

# Teachers and Curriculum



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

KAIKO ME TE MARAUTANGA

VOLUME 9 2006



# TEACHERS AND CURRICULUM

## KAIKO ME TE MARAUTANGA

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VOLUME 9 2006

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# THE DANGERS OF MINIMALISM: HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN THE DRAFT NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM

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## INTRODUCTION

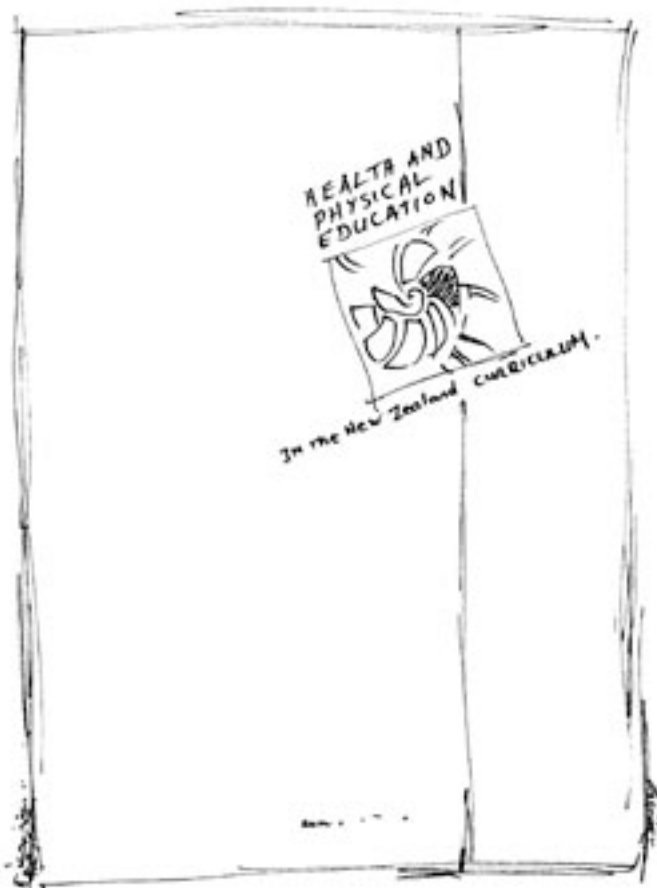
In order to analyse physical education (PE) curriculum policy in England, Penney and Harris (2004) recently compared it with that in New Zealand. Their aim was to distinguish between policy as a source of either "stability and inequity in schools" or "resistance and change" (p. 102). While acknowledging that all curriculum policy documents are replete with contradictions, tensions and silences, they commented favourably on the then New Zealand curriculum policy. Of particular promise was the visibility of "social, cultural, environmental and, most notably, critical discourses" (Penney & Harris, 2004, p. 102). In 2006, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand released a new curriculum for all learning areas, including health and PE. This article follows up the analysis of Penney and Harris by comparing this new draft - The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft for Consultation (Ministry of Education, 2006b) - with the current Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) to which Penney and Harris (2004) referred. While the draft addresses all subjects, my focus is specifically on elements relevant to health and physical education. I will begin by contextualising the curriculum change and explaining the process of review. I will then discuss different approaches to policy analysis and my approach, before analysing and evaluating the proposed curriculum changes affecting health and physical education.

## BACKGROUND

In 1999, the New Zealand Ministry of Education introduced a new curriculum for the learning areas health and physical education entitled *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (HPENZC) (Ministry of Education, 1999). It replaced separate syllabi for health and physical education (Department of Education, 1985, 1987) and marked a significant departure from the philosophical approach to these two subject areas (Education Review Office, 2001). The principal area of departure involved the incorporation of a 'socio-cultural' and 'critical' orientation. By contrast, the preceding syllabi privileged the individual and emphasised physical health, care of the body, the prevention of disease, and movement skills. HPENZC, however, included an explicitly holistic orientation that embraced not only physical, but also mental, emotional, spiritual and social notions of health. It also focused on wider social and political contexts, and the place of the individual therein. As one of the writers described it, the curriculum was an "attempt... to balance priorities between the extremes of individual and global (societal) concerns" (Culpan, 1998, p. 5). Burrows and Wright (2004c) describe it this way:

The writers... were influenced significantly by the work of Australian and British physical education writers...who had begun to draw on critical theory to articulate the contested nature of traditional physical education subject matter and teaching practices. [They]...incorporated tenets of this socially critical theorising into their writing of the new health and physical education curriculum. While physical skill and biophysical knowledge about the human body were still emphasized in the new curriculum, sociological, cultural and psychological knowledge was alluded to as crucial in the attainment of a holistic understanding of health and physical education (p. 195).

