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2007

## A Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) community of practice responding to curriculum change

Deborah K. Clarke  
*University of Wollongong*

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A Personal Development, Health and Physical  
Education (PDHPE) Community of Practice Responding  
to Curriculum Change

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award  
of the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

Faculty of Education

2007

by

Deborah Kaye Clarke

Dip. Teach., BEd., MEd (Physical & Health Education)

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## Certification

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I, Deborah Kaye Clarke, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Education, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualification at any other institution.

Signed

Date

Deborah Kaye Clarke

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## Acknowledgements

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## Abstract

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In 1999, the New South Wales Board of Studies (NSW BOS) released a revised Stage 6 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) syllabus<sup>1</sup>. This syllabus signalled a significant discursive shift with subject knowledge altering to reflect a socio-cultural perspective of health and physical activity. This shift challenged the identity of many Physical and Health Education teachers who have historically created their professional self around the scientific discourses of human movement.

Physical and Health Education teachers have been criticised for their lack of engagement with and insensitivity to the socio-cultural aspects of the revised syllabus (Gard & Wright, 2001; MacDonald et al. 2002), and been described as “elitist, sexist, 'pragmatic sceptics' and anti-intellectual” (Tinning, 2004). Given this professional identity, the question arose as to how professional development could assist NSW PDHPE teachers to engage with and commit to the socio-cultural perspective of the revised syllabus?

Therefore the aims of the study were to identify the professional identity of the members of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) of PDHPE HSC markers and pre-service PDHPE teachers and establish how this identity influenced their preferences for particular aspects of the Stage 6 PDHPE syllabus. As a further educational outcome of this research, suggestions for professional development were proposed to assist PDHPE teachers to engage with curriculum change.

As a mixed-method study, data gathering involved surveying PDHPE HSC markers and pre-service PDHPE teachers, and undertaking semi-structured interviews with 25 PDHPE teachers. A range of NSW BOS and educational systems' professional development documents were used as artefacts. Survey data were analysed using Chi Square and Chi Square Automatic Interaction Detector (CHAID). Interview data were analysed for themes relating to the value of participating in communities of practice to assist in responding to curriculum change. The results from the examination of both the survey and interview data sources indicated that a range of factors influenced the HSC option selections of NSW PDHPE HSC markers. These factors included the academic ability, sex

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<sup>1</sup> Stage 6 is the post-compulsory years of schooling (Years 11&12) and PDHPE is a NSW Key Learning Area combining the “traditional” areas of Health and Physical Education.

and interest of their students. The profile of HSC markers also influenced their HSC option selection, with sources of professional development, years of teaching experience and sex of the marker being the most influential factors. The representative sample of HSC markers indicated that they were practical doers, seekers of certainty, gendered interpreters of the syllabus, and conservative participants in the broader PDHPE community of practice who maintain the status quo.

The results of the survey data further revealed that the pre-service PDHPE teachers in the research sample were influenced in their selection of HSC options by their students' interest, their own expertise and interests, the pedagogy they believed could be used to teach a particular option, and the application of the option beyond school.

Both HSC markers and pre-service PDHPE teachers indicated the benefits of engaging with colleagues as a resource for learning about a socio-cultural perspective of health and physical activity.

By cultivating particular conditions within the PDHPE community of practice, members could engage with the socio-cultural perspective of the 1999 syllabus through their participation in situated and reflective learning experiences. The results of the thesis clearly indicate that by participating in overlapping communities of practice, acting as brokers, and creating time for reflection and shared dialogue that NSW PDHPE teachers can make meaning of and commit to the socio-cultural perspective of the 1999 Stage 6 syllabus.



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