, alternatively referred to as winter games (e.g. netball, basketball, soccer, volleyball);
- gymnastics;
- cross-country, athletics (including run, jump, throw) and, in some schools, triathlon;
- dance and movement, folk dancing and/or creative dance;
- fitness (typically in the form of skipping, running, or Jump Jam)

Teachers from one school, a large urban school with an ethnic composition made up predominantly of Maori and Pasifika students, indicated that they also included Te Reo Kori as a topic in their programme. One other school, with a Principal who had previously been a PE specialist and who valued motor skill development, ran a structured PMP programme in the junior syndicate, as part of their weekly PE programme.

The common topics, excluding Te Reo Kori and PMP, reflect the programme detailed in the *Standard 2 to Form 2 Teacher's Handbook* (Department of Education, 1964) and the topics outlined in the 1987 *Guide to Success* (Department of Education, 1987). This suggests that the PE programmes in New Zealand primary schools are long-established and grounded in historical and traditional models, based on a year-plan where the learning aims are achieved through sports-based and multi-activity oriented programmes.

### **The pedagogy of PE**

Practices of the past are also evident in the pedagogies used in the delivery of PE lessons. Teachers at all ten schools indicated that, once they had been given the year-long plan by either a syndicate leader or teacher-in-charge of PE (sometimes referred to as teacher-in-charge of sport), they were generally left to their own devices to determine the make up of each 'unit.' Given that most teachers understood PE to be predominantly about getting fit, learning physical skills, and being able to play games/sports, teachers structured lessons around 'keeping kids moving.' As a result, regardless of the topic or focus, the majority of lessons followed a similar format: warm-up or energiser activity, skill teaching/practices, minor games (or races), and warm down.

In relation to the 'spectrum of teaching styles' (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002), teachers appear to present PE lessons using predominantly 'command and practice.' Teacher-centred approaches may assist in the early stages of physical skill development (Macfayden, 2000), however, it would appear that such approaches are favoured by primary school teachers as a mechanism to manage the learning environment. This is inconsistent with the student-centred approaches generally accepted and advocated in other curriculum areas and detailed in the HPE curriculum support materials, such as the *Curriculum in Action series*<sup>3</sup>, produced by the Ministry of Education (1999 – 2004).

Some teachers suggested that they preferred to delegate the teaching of PE to someone else - either a colleague or an external 'expert.' One school utilised outside experts to run particular sport sessions, such as touch rugby, for all year levels as part of the PE programme. Six schools indicated that they used offsite facilities, particularly aquatic centres, and the experts available at these venues to deliver part of the PE programme. In two schools, teachers swapped classes so that each could teach in their 'specialist' areas e.g. music and PE. The introduction of Jump Jam<sup>4</sup> into their schools had allowed some teachers to tick this of as their PE lesson, particularly when they were too busy addressing learning in other curriculum areas to include additional PE opportunities.

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<sup>3</sup> The Curriculum in Action series (Ministry of Education, 1999-2004) includes 22 publications designed to support teachers with the implementation of the HPE curriculum. Of these publications, 13 are designed to support PE in primary schools. A list of these publications can be found in the HPE community section of Te Kete Ipurangi ([www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz)).

<sup>4</sup> Jump Jam is a resource kit of 'Kidz Aerobix', designed specifically for primary and intermediate schools. It is a programme designed to support teachers to deliver physical activity in the form of fitness/dance routines. Jump Jam is a commercial product.

## **Holding on to the past**

While there are pockets of practice that differ from the snapshot of PE already outlined, the commonalities across the schools in this study suggest that there is much to consider in relation to the historically-shaped way in which PE in New Zealand primary schools is conceived and delivered. The next section of this paper seeks to briefly explore primary school PE programmes and practices in relation to three main areas: teachers' engagement with the HPE curriculum; the 'cookbook' approach to programming; and the reliance on teacher-directed pedagogies. These areas appear to play a significant role in the continuation of historically-based PE in primary schools.

### **Teacher engagement with curriculum**

The successful implementation of the HPE curriculum is "highly dependent on its general acceptance by practicing teachers" (Culpan, 1996/97, p. 216). Such acceptance, however, would require teachers to access and understand the HPE curriculum and therefore be able to make an informed decision as to the merits and failings of the document. Research (Petrie, Jones, & McKim, 2007) highlighted that, seven years after its release, teachers had limited knowledge of, or experience with, the 1999 HPE curriculum.