Four 'underlying concepts' communicate the socio-cultural and critical dimensions of HPENZC: 'Hauora', the 'Socio-ecological perspective', 'Health promotion', and 'Attitudes and Values'. Hauora is defined as "a Maori philosophy of wellbeing" and explained using Durie's (1994) Whāre Tapa Whā model (p. 31), which I will return to in my analysis.



In addition, hauora is also linked to, and further contextualized within, wider society by a "socio-ecological perspective". This includes exploration of the 'self' in the context of 'others' and 'society' (p, 33). Processes of 'Health promotion' and 'attitudes and values' - both placed in a social justice framework - complete the socio-cultural and critical foundations.

International physical education scholars acknowledged this socio-cultural and critical orientation. Penney and Harris (2004), for example, were especially positive about its "form and content". They described HPENZC as offering "a breadth of engagement in terms of both issues and activities. . . a broader view of health as multi-dimensional but also socially constructed and culturally specific" (p. 103). Although less wholly supportive of HPENZC, Tinning (2000) recognised its "socially critical agenda" (p. 8) and focus on social justice. However, Tinning questioned whether the curriculum aims could realistically be achieved in practice. Indeed, Culpan (1996/1997) noted after writing HPENZC: "it must be acknowledged that the achievement of a new physical education teaching paradigm is a huge personal and epistemological challenge. Any attempt to debunk commonly held beliefs in physical education and sport (as in any subject area) or to situate them into a political and social context", he said, "nearly always gives rise to incredulity, discomfort and even hostility among students and practitioners" (p. 217).

If, as these writers suggest, this radical change in the philosophy of the curriculum requires teachers to adopt different ways of thinking and to invest time and energy, it seems surprising that a review of the health and PE curriculum in New Zealand should follow so soon. Even more surprising is the complete lack of research into the implementation of HPENZC into New Zealand schools and how teachers and students received it.

Nonetheless, Penney and Harris (2004) argued that the framework adopted in HPENZC had the *potential* to change the perception of Health and PE and to cast it within a more holistic and critical light. Whether the new draft curriculum will preserve this perception is the subject of this article. Before considering this, it is pertinent to briefly outline my involvement in the current curriculum review process and the development of the current 2006 draft document.

### PROCESS AND COMPROMISE

In 2004, the New Zealand Ministry of Education requested the subject associations of Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ), the New Zealand Health Teachers' Association (NZHTA), the Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association (HETTANZ), and Education Outdoors New Zealand (EONZ), send two representatives each to meetings to discuss the place of the health and physical education learning area in the curriculum review, referred to as 'The Curriculum Marautanga Project' (CMP). I attended these meetings as a representative of PENZ, and contributed to the draft statement for health and physical education, in consultation with various people in the wider physical education community. Our brief was to write, in one page or less, a so-called "essence statement" for health and physical education, and to review the achievement objectives. The essence statement communicated the essentials of health and physical education, that is, the elements unique to the learning area.

Early in the review process we pointed out that there was no mandate to change the current curriculum in health and PE and that many educators were still grappling with the existing HPENZC curriculum philosophy. The curriculum stocktake report (Ministry of Education, 2002) (on which the Ministry based its rationale for the whole curriculum review) gave us no specific guidance about health and PE and did not make recommendations for change to HPENZC. In short, we were asked to review the HPENZC curriculum without any obvious reason. The curriculum working group thus decided to write the essence statement, employing the existing HPENZC philosophy. This was problematic because it meant trying to sum up the intentions and content of a 64 page document in, what turned out to be, less than two pages, with additional pages being left for the achievement objectives.

