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External providers and their impact on primary physical education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Within Aotearoa/New Zealand primary schools, External Providers (EPs) have steadily increased their influence on physical education. The purpose of this study was to explore and interpret classroom teachers' perspectives of EPs in their primary school. The research team obtained questionnaire responses from 487 classroom teachers from 133 different primary and intermediate schools in six regions across Aotearoa/New Zealand. In addition, 33 classroom teachers, selected from the six regions as a purposive sample [Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Newbury, CA: Sage], were interviewed. The research utilised a case-study design [Stake, R. E. (2005). *Qualitative case studies*. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage] and incorporated a mixed-methods approach [Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass]. Our findings support the belief that EPs are established as major providers of physical education and sport in the primary schools space. Teachers identified a large number of EPs ($n = 638$) active in their schools. A number of categories were drawn from the interviews: *Prevalence of EPs*, *Expertise and professional development* (PD), *Valued programs*, *Evaluation and assessment of EP provided programs* and *Pedagogical limitations*. The teachers valued the EPs for their expertise, PD and the opportunities for students to experience a wide range of sports. However, schools conducted little assessment or evaluation of the programs. Teachers expressed some criticisms around the pedagogical approaches used and the EPs' lack of knowledge of the curriculum. As a profession it is our responsibility to ensure that all students experience quality physical education programs and that EPs are working in ways that maximise the benefits for our students.

KEYWORDS

physical education; primary schools; external providers

Introduction

The use of External Providers (EPs) to teach aspects of physical education is a common occurrence in Aotearoa/New Zealand primary schools (Petrie et al., 2013; Powell, 2015). This is not a situation that is exclusive to Aotearoa/New Zealand with researchers

in a number of other countries, including Australia and the UK, reporting that EPs have become increasingly prevalent in their schools (Griggs, 2007, 2010; Morgan & Hansen, 2007, 2008; Williams, Hay, & Macdonald, 2011; Williams & Macdonald, 2015). Williams et al. (2011) after their review of the contemporary literature suggested that the subscription to external services and resources had become an international trend.

This article explores and interprets the views of Aotearoa/New Zealand primary school classroom teachers in regards to the role that EPs play within their schools. It draws on data from a larger study that investigated the realities of physical education as it is currently practiced in New Zealand primary schools (Dyson, Gordon, Cowan, & McKenzie, 2014). In it we have used the term EPs, which refers to any outside agency coming into a school to provide a service, program or resource as this was the term that primary school teachers most often used in schools. We acknowledge, however, that other terms are also used in the literature. Williams et al. (2011), for example, have proposed the use of the term 'outsourcing' to describe the situation where goods and services are procured from suppliers external to the school.

There has been some discussion in the literature on the role of EPs in relation to their contribution to meeting the learning intentions of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (MOE, 2007) and the physical education learning area situated within it (Powell, 2015). A central underpinning of the NZC (MOE, 2007) is the process of 'Teaching as Inquiry' (p. 35) whereby effective pedagogy is considered to be a cyclical process that examines the teaching-learning process both day by day and over the longer term (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). Teaching as Inquiry requires the school and the teacher to examine where their students are and what they need to learn, the specific strategies that will help them achieve this learning, the results of the teaching and the implications for future teaching and learning. As part of this process the teacher collects evidence on student's learning and their own teaching (Timperley, Kaser, & Halbert, 2014). One consideration when reflecting on the role of EPs is the degree to which they can/could legitimately meet the expectations associated with a Teaching as Inquiry approach. Petrie et al. (2013) in their commentary on EPs stated that:

It appears that many programmes and initiatives being offered to schools are developed and delivered by people with limited knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy, context, or learners. In addition, the initiatives appear to often be delivered as standardised programmes, with providers rarely identifying or adjusting programmes to meet the specific needs of individual students, classes or schools. (p. 9)

The depth and breadth of the physical education learning area is clearly presented within the NZC (MOE, 2007) document:

In physical education, the focus is on movement and its contribution to the development of individuals and communities. By learning in, through, and about movement, students gain an understanding that movement is integral to human expression and that it can contribute to people's pleasure and enhance their lives. They learn to understand, appreciate, and move their bodies, relate positively to others, and demonstrate constructive attitudes and values. This learning takes place as they engage in play, games, sport, exercise, recreation, adventure, and expressive movement in diverse physical and social environments. Physical education encourages students to engage in movement experiences that promote and support the development of physical and social skills. It fosters critical thinking and action and enables students to understand the role and significance of physical activity for individuals and society. (p. 23)

