What does a ‘Sociocultural Perspective’ mean in Health and Physical Education?

Kenneth P. Cliff
cliff@uow.edu.au

Jan Wright
University of Wollongong, jwright@uow.edu.au

D. Clarke
Charles Sturt University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ro.uow.edu.au/edupapers

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Cliff, Kenneth P.; Wright, Jan; and Clarke, D.: What does a ‘Sociocultural Perspective’ mean in Health and Physical Education? 2009.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
Chapter Ten

What does a ‘Sociocultural Perspective’ mean in Health and Physical Education?

Ken Cliff, University of Wollongong
Jan Wright, University of Wollongong
Deb Clarke, Charles Sturt University

Chapter Intention:
- To explore the discourse of ‘sociocultural perspective’ and its representations in Health and Physical Education curriculum
- To explore sociocultural perspective alongside the emphasis of critical pedagogies and critical inquiry
- To consider possibilities and limitations to embedding a ‘sociocultural perspective’ in teaching practices

Introduction

While a sociocultural perspective is a relatively recent curriculum change in health and physical education (HPE), it can be seen to have emerged out of curriculum critique and dissatisfaction that began as early as the 1980s and gathered momentum throughout the 1990s. As a perspective through which to interpret HPE content and issues, it has important implications both for the work of HPE teachers and for how these teachers are prepared through pre-service teacher education programs. Firstly, because its sociological and
cultural studies underpinnings represent a significant departure from the predominantly medico-scientific, biophysical and psychological foundations of HPE, and secondly, because its attention to social and cultural influences on health put it in opposition to notions which locate responsibility for health almost solely in the individual and their decisions.

In this chapter we begin by drawing on the voices of practicing teachers and HPE literature to offer a definition of a sociocultural perspective. We reflect on its emergence and consider the relationship between a sociocultural perspective and associated curriculum changes such as critical pedagogy and critical inquiry. Syllabus documents from Australia and New Zealand are used to highlight the often contested nature of a sociocultural perspective within official curriculum documents. The latter part of the chapter draws on recent research from two classrooms to consider what a sociocultural perspective might look like in practice. While HPE research from the previous two decades suggests a number of likely tensions (for example, because of its status as an apparatus of health promotion within the New Public Health framework, HPE has tended to be privilege discourses of personal responsibility for health, whereas a sociocultural perspective requires consideration of the social and cultural environments and circumstances in which individuals act), there has been little research to date which has explicitly examined a sociocultural perspective as a curriculum change in practice. In this next section we present findings from recently completed PhD research that sought to address this issue (Cliff 2007). This research was conducted in the Australian State of New South Wales (NSW) and used the
implementation of the newly re-written Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) syllabus for students in years 7-10 (ages 12-16) (Board of Studies 2003) as the setting. While this work draws attention to a range of discursive and institutional elements that constrain a sociocultural perspective, it also argues that a sociocultural perspective is a curriculum change that can be widely taken up – though it may require a rethinking of the purposes and pedagogy of HPE.

What is a sociocultural perspective?

An historical analysis of HPE academic literature highlights the emergence of a sociocultural perspective as a complex counter discourse informed by critical pedagogues and critical pedagogy in Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s. Drawing on this critical tradition, a sociocultural perspective is a way of examining health and physical activity issues and a perspective through which to ‘read’ or understand HPE content. Generally, the ‘social’ elements of a sociocultural perspective are concerned with power and social relations, political and economic factors, and dominant and subordinate groups. The ‘cultural’ aspect refers to shared ways of thinking and acting (ideas, values, beliefs, behaviours), which differ from one culture to another and even within cultures. When asked about what a sociocultural perspective in HPE means to him, one of the teachers who took part in our research said:

I understand it as each person’s position within society and the effect of their socio-economic status and their race and their religion and all those
things and how that affects them in that whole broad banner of their health concepts…it’s the circumstances of your whole social situation, your whole cultural situation I suppose, yeah it’s people based (Mark, HPE teacher NSW).