The process of curriculum development is highly problematic, especially when it involves, as is the case here, over eight people from different subject disciplines and backgrounds. Although my concern in this article is the resultant draft document, and not the process by which it was developed, aspects of the process are relevant when discussing different approaches to policy analysis (see below). Ball (1990) argues that policies are always filled with "discontinuities, compromises, omissions and exceptions" and that "policy making in a...complex, plural society...is unwieldy and complex" (p. 3). In the end, a policy invariably waters down many interests.

Ball (1990) draws particular attention to the considerable difficulties in attempting to make policy that suits a range of different interests without silencing certain viewpoints. HPENZC certainly has its own internal contradictions, is a political product of its time, and has drawn critique from scholars challenging the coherence of its vision (Ross, 2001). The two principal writers did, however, have a definitive direction and produced a mostly cohesive and unified document (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2002) which undoubtedly provided challenge to the neo-liberal political agenda under which it was conceived (Culpan, 1996/1997). In contrast, this new abbreviated curriculum draft amounts to a regression of both the intent and content of HPENZC.

### POLICY READING(S)

Policy analysis and policy making are political exercises. Olssen, O'Neill and Codd (2004) argue that reading "educational policy is not just a matter of understanding its educational context or reading it as the 'pronouncements' of the 'policy-makers'... [but] requires an understanding of the dynamics of the various elements of the social structure and their intersections in the context of history" (p. 2). Their point here is important, education policy in New Zealand can only be understood in its context of educational practice, health and physical education, political issues in education, the relationship between schools and communities, and the broader New Zealand society.

Olssen et al. (2004) also examine education policy as "a transformative discourse that can have real social effects" (p.3). These 'effects' are, of course, those visited on teachers and students by policy change and implementation and, subsequently, on the communities they live in, as students and families live the realities of programme changes. As Penney and Harris (2004) point out, policy documents can potentially open up spaces of resistance to dominant ways of thinking in society, allowing students to critically challenge social forces or, alternatively, support the inequitable status quo by silencing critical perspectives. Olssen et al. (2004) outline three ways of reading policy which are relevant to my analysis: technocratic, empiricist-idealist and new criticism. Although these employ separate views of policy, they are not mutually exclusive. Teachers, for instance, may read policy from varying perspectives. I will outline each view before defining the particular approach taken in this article.

### TECHNOCRATIC

A technocratic reading of policy assumes the policy makers' intentions



are communicated in the text and can be accepted as a direct, uncomplicated communication of political action. This way of reading seeks the true and correct meaning of the text, but without reference to the influences on policy or the wider political environment. The reader assumes policy writers put forward a clear vision, and do not question underlying tensions, process, or make links to wider social trends. Olssen et al. (2004) describe it this way:

In the technocratic view, policy documents are interpreted as the expression of political purpose... as statements of the courses of action that policy-makers and administrators intend to follow... the analysis of a policy document becomes a quest for the authorial intentions presumed to lie behind the text...the task of analysis becomes one of establishing the correct interpretation of the text (p. 60).

A singular interpretation is key and Olssen and colleagues note that "when there is controversy surrounding the meaning of a document, it is assumed that some readers have misunderstood what was meant" (p. 60). A technocratic reading of policy, therefore, becomes a comprehension exercise to understand the true interpretation and is essentially reading for meaning. Teachers, of course, have diverse and complex relationships to curriculum policy (McGee, 1997) and are likely to read it in many different ways. A technocratic reading may be one of them, as they grapple with a plethora of official communications and policies, while dealing with the realities of everyday life in the classroom.

#### EMPIRICIST-IDEALIST

Olssen et al.'s (2004) second way of understanding policy is as a function of practice. In this view, policy is an attempt to reflect practice, either as a vision of future practice or a description of current practice. The empiricist-idealist, in Olssen et al.'s (2004) terms, is interested in the *empirical* practice of education and views curriculum documents with an *idealist* belief that policy relates to what really happens every day in schools. Curriculum policy analysis here requires making links between the policy and, in this case, programmes, plans, and activities in which students will engage. Olssen et al. (2004) identify major shortcomings in this view with respect to the nature of language and its ability to represent the lived reality of teachers and students. They argue that empiricist-idealism overlooks the fact:

that language itself is a sphere of social practice and is necessarily

structured by the material conditions in which that practice takes place... language can produce real social effects... can be political... [and] produce ideological effects by suppressing the contradictions of people's experience in the interests of preserving the existing social formation (p. 64).