Penney, Pope, Hunter, Phillips, and Dewar (2013) and Penney et al. (2013) both argue that EPs in Aotearoa/New Zealand do not meet the full intent of physical education as presented in the NZC (MOE, 2007) and may in fact be redefining physical education as a Learning Area. They argue that the lack of comprehensive curriculum-related physical education being taught in schools had led to the programs being presented by EPs acting as the default physical education curriculum. Petrie (2011) also expressed concern that external programs and initiatives had the potential for:

- taking the place of curriculum PE
- having limited or superficial links to the HPE curriculum, resulting in 'PE' returning to a focus solely on sport, fitness, fundamental movement skills
- being disconnected from broader school ethos
- being unsustainable for schools to finance
- bringing about sustainable changes in teachers' practices. (p. 15)

Other Aotearoa/New Zealand Scholars have also argued that due to the influence of EPs students are experiencing a simplistic representation of physical education (Burrows & Wright, 2007; Dyson, Gordon, & Cowan, 2011; Gordon, Cowan, McKenzie, & Dyson, 2013; Penney et al., 2013) which is not always clearly associated with the NZC (MOE, 2007).

Kirk (2010) commented that the presence of these programs and organisations has a significant influence on the construction of physical education, while Macdonald (2011) felt that outsourcing is significant in that it can potentially:

- Dissipate the place of PE in schooling with PE being provided outside 'normal' (school teacher-led) curriculum and pedagogical practices
- Direct the foci of PE curriculum to 'problems' for which there is a market 'solution'
- Deprofessionalize PE as PE purchases expertise from those often outside the profession
- Introduce globalized commodities that may not align with the educational mission of schooling nor the needs and interests of students. (p. 42)

When the ease with which EPs have been able to establish themselves within primary schools in a number of countries is considered, it could be argued that this is partially a result of poor-quality physical education. A number of writers have identified practices that indicate there could be deficiencies in primary school programs. Kirk (2010) has suggested that physical education in the US, UK and Australia often emphasises what he calls an 'exposure curriculum' based on traditional sports and games. Griggs (2007), in an international review, reported that primary schools provided insufficient challenges for children in lessons, observed an over emphasis on performance, discussed a dominant sport and games presence, and revealed that schools carried out insufficient assessment of the Physical Education Curriculum. In regards to professional development (PD) the New Zealand context is impacted by the government's decision in 2009 to remove all advisors in health and physical education. This decision removed one of the major sources of PD for practicing teachers (Paterson, 2010).

Penney et al. (2013) concluded from their interviews with teachers and principals that 'there was widespread concern that knowledge of content and of pedagogy is deficient in physical education in many school settings' (p. 19). Their work identified 'inadequacies and needs in (i) initial teacher education and (ii) professional development and support for teachers' (p. 45). The call for improved initial teacher education and teachers' practices

has been supported by a number of other writers (Gordon et al., 2013; Dyson et al., 2011; Griggs, 2007, 2010; Harris, Cale, & Musson, 2012; Petrie et al., 2013), all who supported the need for a dedicated effort to enhance teacher preparation in physical education. In regards to PD, Penney et al. (2013) concluded that if teachers were to supply quality physical education in schools a concentrated effort in school-based and PD opportunities for teachers was needed. To be successful these initiatives needed to address teacher weaknesses in not only content knowledge but also the knowledge associated with how to teach the content. We draw on Shulman's (1987) definition of pedagogical content knowledge to illustrate the relationship between content and pedagogy, 'Pedagogical Content knowledge is the blending of both content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems or issues are organised, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for discussion' (p. 8).

Addressing deficiency in pedagogical content knowledge could be advantageous in attempting to support and sustain teacher-led physical education in primary schools.

While the use of EPs occurs in a number of countries, Aotearoa/New Zealand is in a unique situation with the availability of Kiwisport funding introduced by the New Zealand Government (Key, 2009). Between 2010 and 2014, \$82 million was budgeted for sport for school-aged children. For primary schools a direct allocation of \$13 per student (\$6 million) per year was supplemented by indirect funding that was allocated through 17 Regional Sports Trusts (RSTs) to promote and establish partnerships between community groups, schools, clubs and other sporting providers. The intention of this funding was to enhance fundamental sport skill development and to increase access to sport for all school-aged children in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This funding has given schools the opportunity to access EPs and to bring sports into their schools, both for out of school sporting events and to provide experiences for children during physical education curriculum time. The ready availability of government funds, particularly for regional sport trusts is one important factor in the proliferation of EPs within Aotearoa/New Zealand primary schools (Powell, 2015).