The critical underpinnings of a sociocultural perspective also recognise calls for HPE to problematise the construction of knowledge, through an approach to knowledge that understands it as socially constructed. Whereas in the past HPE has primarily provided young people with the tools and knowledge of medico-scientific, biophysical and psychological sciences to understand and examine health and physical activity issues, a sociocultural perspective employs knowledge and ways of thinking drawn from sociology and cultural studies [Margin note 10.1]. These disciplines provide notably different engagements with health and physical activity issues. For example, while understandings of ill-health in HPE have often been premised on the assumption that individuals’ experience poor health and premature mortality because they have failed to ascertain and employ knowledge to choose health affirming behaviours (Lupton 1995, 1999; Tinning & Glasby 2002; Evans et al. 2004a; Gard & Wright 2005), sociology and cultural studies has drawn attention to the social and cultural dimensions of ill health and related issues. One area in which researchers have begun problematising knowledge and ‘questioning the taken for granted’, has been the analysis of the obesity ‘epidemic’ and its impact on HPE. Several researchers (Evans et al. 2003; Evans et al. 2004b; Evans et al. 2008; Gard 2004; Wright & Burrows 2004; Gard & Kirk 2007; Wright & Dean 2007) have shown that asking questions
such as ‘who stands to benefit from this concern?’, ‘how are important
differences such as culture, class, ethnicity, gender and economic status
accounted for in analyses of the issue?’ and ‘how is the event consistent with
broader discourses circulating at the current time?’, can help HPE teachers
and students in understanding the obesity epidemic as a social construction
which should be subject to analysis, questioning and debate.

Thinking Critically Probe:
Want to begin to think critically about the Obesity ‘Epidemic’? There is a
growing body of research (both inside and outside of HPE) in which authors
have adopted a critical sociocultural perspective to problematise knowledge
about obesity. Here are a set of weblinks to get you started:

Go to: http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/35/1/55 and download a free
copy of the article ‘The epidemiology of overweight and obesity: public health
crisis or moral panic?’ by Campos, Saguy, Ernsberger, Oliver and Gaessner
(2005).

Go to: http://www.oru.se/oru-
upload/Institutioner/Pedagogik/Dokument/abstracts/UD/nr%202_2007/Wright_Dean.pdf and download a free copy of the article ‘A Balancing Act:
Problematising prescriptions about food and weight in school health texts’ by
Wright and Dean (2007).

Go to: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/counterpoint/stories/2007/1898259.htm and
read a transcript of an interview with Patrick Basham, author of the book ‘Diet
Nation’, on the ABC Radio National program ‘Counterpoint’.

The place and status of a sociocultural perspective as represented in
HPE syllabus documents
While a sociocultural perspective can be seen to underpin syllabus
documents in Australia and New Zealand (Wright 2004), the place and status
of the concept varies greatly between these documents. Those that explicitly
refer to ‘sociocultural’ often refer to a set of factors that are seen to influence
an individual’s health and health-related choices. For example, the NSW Stage 6 Personal Development Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) syllabus (Board of Studies 1999, p. 97) defines sociocultural in the glossary to the text as being ‘related to social and cultural factors that impact on health and physical activity issues’. The South Australian HPE syllabus for the middle years (Department of Education, Training and Employment 2001, p. 96) refers to students studying the ‘sociocultural and political factors that promote wellbeing and those that present risks’ and the Queensland Senior Health Education syllabus (Queensland Studies Authority 2004, p. 24) describes the study of ‘the influence of sociocultural, physical, political and economic environmental factors on health’. An approach to sociocultural influences that stresses ‘factors’ (discrete and identifiable variables such as geographic location, education or ethnicity) is sometimes presumed to be the basis for a sociocultural perspective. However, health sociologists such as Petersen and Lupton (Lupton 1995; Petersen & Lupton 1996) and Germov (1998) suggest that such an approach primarily draws on the individualistic, behaviour change focus of the health sciences. As a result, a sociocultural perspective is (re)interpreted as a ‘social determinants’ approach and in the process loses its focus on the social context of health.

While only a few syllabus documents explicitly acknowledge a sociocultural perspective many, if not most, incorporate aspects of a sociocultural perspective in their learning goals and content. Such documents tend to recognise a sociocultural perspective as incorporating an understanding of health that moves beyond personal responsibility. For example, syllabus
documents in both Australia and New Zealand now consider the impact of structural features such as education, health care and infrastructure on the production of ill-health. Outcomes and content in these documents require students to situate individuals and groups within the social and cultural environments in which they live their lives. A second consistent feature of syllabus documents, which highlights the presence of a sociocultural perspective, is the idea that learning in physical education should be ‘through’ and ‘about’ the physical, rather than focused upon producing skilled performers. For example, research into the sociology of the body, as well as cultural studies-inspired examinations of sporting culture and ideology have contributed to recent syllabuses including content statements such as the following taken from the Queensland Senior Physical Education (PE) syllabus: ‘How do sociocultural understandings of sport, physical activity and exercise influence personal, team and community participation, appreciation and values, within Australian society?’ (Queensland Studies Authority 2004, p.19).