If, as McGee (1997) suggests, teachers provide the link between policy documents and practice by making "inert curriculum statements into living entities in classrooms" (p. 15) then teachers may also use this empiricist-idealist lens when viewing policy. After seeking to interpret intent, they will be likely to make direct links to practice in order to ascertain how the policy relates to programmes and, perhaps, what changes they could make and what current practices they should retain.

These two ways of viewing policy, however, have several problems. Neither invites the reader to consider the constraints under which the policy was written *vis-à-vis* both socio-political (such as government agenda and social trends) and practical contexts (such as several writers or a complex writing process). One aspect of policy making overlooked by both approaches is what Thrupp (2000) describes as "the micro-level of messy policy making and implementation processes" (p. 3). Ball (1990) is also at pains to emphasise the contested, and multi-directional nature of policy writing, which he points out amounts to a series of compromises between different interest groups, government agencies, and writers (of whom there may be many). The technocratic and empiricist-idealist views also ignore the silences and omissions linked to the political context, and how powerful interest groups manipulate and control policy. But what other possibilities exist for reading curriculum policy?

#### NEW CRITICISM (READER RESPONSE)

According to Olssen et al. (2004) 'new criticism' has also influenced policy readings. Originating in literary theory, new criticism suggests that once a text leaves the hands of the writer / editor / publisher, it no longer represents the voice of the author(s) but is a stand-alone document which can be read multiple ways, according to the reader's social position and beliefs. The authorial voice, unlike in a technocratic reading, holds no sway; interpretive power lies with the reader who may, in theory, proffer any number of interpretations.

While seemingly empowering and liberating, there are several problems with this type of reading. Teachers are themselves products of their societies and are, therefore, influenced by the politics, media discourses, and popular ideas of the time. Teachers in New Zealand are also overwhelmingly from white and middle class backgrounds and have associated classed and racialised experiences that structure or frame so-called personal interpretations. An analysis of this kind, which advantages an individualised reader response, only mandates each reader, in this case teachers, to reproduce their own experiences and world-view in their practice. In addition, teachers are under substantial pressures to conform to regulations in schools (national qualifications and standardised assessments being an example). Thus, teachers who read policy documents in this way tend to frame them around notions of assessment and standards rather than philosophical directions for learning.

#### A CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS

Against this typology, Olssen et al. (2004) advocate a critical discourse analysis of policy documents in education. This kind of reading insists that policy is not only text, to be read either for meaning or relationship to practice, but that policies are components of dominant ways of thinking and of social practices. Policies are, therefore, construed with social and political meanings influenced by and influencing common practices, beliefs and attitudes. Olssen et al. (2004) state that policy cannot properly be understood using any of the above views because each lacks a social and political reference. Thrupp (2000) points out that policy must be viewed with respect to wider social and political contexts. Here he follows Ball (1998), who declared that "educational policy...reflect[s] a general policy orthodoxy... recontextualised at the local level as it interacts with national and intranational political, historical and social contexts" (p. 2). According to this argument, the policy text itself is important only in relation to the setting within which it is written and implemented; political, social, and historical settings being paramount.

#### POPULIST THINKING AND THE DANGERS OF MINIMALISM

A contextualised education policy analysis in New Zealand requires investigation of the current political and social circumstances, including commonly held beliefs and assumptions. Because the 2006 draft curriculum takes a minimalist approach, there is clear potential for 'populist ways of thinking' to influence how policy

content is read. Two such populist notions currently gaining much traction in New Zealand are racialised political rhetoric, especially pertaining to the place of Māori in New Zealand society, and the proliferation of health commentary in the media, concerning issues of the body and obesity. I will examine aspects of the new draft curriculum policy in relation to these two contexts, and explain how the minimalist approach opens up possibilities not intended in the curriculum. I will discuss only elements of the draft document dedicated to health and physical education, including the pages explaining this learning area and its achievement objectives, and I will identify several problematic aspects of the current draft curriculum.