During interviews with primary teachers, it became apparent that the HPE curriculum was not a widely-accessed or utilised tool in their teaching arsenal. Some of the longer-serving teachers commented that they could not remember ever having had any professional development focusing on PE or the 'new' HPE curriculum after it was released in 1999. The majority of teachers noted that they remembered having "a couple" or "a series" of staff meetings about the HPE curriculum, but were unable to recall the content of these sessions. In the ten schools studied, long-term plans formed the basis for the teaching programme of PE. These plans did not require teachers to understand or engage with the HPE curriculum document in their planning or teaching. In contrast, the advent of computer-based planning programmes, such as eTAP<sup>5</sup> in some schools, did encourage some teachers to identify HPE curriculum links in their planning. However, the 'ticking' of the appropriate achievement objective boxes did not necessarily demand familiarity with either the HPE curriculum document or its contents.

Teachers' limited engagement with the HPE curriculum appears to reflect the pressures associated with the 'crowded' nature of the school curriculum and the challenge of implementing the six separate 'new' curricula introduced between 1993 and 2000. The research highlighted that teachers were not all provided with opportunities or support to engage with the HPE curriculum and have not since been made accountable for understanding and implementing the document (Petrie, Jones, & McKim, 2007). This may

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<sup>5</sup> eTAP is a software programme designed to assist teachers with assessment, planning, and student administration. Teachers are able to select and readily attach specific learning outcomes from national curriculum statements to their lesson/unit plans.

have limited prospects for changes to occur in PE programming and practice. The recent release of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007a) may provide new opportunities for PE programmes and practices to be examined. However, this will be dependent on where primary schools place their priorities for addressing the demands of the new curriculum statement.

### **The 'cookbook' programme**

Current primary school programmes appear to be reminiscent of the programmes outlined in the 'cookbooks' of the 20th century: *The Physical Education Handbook, Infant Division* (Department of Education, 1955); *The Standard 2 to Form 2 Handbook of Physical Education* (Department of Education, 1964) and *Physical Education in Junior Classes* (Department of Education, 1966). These resources provided teachers with recipes for teaching PE, which include all the essential ingredients: long-term plans, lesson outlines, and what appears to have been most useful, an extensive range of games for use with classes (Stothart, 2000). At the time, such 'cookbooks' were invaluable to teachers, providing them with detailed support that could enhance their practice. The 'cookbooks,' however, promoted a motor-skill and sports development focus, a focus that is still evident in primary school programmes today. The introduction of the 1999 HPE curriculum proposed an alternative vision for PE - a holistic and socio-critical approach that encouraged teachers to rethink the content and focus of their PE programmes. The research suggests, however, that some schools appear to have taken little note of this curriculum statement, or its intent, in the planning of their PE programmes and have not made identifiable changes to their PE programmes as a result of the introduction of the HPE curriculum (Petrie, Jones, & McKim, 2007).

### **Teacher-directed pedagogical approaches**

It is surprising that PE, in the ten primary schools examined, appears to be primarily delivered through teacher-directed approaches, particularly given that teacher-directed approaches appear less prevalent in other curriculum areas. Many teachers reported that they continue to utilise a conventional lesson sequence, involving a warm-up, skill teaching, practice, game, and warm-down approach when teaching PE. This is not consistent with resources developed to support the delivery of PE. Both the *Curriculum in Action* series and the TKI website<sup>6</sup>, advocate for student-centred approaches, culturally-responsive pedagogies and alternative 'curriculum' models, such as: adventure-based learning, experiential learning cycle, sport education, the social responsibility model, and teaching games for understanding.

It would appear that teachers' reliance on teacher-centred approaches is, in part, a response to their own lack of confidence and comfort in teaching PE and the ways in which

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<sup>6</sup> The Te Kete Ipurangi website ([www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz)) is an online learning centre that provides support material for teachers in schools.

they were 'taught' PE, both through their schooling and Initial Teacher Education [ITE] experiences (Petrie, Jones, & McKim, 2007).

### **Limiting progress**

The research of Petrie, Jones, and McKim (2007) suggests that content and delivery of PE in some New Zealand primary schools is stalled in a time before the release of the 1999 HPE curriculum. While a range of factors could explain the limited changes to practices in primary school PE, the research identified three major areas that warrant further consideration: the role of pre- and in-service teacher training, the role of the Ministry of Education, and school contexts.