A sociocultural perspective and the need for HPE to move away from ‘certainty’, ‘fact’ and ‘truth’.

While a sociocultural perspective now underpins many HPE syllabus documents, few of these have acknowledged how substantially it challenges long established orientations to knowledge and pedagogy in the subject. Firstly, in contrast to the dominants models of HPE at the current time, a sociocultural perspective is not premised on students accumulating ‘factual’ knowledge. While HPE frequently involves pedagogy directed at the transmission of prescriptive truths about how we should live our lives
(Petersen & Lupton 1996; Tinning & Glasby 2002), knowledge related to a sociocultural perspective is by nature ‘slippery’ and ‘grey’ and thus best seen as partial and contingent (Macdonald & Hunter 2005). For some teachers, these differences are difficult to reconcile, especially given the fact that HPE pre-service teacher education programs continue to foreground the rationality and certainty of science. At one of the schools we researched, this tension was clear as the teacher tried to make sense of a sociocultural perspective within a health-based decision making framework. Within this framework the purpose of the unit became limited to providing students with accurate, factual information about food, which they could use to make healthy decisions:

I think there’s a lot of information that’s been out there for a while and they’re very much influenced by the media and as teenagers they are very conscious of body image and I don’t think that’s ever changed, I think that’s always been there. But I think it in some ways gets worse. I think the good thing is that a lot of the information that is out there that they have access to is fairly good information because I think when I went to school a lot of that information was incorrect. So it probably is more correct information but there still are many misconceptions. I think our students are better educated in that area. The biggest problem I think is that they may be better educated but they don’t necessarily make the better choices and that is going to be the age-old problem for us in PDHPE. How do you overcome that? (Debbie, HPE teacher NSW).
Though we have no desire to question the intentions of this teacher (who was widely regarded as an expert practitioner), our point is that the tools she employs to understand issues relating to food are fairly clearly incongruent with a sociocultural perspective. She argues that students need to learn to assess the quality of food-related information, sort the ‘correct’ from the ‘incorrect’, and then apply the correct information to inform their own behaviours. The use of the binaries ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’, as well as the assumption that students are unable to make rational decisions because they do not heed the ‘right’ knowledge, suggest that this teacher does not have the necessary tools too move outside of her rational science knowledge base. While such knowledge has a place within HPE, it is not a substitute for sociocultural knowledge. For example, a teacher mobilising a sociocultural perspective would draw upon knowledge from fields such as sociology and cultural studies to ask questions about the place of food in people’s lives and to highlight the sociocultural circumstances (for example, geographical location, cost, time available for food preparation, ethnicity and cultural backgrounds) in which people make food related choices.

**A sociocultural perspective as a part of young people’s lives.**

One of the strengths of a sociocultural perspective is the fact that some form of it is embedded in the lives that people lead everyday, and as such many students are quickly able to recognise fundamental sociocultural concepts. For example, when asked to explain ‘why it is too simplistic to say that people in Australia are getting fatter because they don’t exercise enough and eat poorly’, one group of 14 and 15 year old students responded by suggesting
that people live in greatly varied circumstances and that the inequitable
distribution of resources means that exercise and healthy eating are beyond
the reach of some:

It is too simplistic to say that Australians are getting fatter because of
eating habits or/and exercise because what you eat depends on
background and religion, as well as peer pressure and availability. Exercise
is not always easy to take part in, socioeconomic status affects availability,
environmental availability, as well as marital status or children (Krystal,
Charlotte, Dean, Ashley – Year 9 students).

The students’ answer clearly encompasses the idea that individuals do not
make health-related decisions in isolation from the everyday social and
cultural circumstance of their lives. When asked to explain why making health-
related decisions can be difficult, given the range of influences in our lives,
other groups of students showed a similar ability to employ a sociocultural
perspective. They wrote:

It is difficult because there are many different choices and people influence
you in different ways, towards different things. Your choices are influenced
by the cost of the sport, what your friends are doing, peer pressure, how
much time you have, where it is played, how far away, whether you enjoy
this sport, cultural reasons – some cultures may have to wear certain
things (Emma, Krystal, James – Year 9 students).
It is hard because your family influences you on how you make your decisions because of how they have brought you up. Your friends that you hang around do things differently. Religious backgrounds also influence your choices of what you believe in. Your age, your sex might have something to do with it. And environmental reasons such as where you live, work, go to school (Chelsea, Sam, Mark – Year 9 students).