### LOUD SILENCES

Ball (2003) states that "education policies are primarily aimed at satisfying the concerns and interests of the middle class" (p. 25). He argues this by pointing out that middle class people are generally more able to use policy to their strategic advantage, and more likely and able, because of cultural resources, to advocate for certain policy directions. Furthermore, he argues that policy direction also reflects popular and political direction and is, in effect, a 'condensation of class struggles' (p. 28). If class struggles in New Zealand are also ethnic struggles, due to the generally low socio-economic status of Māori and Pasifika peoples in our society, then we could assume that current education policy, such as that discussed here, can be viewed as also indicative of current ethnic issues and, to use Ball's (2003) terminology, a condensation of class and ethnic struggles. Ethnic struggles in New Zealand, as in many other nation states, are underscored by a history of colonisation which has systematically devalued and marginalised indigenous knowledges, replacing them with the colonisers' own. Education and curriculum are no exception. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states:

Academic knowledges are organised around the idea of disciplines and fields of knowledge. These are deeply implicated in each other and share genealogical foundations in various classical and Enlightenment philosophies. Most of the 'traditional' disciplines are grounded in cultural world views which are either antagonistic to other belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems (p. 65).

HPENZC provides a curious example in this context because it includes, as one of its central concepts, a philosophy based on a Māori world view. This concept, entitled 'hauora', is represented by Durie's (1994) Whāre Tapa Whā (four-sided house) model. Although controversial, the inclusion of an indigenous concept, as a central and philosophically defining element of a western curriculum document, was significant for several reasons. The inclusion of hauora opens up what Penney and Harris (2004) refer to as a space for resistance to dominant ways of thinking and practice. It allows a dialectic to exist between Pākehā and Māori forms of knowledge, and positions health and physical education uniquely in relation to

other curriculum documents in New Zealand, none of which has a Māori concept as an underlying philosophy. It could be argued that this move attempted to subvert Pākehā-centred ways of knowing in what is essentially a euro-centric education system. Hauora in HPENZC is integrated throughout the document and links are made to it from each 'key area of learning' (the subject contexts/content areas) and in the achievement objectives. An entire page is devoted to it, including a diagram of Durie's (1994) model.

Despite the centrality of this concept within the document, several scholars were critical of the inclusion of hauora in the HPENZC curriculum. Salter (2000) argued that the curriculum 'sanitised' the concept and tore it from its Māori context. He feared many teachers would not learn the depth of Māori meaning in the concept. Ross (2001) agreed, lamenting the barren representation of hauora in the curriculum and the failure of the writers to evoke the depth of understanding inherent in the concept. His concern aligns with Kohere's (2003) later explanation of the context of hauora, and his assertion that it must be understood within a Māori world view. Kohere (2003) pointed out that hauora does not simply translate as 'wellbeing', rather, it is much more, amounting to "the driving force for the unfolding of the potential of individuals to act in this world for and with others" (p. 23). According to Salter (2000), at best the misrepresentation results in a miscommunication; at worst, it represents a misappropriation of Māori knowledge, adding further injustice to a long history of colonisation. He also highlighted the problematic use of Māori concepts in Pākehā curricula that do not generally embrace different views of knowledge, teaching and learning. Linking the curriculum and hauora to the wider political debate, Hokowhitu (2004) also criticised the HPENZC writers' treatment of the Whāre Tapa Whā model, especially the exclusion of 'whenua' (land) in the representation of hauora. He speculated that this was a deliberate political decision consistent with wider governmental sensitivity over ongoing Māori land grievances, and a further denial of the integral nature of land to Māori.

These criticisms share a common factor: a concern that the representation of hauora in HPENZC was inadequate in communicating a complex concept, closely aligned to a Māori world view and, therefore, not able to be fully appreciated and understood if isolated within a Pākehā policy document. A further point resulting from this scholarly



debate is whether Pākehā policy makers have the right to use Māori concepts in policy documents and, if this is desirable, how a collaborative process of inter-cultural policy development may occur, with following support and professional development for teachers.