### **Limited pre- and in-service training**

Key to the development of teachers' knowledge and understanding about PE are pre- and in-service training. It is important to identify the current issues with pre- and in-service PD opportunities that result in PE practices in primary schools continuing to be embedded in past practice.

### **Initial teacher education (ITE)**

Prospective teachers do not enter ITE programs with a clean slate in terms of their beliefs about PE as their professional conceptions are already shaped by their experiences in PE classes and participation in exercise, play, and sport outside the school context (Crum, 1990; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). They also have "personal beliefs about classrooms and pupils and images of themselves as teachers" (Kagan, 1992, p. 154).

These prior experiences and beliefs have a distinct and traceable influence on an individual's decisions, practices, and performance as future teachers of PE (Morgan, Bourke, & Thompson, 2001; Schempp & Graber, 1992). Given that teacher trainees come to ITE with preconceived ideas relating to the practices and programmes of PE, it would seem that in order to create dissonance in these preconceptions of PE and to work towards developing an understanding that is more consistent with curriculum offerings, adequate time needs to be provided for PE within ITE programmes.

The significant reduction in the hours dedicated to PE within ITE courses in recent years is of concern. The reduction in ITE degree qualifications from four to three years appears to have impacted on primary teacher trainees' opportunities to develop content and pedagogical knowledge of PE across their three-year ITE courses. Currently, generalist teachers undertake varying hours of tuition within their PE ITE courses, with few receiving more than 40 hours<sup>7</sup>. In some instances, generalist teacher courses are a

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<sup>7</sup> The following provides some examples of the hours New Zealand ITE providers allocate for the study of teaching PE within a generalist teacher-training programme. Institution One – 36 hrs (BTchg HPE course), and 48 hrs (Grad Dip Tchg HPE course – 36 hrs face to face); Institution Two - 40 hrs (BTChIn PE course, over 2 years) and 18 hrs (Grad Dip Tchg PE course); and Institution Three – 52 hrs (B Teach HPE Course, including EOTC) and 11 hrs (Grad Dip Tchg, as of 2009).

combined HPE course, and students do not receive a dedicated PE paper. The reduction in hours has meant that opportunities for students to develop greater knowledge, skills, and understandings of specific content areas, such as aquatics, has been removed. PE courses in current ITE programmes focus predominantly on curriculum and pedagogical studies, using the context of movement as a vehicle for studying the teaching of PE. There is little time available for, or dedicated to, the development of content knowledge, or opportunities for generalist teachers to develop their own movement abilities. The limited time is of concern and could be inadequate for allowing primary teachers to develop the skills, knowledge, and understanding to be able to confidently teach PE in a way that will lead to the desired learning outcomes for students.

### ***In-service professional learning opportunities***

Given the limited opportunities for focus on PE within ITE programmes, it would appear important that beginning and experienced teachers are provided with opportunities to participate in regular in-service PD focussed on PE. Yet, the research of Petrie, Jones, and McKim (2007) found that few teachers had opportunities to undertake regular PD relating to PE. Of the 19 experienced<sup>8</sup> teachers interviewed, only seven had ever attended more than one course focussed on PE. Those that had been to only one in-service course reported that these had not been longer than one day.

These findings suggest that professional development and ongoing learning in relation to PE is a low priority for many teachers and schools. It must be noted, however, that schools and teachers in primary schools are consistently bombarded with PD opportunities across all curriculum areas and in relation to other initiatives, such as numeracy, ICT, student well-being, and assessment for learning. Teachers are expected to be involved in too many PD programmes at once and this inhibits the potential for learning and the chance of sustaining change (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). This then presents a challenge to providers of curriculum-based PD for teachers, who may need to consider less 'siloed' ways of working in primary schools.

A broader systemic issue in relation to PD for PE is the timeframe for and frequency of opportunities within many PD programmes. For example, advisers involved in the PE curriculum aspects of the PD programme<sup>9</sup> investigated by Petrie, Jones, and McKim (2007) worked with each school for no more than eight days across four terms. Advisers reported that this limited contact left them feeling as if they were withdrawing support from schools before these schools had made enough progress to be able to independently sustain the changes. PD models, such as the one outlined above, appear to create the "chook house" (Macdonald, 2004, p. 70) effect, where excitement and activity is maintained while advisers

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<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this study, 'experienced' equates to having taught for more than 5 years. However, included in this sample are nine teachers who have been teaching for more than 15 years.