This research explores the present reality of EPs within primary schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand through the perspectives of the classroom teachers. It seeks their views on the place of EPs, the perceived advantages and disadvantages of their presence and the influence that EPs have had on the curriculum and pedagogy of physical education within their classrooms and schools.

Methodology

This research utilised a case-study design (Stake, 2005). The phenomenon or case is the increasing presence of EPs in the context of primary school in New Zealand (Armour & Griffiths, 2012). This case study was situated within a larger study that examined primary school physical education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This study incorporated a mixed-methods approach (Greene, 2007) that allows for quantitative and qualitative data to be integrated pragmatically within data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the evidence gathered (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The quantitative questionnaire allowed us to survey a large number of teachers to determine the prevalence of EPs in schools. This was followed by qualitative interviews to gain a deeper understanding of this particular group of teacher's perspectives. The questionnaire

was adapted from previous research on primary school physical education programs in Australia (Morgan & Hansen, 2007).

Participants

The participants were 487 classroom teachers from 133 different primary and intermediate schools in six regions (North Auckland, Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago) across Aotearoa/New Zealand. The research team interviewed 33 classroom teachers from across the six regions.

Data collection

We obtained questionnaire responses from 487 classroom teachers responsible for teaching children aged between 5 and 12 years from primary and intermediate schools throughout the country. We then interviewed 33 classroom teachers, who had volunteered to be interviewed via the survey, from across the six regions as a purposive sample (Patton, 2002). Teachers were interviewed using semi-structured interviews for 45–65 minutes. An independent graduate student transcribed the interview recordings verbatim. All interview data were entered into NVivo 9 by one of the research team.

Data analysis

The qualitative data analysis presented the trustworthiness of the data by establishing its credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). *Credibility* was achieved through peer debriefing with colleagues who are knowledgeable regarding primary schools (teachers and principals) and the research team. Throughout the process of analysis, peer debriefing with the research team was an important part of developing credibility. This required the four researchers in this study to read and re-read all the transcripts and the categories or themes drawn from NVivo 9 while continually critiquing the interpretations derived from the surveys and the interviews. *Dependability* of the findings was determined through a peer examination strategy to check the themes that were drawn from the interviews. Specifically, all authors challenged the logic behind the interpretations made by the other authors until all four authors agreed that the themes and interpretations were the best representation of participants' responses. We have attempted to achieve *confirmability* by providing a reflexive, self-critical account based on triangulating our findings and interpretations. We present the findings shaped by the teacher's comments and not the researcher's bias, motivation or interest. Finally, *transferability* has been established by drawing on critical discussion of the pertinent literature and our mixed data sources coming from a wide geographic area in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

In the data analysis process we present a snap shot of some of the trends that were drawn from the survey and the interview responses and we believe that the findings have applicability in other contexts. During this data analysis process a number of themes or categories were drawn from the evidence. The first-order of analysis or entering the evidence into NVivo 9 produced nodes or thematic descriptions from the data. The second stage of analysis involved the inferential coding of these initial descriptions

(Miles et al., 2014). This was undertaken with the aim of challenging the interpretations of the findings, identifying conceptual links and uncovering key categories through frequent reading and re-reading of the evidence and peer debriefing sessions.

The quantitative data analysis provided descriptive statistics that were calculated from question 11 of the questionnaire that asked the question: 'If your school utilizes any external agencies (such as sports trusts, netball association, local swimming pool, etc.) to take students for ANY PE activities, please list/describe all agencies and their level of involvement and the specific activities taught.' The data received from the questionnaires informed the interview questions and gave a tangible frame or reference in which to situate the interview responses. The participant's responses offered an overview or statistic of the degree to which EPs were present in schools across the country and the activities the EPs were providing.

Findings

A number of categories were drawn from the evidence collected. These were the: *Prevalence of EPs*, *Expertise and PD*, *Valued programs*, *Evaluation and assessment of EP provided programs* and *Pedagogical limitations*.

Prevalence of EPs

This study revealed that EPs are major providers of physical education and sport in the primary schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Teachers identified that a large number of EPs ($n = 638$) were active in their schools. The survey revealed that 87% (422 out of 487 surveys) of teachers reported using an EP in their schools. A teacher described the prevalence of the EPs in one school and the way in which different EPs came into the school throughout the year:

Term one they do ripper rugby with the boys and all the girls preseason. In term two we have basketball, term three we've got rugby league and softball and term four they have soccer ... We also utilise other [non-sport activities] ... We do MoveMprove [Gymnastics New Zealand]. We do the bike safety ... As they get older they get more sports specific but at the lower end it's more skills based.