Regrettably, the current 2006 draft document makes no attempt to address the concerns and criticisms of these scholars. On the contrary, it perhaps exacerbates them by reducing the explanation and links to hauora in the draft to a single line which reads: "Hauora - A Māori philosophy of well-being that includes the dimensions taha wairua, taha hinengaro, taha tinana, taha whānau\*, each one influencing and supporting the others" (Ministry of Education, 2006b, p. 16). The asterisk after 'whānau' links to a footnote which states:

In this learning area, the use of the word hauora is based on Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model (Durie, 1994). Hauora and well-being, although not synonyms, share much common ground. Taha wairua relates to spiritual well-being; taha hinengaro to mental and emotional well-being; taha tinana to physical well-being, and taha whānau to social well-being. (MOE, 2006b, p. 16)

But there is no acknowledgement of the academic debates described above, and no evidence of a willingness to address the writers' concerns about the representation of the concept or the use of indigenous knowledge. Sadly, having been involved in the writing process, I can confirm that Māori had no input in the development of the draft document, bar a few hours meeting with the group responsible for reviewing the Māori immersion curriculum document currently in draft form and entitled *Hauora i roto i te marautanga o Aotearoa: He tauira* (Ministry of Education, 2000). This group recommended consultation with Māori regionally. The question remains, why has the debate surrounding the concept of hauora in health and physical education not penetrated the draft curriculum policy? The current draft validates Salter's (2000) concerns about marginalisation and further 'sanitisation' of hauora, and Ross' (2001) doubts about the usefulness of directly translated concepts losing their richness. This is of particular interest within both the wider document and New Zealand society.

The full 2006 draft curriculum carries no overarching statement about the significance of The Treaty of Waitangi. The Māori Party refers to this omission as "cultural genocide" (Radio New Zealand,

2006), although the current Minister of Education, Steve Maharey, is apparently "comfortable with the lack of reference to the Treaty" (Radio New Zealand, 2006). This is despite a clear statement in the Curriculum Stocktake Report (Ministry of Education, 2002) recommending that "as most Māori students are in [mainstream] schools... the underlying philosophy [of the next curriculum]... should reflect their status as tangata whenua" (p. 1). The political environment in New Zealand has shifted somewhat, even since 2002, and bicultural issues are increasingly difficult for the current government to promote. The opposition party's popular 'one law for all' policies which seek to do away with what they refer to as 'race-based funding', along with calls to end all Māori land claims, have caused the current Labour government to withdraw support from Māori issues. Luke's notions of "non-decision-making" and silences that preclude discussion and debate (cited in Ball, 2003, p. 25) offer some useful insights here. He defines 'non-decision-making' in a policy environment as a process whereby "decisions are prevented from being taken on potential issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests" (cited in Ball 2003, p. 25). Hauora and the absence of the Treaty of Waitangi in this draft 2006 curriculum may be seen as silences, a quashing of the debates surrounding the place of indigenous knowledge, because of the clash of subjective positions surrounding issues of ethnicity in New Zealand. There was limited space in the health and physical education review process to debate these issues, to discuss commentary surrounding the concept of hauora, or to plan possible future directions. The Ministry of Education now acknowledges the potential to develop a dedicated support document about hauora, but there is no evidence in the draft that this concept is sufficiently valued. Keeping hauora as an underlying concept but disallowing readers to engage with it in-depth, serves as a classic non-decision. The challenge begun with the inclusion of hauora in HPENZC is stalled instead of taken forward, despite intense interest from academics and educationalists. Rather than developing the dialogue further, the concept is pared back, adding to the above writers' concerns that indigenous knowledge is not valued and colonisation processes are allowed to continue unchecked. The Education Minister's response to the Treaty's absence in the draft can only be interpreted as a lack of political will to actually grapple with indigenous issues in education. Populist thinking about indigenous knowledge, therefore, goes unchallenged. This is also true of current thinking about health and the body. I examine this in the following section.

## HEALTH AND THE BODY

In recent times, notions of an 'obesity epidemic' have subsumed popular thinking about health in western societies. Media commentators focus a great deal of attention on this epidemic by reporting with alarm that people in western societies are getting fatter, and that this fatness will greatly affect the health of these populations. These reports, invariably supported by concerns emanating from the medical profession, governments, and health and community agencies, have been a pervasive and consistent aspect of newspapers and magazines in recent years (Gard & Wright, 2005). In their critique of the literature on the obesity epidemic and the media frenzy on the subject, Gard and Wright (2005) note that the statistical gains in weight across Western populations are reported as a product of decreased physical activity and increased food consumption (Gard, 2004). This literature, therefore, suggests that the answers to obesity lie in increased exercise (physical activity) and 'healthier' eating. Gard (2004) states that these assumptions are over-simplified and lack clear evidence. Yet, western governments and health agencies have facilitated a number of community initiatives. Schools, too, have been included in some of these initiatives.