<sup>9</sup> See Petrie, Jones, and McKim (2007) for more on Model 2 and the impacts of this model.

are working in the schools, but the effect appears unsustainable once support is withdrawn. Short timeframes and infrequent PD opportunities appear to result in replication of and dependence on resources provided by advisers, as opposed to creating independent and innovative PE practitioners in primary schools.

This limited pre- and in-service training may inhibit teacher confidence and development of alternative understandings of PE, in relation to the subject-specific content, curriculum, and pedagogical knowledge, which are needed to deliver meaningful learning opportunities.

### **The role of the Ministry of Education**

The Ministry of Education influences the policy-frame for New Zealand schools, establishing this through the development of curriculum, resource materials, and the provision of PD. The Ministry of Education has a key role in determining how PE is represented in primary schools. Aspects of this role that warrant attention in this paper are: how policy issues and the current focus of PD appear to reinforce a particular understanding of physical activity and movement skill development as primary school PE; and the way the Education Review office (ERO) and PD advisers are supported to interpret and understand PE, before working in schools.

### **Physical activity and movement as PE**

The HPE curriculum provided detail about the position of physical activity within a framework for PE and advocated for learning 'in, through, and about movement' (Arnold, 1979). However, the amended *National Administration Guideline* prescribes a narrower focus when it highlights that "each Board, through the principal and staff, is required to... give priority to regular quality physical activity that develops movement skills for all students, especially in years 1-6" [NAG 1 (i) (c)] (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 4406). To support teachers in dealing with this policy change, the Minister of Education announced a physical activity PD initiative (*The Physical Activity Initiative*) designed to "help teachers encourage New Zealand primary school children to become more physically active" (Ministry of Education, 2005a, p.1). The initiative provides opportunities for both the development of curricula and co-curricular physical activity and includes having an emphasis on the development of teachers' ability to deliver quality curriculum-based PE programmes and lessons. It is important to note that issues of terminology and an over-emphasis on physical activity, as opposed to PE, appears to have contributed to some teachers feeling unclear as to what constitutes curriculum PE (Gatman, 2005).

The *Physical Activity Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 2007b) may assist in clarifying the differences and overlaps between physical activity and curriculum PE. The effectiveness of these guidelines is yet to be determined. Given that the current priority for many primary schools is the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, it is possible that the *Physical Activity Guidelines* will be filed away in much the same way as the *HPE Curriculum and Curriculum in Action* series, unless teachers and schools are provided with additional support.

### **ERO and PD advisers – are they well prepared?**

The research outlined in this paper identified issues with the preparedness of PD advisers to support the development of PE in schools and of ERO evaluators to assess PE programmes. The knowledge of PD advisers charged with enhancing teachers' ability to deliver PE in the ten primary schools studied appeared to be limited by their own previous experiences as generalist teachers and lack of PD for their advisory role before working in schools (Petrie, Jones, & McKim, 2007). This seemed to make it difficult for some advisers to broaden content to meet individual school and teacher needs and to provide effective feedback in relation to PE lessons. It was recommended by Petrie, Jones, and McKim (2007) that time be allocated for advisers to undertake their own PD to develop subject-specific PE content and pedagogical content knowledge before engaging with schools. Opportunities for professional learning would support advisers to provide appropriate advice and guidance to teachers and schools.

In the ten schools involved in the research, few PE programmes were consistent with the philosophy or intent of the HPE curriculum, nor were they delivered using the student-centred approaches advocated for in PE curriculum support documents. However, data on these schools unearthed some ERO reports that commended schools on the successful delivery of PE programmes and their implementation of the HPE curriculum. These findings would suggest that those charged with evaluating schools might interpret PE differently to how this learning area is articulated in the *HPE Curriculum* and essence statement of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. School evaluators (ERO staff) may need some professional support and development opportunities to assist them in understanding and providing more meaningful assessments of PE in primary schools.

If those responsible for supporting and evaluating PE in primary schools do not have contemporary understanding of PE, we will see a continuation of traditional understandings and practices in PE.