Students were exposed to a wide range of sports. The type of external provision varied and included 56 different sports codes operating at a local club, regional or national levels. There were approximately 180 different organisations involved, which included (1) national bodies such as the Heart Foundation, Jump Rope for Heart and KiwiSport, (2) private providers such as Kelly Sports, RSTs, other trusts such as the Wynton Rufer Trust, Find Your Field of Dreams Foundation and Halberg Trust and (3) community groups such as the Rotary club, sport clubs, sport academies, regional councils, secondary school students and parents. Fifteen sport codes had RST bodies as providers and five teachers made reference to the national sports body as a provider. Some teachers also identified the use of personnel such as regional and national players, and ex-representative players from rugby, cricket, basketball, hockey and netball as EPs.

A large number of sports codes were present in the schools. The more traditional sport codes were dominant, with teachers identifying 77 cricket EPs, 44 rugby EPs and 24

football EPs in contrast to the less traditional sports such as volleyball five EPs, golf four EPs and badminton four EPs. A consistent pattern on survey responses was that large numbers of teachers did not name (for reasons unknown to us) the actual providers coming into the school. That is, there were 268 named providers and 366 unnamed providers across the most popular sports codes listed.

The extent of EP's provision may be even greater than teachers reported. Teachers identified external provision as programs where people external to the school were involved in teaching the students. When asked in interviews teachers did comment that programs such as Jump Jam (a ubiquitous Aerobics Programme) was not seen as an externally provided program, despite the fact that it was produced by and purchased from an EP before being implemented (played as a video) by the teachers and students within the schools. It appears that such programs have become so integrated into the school physical education curriculum that they have become completely normalised and accepted.

Expertise and PD

Teachers gave a number of reasons for the use of EPs in schools. For many teachers, EPs were seen as specialists or experts who held certain knowledge and skills in the field. Their expertise was usually identified as knowledge of a specific sport or physical skill area. For example, teachers commented that, 'Senior school we have experts for rugby and soccer in', 'Sports Southland have a team of experts who teach skills needed relative to what needs more work on' and 'We have visiting experts from Northland Cricket, Hockey and Tennis.'

Many educators contrasted the EPs' expertise with teachers' lack of expertise and confidence in teaching physical education. The EPs were able to offer specialised knowledge that teachers perceived they did not have: 'It gives the chance for the kids to up-skill in a way that I couldn't give them.' This lack of confidence in their own competence to successfully teach physical education was articulated by a large number of teachers. In many cases they also felt that 'other teachers' lacked the ability to teach physical education competently and were therefore advantaged by the presence of EPs.

I think [external provision] is to help teachers that might not be so confident teaching PE, whether it be that their fitness is up to it or their skill level I'm not quite sure, but just to support the teacher ...

Some teachers who held a leadership role for physical education, often called 'Sports coordinators', in their schools felt that if EPs came in they could at least be assured that all children were getting an equal allocation of physical education. 'If it [provision by EPs] is scheduled and someone else is coming out then it [physical education] gets done.' This implies that if classroom teachers are relied on to teach their own physical education, it may not 'get done' at all.

The EPs' expertise was valued not only for what it offered to students, but educators also believed EPs offered teachers an opportunity for PD. Many teachers reported relying on EPs for PD in physical education. They identified a double benefit with the EPs providing both PD for teachers and expert instruction for their children because they can 'up-skill the teachers and the kids, a combination'. One teacher reported that it was easier to rely on EPs for PD than to search for the information on one's own:

They can teach and support us far easier than we can find that information out and they can teach us a faster and easier way to teach to the kids. It helps me for my personal development.

A principal explained that one benefit of bringing in EPs was for teachers to receive PD from a 'specialist', but it is interesting that the PD is equated with merely 'staying' and watching the lesson:

With external people coming in I thought it was good because I got a little bit of PD for the staff as well, they could see what activities were happening ... the teachers always stayed with the class when they were with the specialist.

Perhaps one reason the PD was appealing to educators was the lack of other opportunities for capacity-building in physical education as one teacher commented, 'There are few PD opportunities for our staff in PE, but lots of PD in Maths and Literacy.'

Valued programs

For many classroom teachers the EPs gave the opportunity for students to gain a variety of experiences they may not normally get. One teacher mentioned the opportunities for students who could not otherwise afford it:

For us it was an awesome way to get the sports into our school ... we don't have, unfortunately the parent support and kids just can't afford to participate ... they can't afford the subs. We subsidize the subs and still we have parents who really struggle. So for us, [using] outside providers was very much about getting our kids involved in fun and out in the community.

