

With the Best of Intentions: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Physical Education Curriculum Materials

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Much of physical education curriculum in the developed world and specifically in Australia tends to be guided in principle by syllabus documents that represent, in varying degrees, some form of government education priorities. Through the use of critical discourse analysis we analyze one such syllabus example (an official syllabus document of one of the Australian States) to explore the relationships between the emancipatory/social justice expectations presented in the rubric of and introduction to the official syllabus document, and the language details of learning outcomes that indicate how the expectations might be satisfied. Given the complexity and multilevel pathways of message systems/ideologies we question the efficacy of such documents oriented around social justice principles to genuinely deliver more radical agendas which promote social change and encourage a preparedness to engage in social action leading to a betterment of society.

Keywords: emancipatory politics, hegemony, ideology, social justice

Most developed countries have curriculum materials for physical education (Hardman & Marshall, 2000, Pühse & Gerber, 2005). Often these will be specific syllabi, official policy statements, teacher resources, and similar. All of these documents can be thought of as texts that were written or produced (i.e., constructed) by someone (or group of people) for some specific purpose. Often they are the official *voice* of the state (Apple, 1993) in the sense that they represent what the government consider should (or must) be taught in the school subject.

For the purposes of this article, we consider such curriculum documents to be a *text* that is made up of numerous discourses (Gee, 1996). By *discourse* we mean a regular, recurrent pattern of language that both shapes and reflects the user's basic intellectual commitments (Sparkes, 1990). Importantly, as Sparkes (1990) tells us, "all discourses are socially constructed and contain rules that guide their use . . . the rules, both tacit and explicit govern what is said and what remains

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unsaid when we speak or write” (p. 9). *Text* refers to a particular concrete manifestation of practices organized within particular discourses. Examples of text include written passages, oral communications, nonverbal communications, and visual forms of communication such as photographs, paintings, and sculpture. Thus the physical education curriculum, like policy statements, textbooks, newspapers, visual media, and so on can be viewed as a text embodying discourses that articulate ideas, beliefs, values, and practices. The concept of *text* as it is used in cultural analysis is not a single version or account of reality but rather will have many meanings depending on who is doing the reading. These concepts have been previously discussed in the pages of this journal (Tinning, 1991; Wright, 1995; Wright & King, 1991).

This article is a report of a critical discourse analysis of the Queensland (Australia) *Years 1–10 Health and Physical Education (HPE) Syllabus*. This is an official document that was constructed by Queensland educators (a writing team formed through an ad hoc alliance of bureaucrats, teachers, and teacher educators) according to national guidelines that were articulated in the *National Statement and Profiles* (Australian Education Council, 1994) for all school subject areas in Australia. The *National Statement and Profiles* created a framework that was meant to underpin the development of specific state-level curriculum documents. The framework was based on principles of social justice considered to be significant, namely, equity, diversity, and supportive environments. Although there are State differences in interpretation and response to this framework, the Queensland syllabus is very clear regarding its commitment to the underpinning principles of the framework when it says, “The socio-cultural perspective and social justice principles underpinning the syllabus encourage students to consider social and cultural developments which may affect themselves and others, now and in the future” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999, p. 5). The Queensland HPE syllabus outlined the major elements of content to be taught in schools and the student learning outcomes at eight levels of achievement, including a framework to chart the progress of students and report on student learning. Learning outcomes are identified as being *core*, or essential, whereas others are deemed *discretionary*. All are to be organized into one of three strands: *promoting the health of individuals and communities*, *developing concepts and skills for physical activity*, and *enhancing personal development*. Within these strands, the outcome statements for different levels plus a series of core and discretionary outcomes are listed. These outcomes, along with the rationale in the document, represent the data source that we use for our critical discourse analysis.

Before moving to a more detailed analysis of the syllabus, it is important to note that this analysis is a part of a larger study into the relationship between teacher identity and curriculum reform (funded by the Australian Research Council). In the larger study, we have been investigating how teachers emotionally connect with the socially critical principles (Macdonald & Kirk, 1999) that underpin the syllabus. To pursue this inquiry, we first needed to determine the nature of the discourses used in the syllabus document.

It might seem, on the face of it, that such an undertaking would be superfluous given that the Queensland HPE syllabus is explicitly underpinned by principles that collectively embody what Giddens (1991) calls *an ethic of emancipatory politics*. (Giddens (1991) defines the term *emancipatory politics* “as a generic

outlook concerned above all with liberating individuals and groups from constraints which adversely affect their life chances. . . . Emancipatory politics is concerned to reduce or eliminate *exploitation, inequality and oppression*” [pp. 210–211].) However, the rationale for this analysis was to ascertain what the syllabus actually expects of HPE teachers and whether the syllabus, by design or default, inadvertently engages in language use that might be inconsistent with the underpinning principles.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis has emerged in recent years as an eclectic research strategy with epistemological connections to critical theory, poststructuralism, and social constructionism. Its intellectual roots owe much to the work of Althusser (1971) and Gramsci (1971), and this underpinning emancipatory ethic is acknowledged in most of the work of critical discourse analysts, particularly those based in Europe or with European influences. Although the American strain is not so connected to Althusser and Gramsci, it still maintains a critical edge. Some, like Billig (2002) for example, argue that there needs to be committed return to the “critical” in critical discourse analysis, which has to some extent been colonized by a more nihilistic form of poststructural social theory. Indeed McKenna (2004) is more specific and he asks whether the “foundational principles of critical studies—democracy, equality, fairness, and justice—can be reaffirmed in practice” (p. 9). Where one sits with this depends on ontological and epistemological commitment and it would be difficult to resolve this in an article of this kind. Generally, we support the positions of both Billig and McKenna. So even though this is a report on how the Queensland HPE syllabus was analyzed to determine whether there were inconsistencies or contradictions actually contained in its rhetoric, it was done by using the tools of critical discourse analysis, and, as a consequence, the socially critical credentials of the syllabus were placed under close scrutiny.