Schools, as Burrows & Wright (2004b) observe, are now "regarded as 'the' key sites for nutrition education and intervention" (p. 88). Indeed, many schools are tackling obesity with new physical activity initiatives such as 'walking buses', employing extra staff to organise programmes during break times, as well as using fitness testing, body weight measurements, and even recording and monitoring children's body mass index (BMI) results. Many have incorporated 'healthy eating' and other nutrition-focused inventions, including 'lunchbox checks' and banning sweetened drinks. Children now learn to monitor their bodies and make constant judgments about their state of fitness or lack of health. Many of these judgments are linked to physical body size and shape (Burrows & Wright, 2004a).

It is difficult to find evidence that supports the value of these initiatives in improving either children's health and wellbeing, or their learning. In terms of developing 'fitness', prominent physical educators advocate for learning to be the focus of programmes. They question whether the development of fitness is either



an achievable or desirable function of schooling (Kirk, 1996; Tinning, 2000). As Gard (2004) points out, 'fitness' activities designed to address weight can be negative experiences for young people, and often lack any sense of the 'joy of movement' that most physical educators advocate. He states that "an impossibly fine line separates activity which will have an effect on children's body weight and activity which is boring, stressful, humiliating and ultimately counter-productive" (p. 75). In addition, it is easy to see how an overt focus in schools on physical health, body size and shape, food consumption, and fitness will lead children and young people to monitor their bodies, feel anxious about food, and worry even more about their development and weight. The result is hardly likely to have positive effects on wellbeing and learning (Burrows & Wright, 2004a, 2004b), which is what most teachers strive for. Not surprisingly, many of these messages are also promoted by the food and fitness industries (e.g. diet, fitness, and weight loss industries) that rely on people's dissatisfaction with their bodies for their profits. Not only do the messages currently promoted in schools directly support these dubious enterprises, they also contradict the socio-cultural and critical orientation Penney and Harris (2004) identified in HPENZC.

So, how will the new draft curriculum intervene in these programmes and ways of thinking? Ideally, the curriculum will focus on the kind of socio-cultural and critical perspectives noted by Penney and Harris (2004) and others (Culpan, 1996/7; Burrows & Wright, 2004b) and encourage teachers and schools to question current obesity-prevention practices. It might even facilitate 'physical education' rather than body management and weight monitoring. If the draft curriculum employed the same philosophies as HPENZC this could be possible. Sadly, despite being based on the same concepts and content, I think it is unlikely. The silences and reliance on personal interpretation, provide little opportunity to challenge dominant ways of thinking.

The current draft curriculum does not give teachers even the chance to apply a technocratic interpretation because it does not provide enough detail for a comprehensive understanding of the text. Nor does it allow teachers to make direct links with practice through an empiricist-idealist reading. A likely option for teachers, if they still choose to engage with the policy, is to employ their own reader response, as described by Olssen et al. (2004) in their discussion of new criticism. This reader response viewpoint may encourage teachers to implement programmes designed to alleviate obesity, rather than to question the grounding assumptions of these messages. An example from the 'Key areas of learning', included in the draft, illustrates how this might happen.

### THE KEY AREAS OF LEARNING

The key areas of learning appear in both HPENZC and in the current 2006 draft, and are targeted areas of study or topics that students might engage with as part of their programmes in health and physical education. They are listed as: mental health, sexuality education, food and nutrition, body care and physical safety, physical activity, outdoor education, and sport studies. Each of these areas in HPENZC is explained in depth, with reference to the underlying concepts (hauora, socio-ecological perspective, health promotion, and attitudes and values), and each one is explained over a page or more with additional examples. In the draft 2006 curriculum, however, each key area is listed in title only. I will use the example of 'physical activity' to explain my concerns in relation to this abbreviation.