Certain EP programs were frequently mentioned as providing positive experiences for students that schools were not able to provide on their own. Teachers particularly valued learn-to-swim and gymnastics programs.

Swimming

Many schools have swimming programs provided by EPs that teachers described in detail. Several teachers reported that they were supportive of this instruction:

We go in a two-week block to the swimming pool, which is great. We use some of the coaches who are at Splash Palace [name of the provider] and we use our own expertise that we have got plus any parents with expertise. We group the kids across the syndicate for skills and ability and during that time they will have, basically have a series of lessons over the two weeks every day. So eight lessons and you see improvement in that time.

We've got funding for all our year 3-5 [students], to have ten swim lessons at the local pool, for that, so we used that, that was really cool.

Gymnastics

Gymnastics was one of the activities that had lesson plans, equipment and resources for the schools to use. Teachers were supportive of the gymnastics programs:

It's a fantastic facility. They have the beams, the ropes the climbing frames, they can jump into things and trampolines. We haven't got the facilities or the resources to do that and

also specialists; they know what they are doing. In some ways for us as a class what is more required than the swimming, is seeing the children's response to it. We just love it and the children's love; it shows us another dimension of the children and they are so proud of themselves.

When we did the gymnastics, they gave us lesson plans, and ... skills that they were going to be teaching each week, and then they gave us an evaluation of how they saw the children. So they didn't individually name the children, but they gave us an overall picture.

In this study there was some mention of commercial providers as supplying quality programs. Teachers valued resources that had unit plans, lesson plans and power points, although the cost could be prohibitive for many schools:

It's a fantastic resource, it's a really good resource because, it comes with powerpoints. It's also comes with the lesson plans and the discussions teachers can have with the kids, so inquiry focus. I think it's costing us about \$4000-\$5000 to start it up. So we get a couple of units and you go through a couple of units a year.

Evaluation and assessment of EP provided programs

Teachers reported that outside providers and the outcomes of their programs were rarely evaluated. The classroom teachers were asked, 'are these outside providers assessed or evaluated at your school?' The most common answer was a simple 'No'. In some cases the response, while not as definitively negative, demonstrated a degree of uncertainty that gave little confidence that effective processes were in place:

Unsure. No idea sorry. That would be at the management level.

Sometimes they give evaluation forms, and we will fill those out and assess them. But there is nothing formal. Otherwise, if they don't give the assessment we don't really do it. And it is hard because if they rang up again to come in it probably wouldn't even be the same person [providing instruction].

When considering assessment in relation to students rather than the evaluation of programs, the only area in which systematic assessment of students was mentioned was swimming. A number of teachers reported experiences similar to the following:

When we did the swimming, they assessed the children prior – when they got to the pool for the first time – and they assessed them on the last day, and they gave us a report, yeah, a sheet, you know, it was just a data sheet, from where they'd started, and how many lessons they'd had, and where they'd got to – and they gave us a booklet with little stickers they had, you know, how many lengths can you swim? I can swim 5 m, I can swim 25m ...

It appears that the educational benefits of most programs may be limited by a lack of student assessment and program evaluations. While limited in terms of a comprehensive physical education program, it is encouraging, however, that many aquatics programs have measurable learning intentions and assessment pathways are clear.

Pedagogical limitations

There were a number of criticisms offered by teachers on the use of EPs in their schools. These were mostly related to pedagogical limitations in the programs and concerns around the adequacy of the programs in addressing the requirements of the NZC

(MOE, 2007). Pedagogical criticisms of the EPs involved two major areas. The first was concern over the lack of organisation and planning of activities and the limitations of providers in maximising student involvement and opportunities to practice:

Ripper rugby was crazy, the kids had fun because the field was muddy but when it came to the games there was one ball between 30 kids and the girls didn't know how to play, and it didn't really work.

There are also certain coaches that are not really up to standard. There was a lot of queuing where they are just standing in a line waiting to hit the ball. There was a lot of standing around and they should really be a bit more onto it.

The second area of criticism was more aligned with concerns about the quality of the learning that was occurring. Teachers were concerned about the content provided to their students. If the EPs are coming in for a one-off session then is highly likely that they do get to know the students and that they can therefore not teach at a level that is appropriate for the students:

I think it needs to be more than a one-off session ... with the cricket I think we had 45 minutes, but it was just them lobbing the ball over and over and over ... it needs to be more than once, it needs to be a decent length of time.

Like, they did lots of exploring, but it was all just the same exploring – I'd like them to come in with an actual programme where they explore, they learn, and then they build on it ... so that you can actually see the skill progression, rather than ... 'cause with what we did, they just got faster and faster, they didn't actually get better and better.