While these responses provide only a brief snapshot of student understanding, they provide important evidence that a sociocultural perspective can be a concept that draws on the day-to-day experiences of young people’s lives. For example, it is not difficult to imagine that some students may have experienced restrictions in what they have been able to eat (whether because of allergies, finances, availability, or religion) and as such, can understand how these same issues may impact upon others.

Thinking Critically Probe:
As part of a subject focusing on the sociology of sport, our HPE pre-service teachers are asked to interview three people about either the ‘place and meaning of physical activity in their lives’, or their ‘meanings and understandings of health.’ Following these interviews the students produce narratives about the interviewees’ lives, experiences and understandings. One of the highlights of this activity comes from the fact that the interviewees have often led very different lives to the HPE students. For example, this semester students have heard about growing up in a range of foreign countries, being a young person during the Great Depression, and living in a rural area of Australia where the letter box was a 4km bicycle ride and the nearest children lived 20km away!

Ask somebody who grew up in a time or place that is very different to you about physical activity and sport.
Talk to them about how their involvement in sport and physical activity has changed over time, what aspects of life caused these changes, and how they feel about their lives today.
Think about the social and cultural aspects that have shaped their lives in contrast to how they have shaped your own life (geographical location, family, cultural background, education and school experiences, income and socio-economic status, employment, births and deaths).
While evidence from the research suggested that one of the strengths of a sociocultural perspective is the fact that it can be developed specifically out of young people’s experiences and lives, it is also important to recognise that teachers may close down opportunities through their need to be in control of the classroom. An analysis of data from the classroom interactions that took place during the two units showed that, at times, each of the two teachers who took part in the research closed down student discussions that reflected aspects of a sociocultural perspective. Though the reasons for this varied, often it was either because the teacher perceived the ‘purpose’ of the activity to be the transmission of a particular body of factual knowledge and was (in their eyes) attempting to re-direct the discussion towards this, or because they failed to recognise the value in what the young people were saying. The latter was particularly noticeable as the teachers slipped into Initiate, Respond, Evaluate (IRE) patterns of discussion, which tend to contain ‘low level recall/fact-based questions, short utterances or single word responses, and further simple questions and/or teacher evaluation statements’ (Department of Education, Training and the Arts 2006, p. 1). Such teacher-centered exchanges seem to have limited potential to produce the kind of deep thinking and critical engagement required for students to be producers of knowledge (Hayes et al. 2006), nor do they seem to draw and value student’s experiences. While barriers such as this highlight the idea that it would be helpful if teachers charged with working with a sociocultural perspective had training in sociology and cultural studies, we recognise that often this will not be the case (though certainly it is a problem that can and should be
addressed in the case of pre-service teachers, cf. Cliff 2007; Tinning & Glasby 2002). However, the fact that a strength of a sociocultural is its relation to daily life also means that teaching HPE from a sociocultural perspective does not require the teacher to be an ‘expert’. Rather, they need to be a facilitator – a point we will revisit.

Planning and programming for a sociocultural perspective

A sociocultural perspective is generally understood as part of a broader student-centred, inquiry-based movement that also encompasses concepts such as problem solving and critical inquiry (Wright 2004). Pedagogically, such approaches are underpinned by constructivist assumptions about students as producers of knowledge. As such, learning strategies which involve student research, critical engagement with multiple knowledge sources/points of view, and a general orientation to knowledge that positions it as multiple and uncertain are likely contribute to the development of a sociocultural perspective. However, as researchers who have examined curriculum innovations such as Productive Pedagogies (Hayes et al. 2000, Hayes et al. 2006) and Rich Tasks (Macdonald 2003a, 2003b, 2004) have argued, the organisational architecture of schools is often not conducive to these approaches. At least part of this is attributable to the ongoing organisation of schools as ‘modernist institutions par excellence’ (Hayes et al. 2006, p. 10). Writing about the structuring and organisation of schools in the ‘Productive Pedagogies’ research, Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard (2006, p. 133) suggest that ‘as currently structured, schooling systems are an exemplar of modernism, with their standardised approaches to teaching and learning,
their lockstep categorisations and classifications of people and subjects, and their unmistakable architecture of classrooms'. While we will make at least one suggestion for how teachers might negotiate such conditions, it is important to point out that more substantial changes to the organisation of schools and curriculum time is required for a sociocultural perspective to be widely practiced. The inflexible nature of school architecture seems largely inconsistent with the deep knowledge, critical inquiry and intellectual engagements that a sociocultural perspective requires and which recent student-centered curriculum changes (such as Rich Tasks and Productive Pedagogies in Queensland and Quality Teaching in New South Wales) purport to work towards.