### **The school context**

Another reason why PE may be trapped in the past is the way PE is positioned within the school context. Much has already been written about how PE, as a predominantly practical subject, has been marginalised and accorded low status in relation to other 'core' curriculum areas (Marshall & Hardman, 2000; Sparkes, Templin, & Schempp, 1990). However, it is worth briefly identifying the key factors that appear to inhibit the development, and therefore contribute to the ongoing marginalisation, of PE within New Zealand primary schools. Within the ten schools involved in the research, the following key factors appear to contribute to the continuation of traditional approaches in the programming and practice of PE:

- the unanimous view that the 'crowded curriculum' prohibits teachers from having time both for planning and delivering PE;
- popular discourses about the state of children's health and therefore the need for

more physical activity, and the resulting engagement of 'physical activity experts' as the deliverers of PE<sup>10</sup>

- lack of recognition of the need for a teacher-in-charge of curriculum PE, with dedicated time available to plan for PE and support other classroom teachers with their planning and delivery. This position currently is often confused and/or fused with the teacher-in-charge of sport;
- school goals and staff development focussed on the myriad of 'other' priority areas;
- the importance placed on student involvement and success at school and interschool sport events;
- lack of access to a large indoor space, particularly as cold or wet weather often results in PE being abandoned;
- teachers' and parents' opinions about what PE is; and
- lack of adequate resourcing to support teachers with planning alternative PE programmes and lessons.

### **Heading for a different future**

Physical education programmes in primary schools should be about meeting the learning needs of students and providing them with the skills and knowledge to successfully participate in and negotiate the world in which they live. The research upon which this paper is based suggests that current PE programmes in primary schools are aligned with past PE documents, including the 'cookbooks.' This is in contrast to the socio-critical, holistic approach embodied in the 1999 *HPE Curriculum* and expressed in the HPE essence statement of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. A change to meet the learning needs of young New Zealanders requires programmes that are relevant and meaningful to children of today. This requires educators working in primary schools, ITE, or as advisers, to continuously reflect on their programmes and plans for teaching PE to make sure that they are future focussed as opposed to remaining centred on historically-derived programmes and practices.

Before we can realise an alternative vision for PE that challenges the patterns of the past practised in some schools, we must rethink how teachers are prepared and supported to deliver PE. Gatman (2005) presents a range of actions, primarily directed at teachers, which may be useful to consider in order for PE in the primary school to better reflect the intentions of the *HPE Curriculum*. However, it is both unrealistic and unfair to suggest that teachers can do this without the provision of adequate professional development and resources.

The issues with ITE and in-service PD identified in this paper could be addressed as *The Schooling Strategy* (Ministry of Education, 2005b), *Statement of Intent, 2007-2012* (Ministry

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<sup>10</sup> See the papers of Burrows and Macdonald, Hay, and Williams, in this monograph that address this issue in more detail.

of Education, 2007c), and the *Graduating Teacher Standards* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007) are enacted. These publications recognise: the importance of having teachers who know: "the subject or learning area[s] they teach, the most effective teaching and assessment strategies in that [those] subject or learning area[s], and their students" (Ministry of Education, 2005b, p. 18); and the central role of ITE and comprehensive, long-term and ongoing professional learning opportunities in achieving this. "Extended timeframes and frequent contact [within all levels of PD] are probably necessary... because the process of changing teaching practice involves substantive new learning, at times challenging existing beliefs, values, and/or understandings that underpin that practice" (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007, p. xxviii). In line with this, it is essential that attention is given to supporting advisers working in schools to engage in their own PD and providing ERO with direction to ensure that they can appropriately evaluate PE programmes.

An additional area for consideration is how teachers are supported in schools to engage in developing learning opportunities that are reflective of their students' needs and are in line with HPE within *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The lack of teacher engagement with and use of the HPE curriculum indicates that the PE community, teacher educators, PD providers, and the Ministry of Education need to rethink how best to provide support and resources for teachers. This support and resourcing needs to be delivered in ways that makes the PE curriculum accessible to teachers delivering PE in primary schools.

Teachers in primary schools are typically hardworking, diligent, and dedicated practitioners who seek to achieve the best possible outcomes for their students. Nevertheless, teachers need continued support, during both pre- and in-service training, to address the demands placed on them to make PE relevant and meaningful for all young people, now and in the future.

### **Note**

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