There were few examples of providers using a variety of pedagogical approaches and/or demonstrating their ability to meet the needs of low-skilled students or include diverse learners. No teachers mentioned examples of EPs providing differentiated instruction, which is fundamental expectation of New Zealand teachers (MOE, 2007).

There was some concern expressed by the teachers on the degree to which EPs met both the specific requirements and the underpinning intent of the NZC (MOE, 2007), which includes a vision statement identifying students as being 'confident, connected, actively involved and lifelong learners' (p. 8). This does raise the question of whose role it is to ensure the requirements of the NZC (MOE, 2007) are achieved and whether this is a role that EPs can be expected to meet. Many teachers felt the programs were limited: 'Most of the time [spent] is the B strand [physical skills]. They come and teach the skill of this in five sessions and away they go.' Some of the offerings were broad with little depth. One teacher commented:

There is a bit of free stuff, like Pakuranga rugby and Kelly sports. Not much structured coaching available. More one off. They give you a trial and if you like it then you can pay for it. 'My Gym'. Most come in for promotional work, which is not ongoing.

Teachers' comments did not suggest that these activities were part of a comprehensive program that aligned with the NZC (MOE, 2007). This limited curriculum did not appear to provide the depth of understanding and participation that we would expect to see in a program that accurately represented the intention to learn *in, through* and *about* the movement curriculum (MOE, 2007).

Other classroom teachers also felt that the EPs were more about promotion of their sport rather than having a broader interest in the physical education of students:

I think a lot of them are here to promote the sport that they are teaching. Like the hockey people, they have given our school heaps of hockey equipment, they really want to get our school involved. It is rather a promotion of their sport than teaching us how to teach it.

Discussion

One of the interesting outcomes of this research was the lack of confidence classroom teachers reported in their ability to teach physical education. This was reinforced by their comments around EPs supplying expertise that they did not have, that EPs were the experts or specialists and that they had the role not only of up-skilling their students but also supplying teachers with PD. This situation is not peculiar to Aotearoa/New Zealand, with primary school teachers lacking confidence and looking to EPs for expertise in Australia (Morgan & Bourke, 2008; Williams & Macdonald, 2015) and the UK (Griggs, 2007; Kirk, 2010). It is also aligned with the findings of Penney et al. (2013) concerning teachers' limited physical education content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

It appears that EPs are to a large degree defining what occurs in the name of physical education in primary schools rather than the schools offering comprehensive school physical education programs tailored to the needs and interests of their students as stipulated by the NZC (MOE, 2007). Similar concerns have also been highlighted in Australia (Morgan & Bourke, 2008; Williams et al., 2011) and the UK (Evans & Davies, 2014; Griggs, 2007, 2010).

Teachers have identified a number of reasons why EPs provide physical education instruction. These include the poor quality of teacher preparation in physical education, the lack of PD opportunities, the ongoing government emphasis on numeracy and literacy, and the understanding of and lack of value given to physical education by principals, teachers and society at large (Dyson et al., 2011; Penney et al., 2013; Petrie et al., 2013). Primary teachers have generally received little support and leadership to help implement new physical education curricula or indeed to clarify what is meant by the term physical education (Culpan, 1996/1997). This has led to some uncertainty or 'muddled thinking' regarding what primary physical education is in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Culpan, 2005; Dyson et al., 2011).

Our findings suggest that when considering the coverage of the physical education learning area, most EPs are contributing strongly to Strand B (Movement Concepts and Motor Skills) of the NZC (MOE, 2007) but not to the other three strands, Strand A (Personal Development), Strand C (Relationships and Social Development) and Strand D (Environment and Community). This is not surprising, as EPs have been mandated via initiatives such as Kiwi-Sport to work on skills fundamental to sports development in primary schools and have a very narrow view of the physical education curriculum. Other sport providers also have an emphasis on skill development for their specific sport. The rugby club teaches rugby skills, the netball association teaches netball skills, the cricket club teaches cricket and so on. Many EPs had a different agenda than teachers. Their concern was not fulfilling the requirements of NZC, it was promoting their sport or activity and about getting more children to play their sport.

The restricted nature of this coverage means that unless schools and the teachers make a deliberate effort to ensure a full coverage of the physical education learning area for their students they will continue to receive a truncated program in physical education. There

appears to be a danger that if this emphasis continues that physical education could continue to be a sport-based multi-activity model that teachers and educators in physical education have worked hard to move on from (Kirk, 2010).