The process of planning and implementing the units of work at each of the two schools highlighted a number of practical and institutional elements related to school architecture, which worked as barriers to the development of a sociocultural perspective. Firstly, how health and physical education lessons were programmed into the school timetable had a significant effect on attempts to develop a sociocultural perspective. At the first school, St Anne’s Girl’s high school, health education and physical education were integrated, allowing the teacher flexibility in how they decided to use lessons (indoor, outdoor, practical, theory). Moreover, the year 10 class that took part in the unit had a double period (80 minutes) every week, allowing them to complete an eight lesson unit in four weeks. These conditions and the programming they allowed were in marked contrast to the timetabling at Waterside. At Waterside teachers had decided that students in year 9 would be timetabled
into only one health or personal development (PD) period per fortnight. This situation, in combination with normal school events such as school holidays and teacher illness, contributed to the eight lesson unit being conducted over ten weeks, with some lessons more than a fortnight apart. At the completion of the unit the teacher spoke about the negative impact these programming decisions had on the continuity of the unit:

Because currently the way the school is structured PD periods are only once a fortnight, we quickly realised we needed to pick up periods in places so we started changing the timetable which was always difficult with the kids because it was on short notice and it was often taken from a preferred PE period or having to go to a different class, (and) that doesn’t help anything. Those things made it difficult, the time frame between periods when I think there was a period lost due to me being away and one to miscommunication between the time of periods and so that meant that they missed a couple which we’ve had to pick up in the second term after we’ve had about three weeks break, so to come back and we’ve tried to start all over again. Those things affected the process, they were detrimental to it (Mark, HPE teacher NSW).

At St Anne’s the organisational architecture of schools impacted on the development of a sociocultural perspective as the teacher drew on discourses of performativity to constitute expert practice as a teacher. According to Ball (2003, p. 216) ‘performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of
incentives, control, attrition and change’. As a ‘discourse of power’ (Ball 2000, p.1) performativity shapes understandings of expertise and professionalism and in turn, teachers’ modes of working. Ball’s research (1997, 1998, 2000, 2006), as well as work by Jeffrey and Woods’ (Jeffrey & Woods 1997, 1998, Jeffrey 2002, Woods & Jeffrey 2002) and Perryman (2006), provides evidence that teachers are changing ‘who they are’ and what they ‘do’ in response to these notions of expertise. While it is argued that such reforms improve the quality of education through schools adopting the structure and philosophies of the ‘market’ (Ball 2003), reforms have frequently offered narrow definitions of quality teaching which glorify efficiency, accountability and managerialism above all else. For Debbie, the St Anne’s teacher, performativity defined the scope and form of planning in such a way that some ways of thinking and acting became legitimate and valuable, while others were dismissed as inefficient, illegitimate or outside of the bounds of HPE. This had an important impact on the development of learning strategies and learning experiences within the unit, often to the detriment of a sociocultural perspective. For example, learning strategies that were ‘teacher-directed’ were often selected because their outcomes were seen to be predictable and manageable. This marginalised forms of inquiry that may have promoted a sociocultural perspective (such as research and project work) because they were seen as relatively unpredictable and as such, neither time efficient nor guaranteed to achieve the proposed syllabus outcomes.

Postcard from the profession
My teacher training emphasised social justice principles and sociocultural perspectives. I had been appointed to teach PE, Home Economics, Geography and Religion at a secondary school. I was eager and asked for any school curriculum documents that could help me prepare. I was handed colour coded folders for my subjects. They were week to week (including 4
lessons x 40 minutes per week), handouts, and tests to be given at the end of the term. I was amazed at the teacher-directedness, no room for negotiation with students, disconnected from their personal beliefs and experiences, no openness for challenge and shared understandings. I taught from the ‘folders’ for term 1...it was manageable…but boring! Term 2 was different but I still had to conform to tests!