HPENZC explains the concept of 'physical activity' over two pages, beginning with the statement: "physical activity encourages students to enjoy movement, to learn about the movement culture, and to develop positive attitudes towards regular participation in physical activities" (p. 42). There is further contextualisation of physical activity through Arnold's (1979) concept of 'in, through and about movement':

Physical activity contributes to and promotes learning: in movement, by developing physical skills in a range of contexts; through movement, using the medium of physical activity to develop knowledge of themselves and other people, social skills, and positive attitudes and values; about movement, by examining scientific aspects of it and by learning about the social and cultural significance of physical activity for individual, groups, and communities (p. 42, emphasis in original).

Physical activity in HPENZC also emphasises "New Zealand's unique bicultural heritage" and includes "ngā mahi a rehia (Māori recreational and leisure activities, including te reo kōri)" in the description. It then states that "activities are valued [by students] for their intrinsic qualities. . .for fun. . .pleasure. . .satisfaction. .

.playfulness [and] to express themselves and their creativity". Further down are statements about potential student learning, including "knowledge and understanding of the significance of social influences on physical activity for example in relation to body image, gender, the media. . ." (p. 42).

I include this detail from HPENZC because it stands in stark contrast with that in the new draft. The rich physical activity experiences described in HPENZC suggest it is a holistic, inclusive, and diverse area of study, potentially involving students in a wide range of activities which develop movement competence, confidence, and knowledge about the world of movement, including the critique of damaging media messages such as those associated with obesity. In contrast, the draft's single world 'physical activity' connects readers to the fallacies of common sense that ultimately derive from an hysterical media that bombards us with messages about the need to lose weight and the relationship between physical activity and weight loss. This is especially likely in light of the Ministry of Education adding "physical activity" to its list of priorities in the National Education Goals (Ministry of Education, 2006a), undoubtedly in response to the same pressures. The draft curriculum does include an achievement objective at each level, entitled 'regular physical activity', which provides teachers with some direction for programmes. While clearly communicating a focus on enjoyment and a critical perspective, much is lost in relation to the HPENZC description discussed above. The lack of contextualisation of physical activity, and the seven other key areas in the draft, is of concern, not because there is only one way of viewing each of these contexts, but because the reader response required of teachers will be framed by the dominant ways of thinking strongly promoted by the media and reinforced by government and health agencies.

### CONCLUSION

Will the new draft *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education 2006a), especially those parts of it pertaining to health and physical education, challenge some of the narrow ways of thinking currently in circulation? The case and evidence I present here suggest not. On the contrary, the draft lacks sufficient content and will probably encourage a form of reading that Olssen et al. (2004) call new criticism. This reading values the interpretation of the reader above other interpretations. This is problematic because individual readers, influenced by their own classed and racialised experiences, and by aggressive media commentary, are likely to reproduce current practices in line

with these populist and narrow ways of thinking. Two such problematic populist notions relating to health and physical education are evident in the draft: the place of Māori in New Zealand society, and views of the body and health.

The absence of the Treaty of Waitangi in the current draft curriculum, and the treatment of the underlying concept hauora in aspects of the draft relating to health and physical education, reflect wider political moves relating to Māori in New Zealand. The draft ignores the concerns of many writers about the place of hauora in health and PE curriculum and, while Durie's (1994) model of hauora is preserved in the draft, the representation precludes deep engagement with the concept.

Teachers need more material than the current policy provides if they are to engage meaningfully with a Māori concept and escape the shackles of commonsense and popular thinking. In relation to health and physical education, the messages contained in this thinking, as aggressively propagated by the media and medical professionals and scientists, pay excessive attention to body size. These messages encourage teachers to implement programmes in schools that focus on weight loss. Programmes aimed at weight loss invariably involve negative experiences for many young people and are not representative of the kind of physical education most in the field would recognise.

What is needed is a critical reading of policy documents that exposes the "dynamics" of "social relations at particular points in time" (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 2). The dynamics, in this case, are those associated with Māori in New Zealand society, and dominant messages about body and health. Despite its problems, Penney and Harris (2004) identified the potential for this in *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999). The current 2006 draft makes this highly unlikely.

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