With the large numbers of EPs working with students in schools, consideration should be given to what is *not* taught in physical education. According to the perspective of the null curriculum (Eisner, 1985), the large number of EPs may cause students to miss the full potential of a quality, holistic physical education program. The null curriculum was described by Eisner (1985) as what is not taught in schools or 'The options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about much less be able to use, the concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire' (p. 107). What potential learnings are students missing when their physical education program is essentially restricted to Strand B (physical skills) of the NZC (MOE, 2007) and the other three strands are largely absent? Students may never get to experience a holistic physical education program that is an integral part of a broader vision for education that is valued by their teachers and communities, as advocated by Dyson (2014).

We also need to consider what do students learn when their teachers choose to bring in outsiders to teach the learning area of physical education for them and, in some cases, abdicate full responsibility for teaching physical education to EPs? We suggest that it would be surprising if students did not come to their own conclusions about the values attributed to physical education in general. This learning will be reinforced when they observe the ready acceptance of these practices by principals, teachers, parents and society in general. How this impacts on students' own valuing of movement and physical activity is worthy of consideration and further inquiry.

Evans and Davies (2014) also consider unintentional learning when they make the point that exposure to commercial EPs has the potential to generate learning outside of the specific content related to the sport or activity context. 'How these events [business-linked] impact the subjectivities of teachers and children and their developing relationships, for example, to diet, physical activity and health, as well as their attitudes and relations to market products, should be an ongoing concern' (pp. 8–9). At a more individual level, the presence of EPs, who will have their own belief systems about the role of sport, physical activity and possibly healthism (Tinning, 2010)-related issues, offer opportunities for learning generated by the *hidden curriculum* to occur. Tinning, Kirk, and Evans (1993) described the hidden curriculum as 'the learning that results from the reflexive aspects of what teachers do and say' (p. 108). The contact with large numbers of EPs by students, when aligned with a general lack of any kind of assessment or evaluation by schools or teachers makes the consequences of the hidden curriculum an issue directly related to students' learning. Teachers raised the issue of the degree to which EPs were able to contribute to the learning outcomes of physical education as situated within the health and physical education learning area. There was no clarity as to whether they believed it was the EPs role to meet the NZC (MOE, 2007) requirements or whether it was the teachers' role to make the links to the curriculum by building on the experiences of the EPs. Teachers stated that EPs are content experts but our findings suggest that they were not facilitating links from the content provided by EPs to the NZC (MOE, 2007). We posit that clarifying the roles of teachers and EPs would be of immense value going forward. This is an area that school leaders and others in senior management roles have an opportunity to take a leadership role in. Whether or not they choose to do so

will, however, be dependent on their understanding and valuing of physical education when it is taught as envisaged in the NZC (MOE, 2007). Nonetheless, it is the senior leadership team of a school that is responsible for the quality of curriculum and pedagogy.

Recently the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) Report (2014) on health and physical education was released on Aotearoa/New Zealand primary schools. The NMSSA Report (2014) has been designed to assess and understand student achievement at years 4 (age 8–9) and year 8 (age 12–13) across the curriculum. Each of the eight learning areas including health and physical education is assessed over a five-year cycle. It found that while 95% of students were achieving at the expected level for physical education at year 4, by year 8 only 50% of students were doing so. In response to this fall-off in achievement the report made the seemingly obvious statement that for future improvement to occur, ‘students need to be exposed to specific health and physical education teaching’ (p. 7). This comment supports the previous discussion on the null curriculum and our findings that there were a number of areas in physical education that were not being taught, in part due to the ready availability of EPs.

It would seem important for schools that wish to use EPs to cover aspects of their teaching and learning program in physical education to have an in-depth knowledge of intended and actualised outcomes that occur when these programs are implemented. This would seem especially valuable for schools when they evaluate how they are meeting the requirements of the NZC (MOE, 2007), including meeting the specific needs of the school community. It would also seem important that careful evaluation occurs since schools have little control over the activities that are implemented and/or who actually appears in front of their students. It was therefore worrying to find that in the majority of schools there was little prior investigation or systematic evaluation of what content or program EPs provided and that in many instances teachers did not identify who the EPs teaching their students were. One striking finding was that there were 360 examples of teachers not identifying the name of the EP who was teaching their children.

What then does the future hold for physical education and the role of EPs within Aotearoa/New Zealand primary schools? Sport New Zealand (Sport NZ), a government body and the major provider of funding for sport organisations and EPs in NZ primary schools, has commissioned a new report on Sport and Physical Education. The intention is to facilitate the development of a ‘Strategic Plan for Sport and Physical Education’ in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Sport New, 2015). While the report is still in the development phase, when it is implemented it may have a critical impact on physical education and the role of EPs into the future.