**How** does this story link to possibilities for sociocultural perspectives being represented?

**What** were the influences? **Were** there possibilities of creating new spaces for learning?

While some teachers and students will be able to develop a sociocultural perspective despite the constraints which the organisation of schools and curriculum time place on them, many will find such problems significantly constrain what is possible. Based on both the available academic literature and our experiences researching in schools, we suggest that a number of aspects of the organisation of schools and HPE curriculum time need to be altered in order to create conditions that assist teachers and students in developing a sociocultural perspectives. Though Macdonald’s Rich Tasks research warns us that it is not easy (Macdonald 2003b, 2004), the amount of curriculum time required for students to engage deeply with a concept, weigh up information from a variety of sources and become producers of knowledge, suggests to us that HPE teachers would benefit from developing and implementing units of work which teachers from other key learning areas (KLAs). This cross-KLA collaboration might be based around the study of a shared concept. For example, collaboration between HPE and Geography might focus on the built environment’s effect on young people’s health. Depending upon one’s reading position, a number of HPE syllabus documents already provide the scope for such study, through their references to ecological sustainability and creating healthy environments. The Australian
Capital Territory curriculum Framework (ACT Department of Education and Training 2007) requires students to ‘propose and justify actions to be taken at personal, local, national and global levels to develop balanced, sustainable environments to enhance well-being’. ‘examine examples of individual and global actions to create sustainable futures, assess the strengths and limitations of these, and propose further appropriate actions’ (p.101). Such a collaboration might also be seen to be consistent with the ‘socio-ecological perspective’ that underpinned the 1999 document Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education 1999).

Where prolonged collaborations between KLAs are not possible, teachers might organise for their KLAs to overlap at a predetermined point for a number of periods (for example, the study of probability in Maths could be examined through the use of data related to the connections between illness, mortality and social and economic disadvantage). While such collaborations do not guarantee a sociocultural perspective they begin to provide ‘school spaces that facilitate regular and ongoing teacher interaction’ (Macdonald 2003b, p.255), and allow for a prolonged engagement with conceptual issues - both of which are valuable first steps.

What chance is there for a sociocultural perspective to become a practiced curriculum change in early 21st Century HPE?

As we have suggested throughout this chapter, a sociocultural perspective offers significant possibilities for health and physical education, while at the same time presenting a challenge to established practices and ideological
positions. On the one hand, it is an important means through which young people can develop a broad and contextualised understanding of health. At its best it problematises simplistic explanations of complex health issues, moves beyond generalisations and judgemental understandings which seek to apportion individual blame, and considers critical social and cultural differences related to ethnicity, geography, gender and socio-economic status as they impact on health and physical activity issues. Despite these possibilities, putting a sociocultural perspective into practice remains difficult. Some teachers may feel it is too far divorced from the bio-medical and health sciences-based training they received as pre-serviced teachers and as such, compromises their professional identity and expertise. For others, the architecture of their schools and the value placed on efficiency and accountability in contemporary teaching may conspire to create an environment in which they have neither the time, nor the professional support, necessary to come to terms with a sociocultural perspective in practice. The pre-service training teachers receive in relation to a sociocultural perspective and just as importantly, the professional development opportunities and curriculum support materials they are provided with throughout their careers, are also likely to become an increasingly important part of the future of a sociocultural perspective should curriculum authorities continue a move towards a minimalist approach to curriculum documents (see chapters two and four). Despite these barriers, we argue that a sociocultural perspective remains a curriculum change that can make a significant contribution to educational practice in HPE and to the ways young people engage with health and health issues.
Key References


Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland. 2006 'New Basics Project: Intellectual Quality - Substantive Conversations.'


Margin Note 10.1

**Sociocultural perspective:** a way of examining health and physical activity issues that highlights social (power relations, political and economic factors, dominant and subordinate groups) and cultural (shared ways of thinking and acting such as ideas, beliefs, values and behaviours) aspects and influences. A critical sociocultural perspective is also likely to involve questioning the taken for granted.

Margin Note 10.2

**Critical pedagogy/theory:** A diverse body of research whose proponents believe education should ‘empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities’ (Maclaren 2003, p.186). Sociological research drawing on critical theory understands schools to be institutions that have important cultural, political and economic functions. For further reading see Macdonald (2002), Fernandez Balboa (1997) and Maclaren (2003).

### ABBREVIATIONS

- HPE  Health and Physical Education
- KLA  Key Learning Area
- NSW  New South Wales
- PD  Personal Development
- PDHPE  Personal Development, Health and Physical Education
- PE  Physical Education