Our findings suggest that there is a consistent belief among teachers and principals that there is a need for better PD. PD has the potential to lead to sustainable change but this requires a commitment from the schools (Patton, Parker, & Pratt, 2013). The removal of physical education advisors due to a reduction in government funding (Pateron, 2010) means that there is little opportunity for teachers to access PD aligned with the NZC (MOE, 2007). Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ) attempts to fill this need by providing regional workshops and a national conference. However, as a largely unfunded body with limited personnel the availability of PENZ PD is of necessity restricted (Pateron, 2010). Our classroom teachers state that many teachers in NZ look to the EPs for their PD. This is supported by the NMSSA (2014) Report finding that over two-thirds of teachers had received PD in physical education within the last two years and that ‘the

most frequently cited source of support for classroom teaching was external providers' (p. 8). While in some cases teachers may be making educated decisions to seek support from EPs, seeing them as being better than having no support, in other cases it was evident that teachers saw EPs as experts of physical education and explicitly targeted EPs for planning and teaching support. When consideration is given to the identified limitations in EPs this causes a great deal of concern.

Conclusion

It appears that in many cases physical education in primary schools has been transformed into a commodity that may or may not be aligned with the educational mission of schooling or the needs and interests of students (Griggs, 2010; Powell, 2015; Williams & Macdonald, 2015). We have found, as Petrie (2012) reported, that programs provided by EPs are often delivered as standardised pre-packaged programs that do not cater to the individual needs of our children. Teachers identified a narrow curriculum, a lack of skill progression and that EPs were often limited in their ability to maximise student involvement and opportunities to practice. Many programs were not seen to be contextually relevant, culturally responsive or differentiated for learners with different skills or capabilities.

Jump Jam, the ubiquitous Aerobics Programme, is an example of an externally provided program that has become normalised to the degree that it is accepted by many teachers and school leaders as equating to physical education (Powell, 2015). Our findings support Burrows' (2005) comments that programs such as Jump Jam could replace the physical education curriculum in some schools.

We are concerned that many EPs have a different agenda than teachers whose priority must be on meeting the requirements of the NZC (MOE, 2007). This universal use of perceived expertise from EPs from outside the school, and most typically outside the profession, has had a detrimental effect on the quality of physical education in Aotearoa/New Zealand primary schools (Penney et al., 2013).

The reality is, however, that in Aotearoa/New Zealand, EPs are established as a major provider of physical education and sport in primary schools. It is difficult to see this changing in the future as governmental support through Sport NZ increases and EPs become more influential. This situation raises many questions for us. The central question is what impact this phenomenon will have for students in physical education, physical activity, sport and other community activities in the future. Aligned to this is what do schools see as the role of EPs? Do they consider EPs as contributors, playing a part in the wider curriculum coverage for their students, who help meet the requirements of the NZC (MOE, 2007) and the communities in which the schools are situated? Alternatively do schools see EPs more as surrogate teachers who provide the physical education curriculum for their students? And, if generalist classroom teachers teaching physical education do not provide what we believe to be quality physical education in primary schools do we need to look to alternatives such as specialist teachers in primary schools?

What is to be our response as a profession to the reality of the pervasiveness of EPs? Should we distance ourselves from EPs in an attempt to regain the educational high ground or would it be more productive to work alongside EPs in an attempt to influence their programs and to align them more closely to the learning area of physical education and the NZC (MOE, 2007)? This alternative offers the potential of maximising what EPs

offer by combining their content knowledge with the teachers' Curriculum and Pedagogical Knowledge to improve teaching and learning in physical education. This may reduce the uncertainty around who is responsible for the *what* (content) and the blending of the *how* (pedagogy) when incorporating the physical education curriculum into primary schools. While acknowledging the possibilities of a collaborative future we would suggest that exploring the roles and responsibilities of school leadership in helping reduce the confusion is important for the future of quality physical education in our primary schools.

Whatever the response we should not lose sight of the fact that there are a number of physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills that our young people will need in order to be successful in the twenty-first century that can be enhanced through a high quality and sustainable physical education program. Is the increasing focus on sport encouraged by the presence of EPs an appropriate focus and will this focus serve the increasingly diverse nature of Aotearoa/New Zealand into the future? Are we providing a comprehensive and holistic physical education program for our children (Burrows, 2005)?

As a profession it is important that we do all that we can to ensure that all students receive quality teaching and learning in physical education. This includes giving teachers the opportunity to further develop their pedagogical content knowledge through effective continuing PD and sustainable support in their schools. It also includes successfully navigating the reality of EPs in schools in such a way as to maximise the benefits of their presence for our students.

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