What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

It is fair to say that critical discourse analysis has had to endure its share of criticism. As a research method, it is long on theory and contentious on process. The contention related to process comes about because the major proponents of critical discourse analysis generally agree that there are no hard-and-fast research rules. We elaborate on this in the next section as we feel it is prudent to spend some time explaining critical discourse analysis, describing its use in this project and acknowledging its further potential. Fairclough (2000) suggests that the connection of discourse analysis with social theory should draw upon what he calls *middle-range* and *local theory* (he lists here, for example, the work of Bourdieu and Bernstein) to take the analysis into particular fields, which has the effect of “opening up a sociological theorization of discourse” (p. 165).

According to Gee (1999), language as the medium through which discourse does its work has two primary functions that go beyond the conventions of simply giving and receiving information. He claims that these functions are about scaffolding performances of social activities and to scaffold human affiliations, and

here he means within cultures, social groups, and institutions. Hence, any analysis of discourse should be about how language is recruited to bring about specific social activities and create social identities (or memberships). As a consequence, Gee (1999) suggests that we see *language in use* everywhere and as such it is always political, not in the political party sense but “anything and anyplace where human social interactions and relationships have implications for how ‘social goods’ are or ought to be distributed” (p. 2). What Gee means by social goods is anything that people believe to be a source of power, status, or worth.

Producing and Consuming

Most texts (and especially curriculum documents like the Queensland HPE Syllabus) are produced through a combination of processes that lead to the final version of a text. An author is responsible for the actual construction of the text. Through this process, topics are defined and produced and these in turn become the objects of our knowledge (Foucault, 2002). The linguistic techniques involved here come to represent the text. However, the visual representation of the text may fall to another in the process (a publisher, for example). Yet others are often called upon *to represent* the text in terms of the advocacy of its use and its utilitarian nature or its fictional quality. These may be authors’ agents, government ministers, or even critics. In the case of a syllabus document, a government department syllabus writer(s) will take on these roles with a government official at a certain level of authority confirming it fit for “consumption” (or “use”). All of these Fairclough (1992) suggests are subject to change depending on the contextual parameters. As a consequence, in any text there can only really be meaning *potential*. In other words, the likelihood that the text will be “read” in different ways is likely to leave the door open for text interpretation (meaning making) to vary. This has special significance for those (like state officials) who might harbor expectations that a particular syllabus document will convey a particular message to teachers as they implement the curriculum.

Texts are transformed at the point of and during the process of consumption. This, Fairclough (1992) suggests, is brought about through the sociocognitive dimensions of text production and interpretation. This process is further shaped or even constrained by the social practices of which the participants are a part, itself leading to a constraint of interpretation. Given the potential for multiple readings of texts as described above and the expectations of the state as alluded to earlier, it perhaps should come as no great shock that alignment between intended and constructed meaning is not as smooth as the authors of texts might expect. Hence, the particular dispositions of teachers and the emotional attachment they might have to the goals of the document are likely to further complicate meanings made of the Queensland HPE syllabus.

Ideology and Hegemony

For the specific purpose of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (2003) argues that the work of Althusser (Althusser, 1971) on ideology and Gramsci (Gramsci, 1971) on hegemony form a robust framework for investigating discourse as a social practice. In Fairclough’s analysis, there are three important claims about

ideology. First, there is a material existence in the practice of institutions. In other words, the ideological work that goes on in the name of major and most powerful stakeholders is real, not imagined. Second, ideology leads to the constitution of subjects, and third, Fairclough suggests that the state apparatus (Althusser, 1971; in this case, the Education Department of Queensland) creates the sites and the stakes of classes. In doing so, Fairclough claims that ideology and discourse are also affected by the limitations of Althusser's (1971) ideas, that is, that the overthrow of one dominant discourse leads to the imposition of an alternative dominance. Importantly, as Fairclough (2003) and most critical scholars recognize, ideologies become most effective when they become naturalized and taken for granted and this forms the link to Gramscian theory of hegemony. Hegemony is for Fairclough the perfect partner to ideology. It is about constructing alliances and works on many fronts but in a somewhat "unstable equilibrium" (p. 92). In this sense, radical agendas (even the concept of radical) are appropriated to suit politically conservative agendas. A further example of this is the discourse framed by the word *sustainable*, which, when used by the chief executive officer of a major corporation has a meaning quite different from the one used by an environmentalist.

Hence, discourses can be seen as both ideological and hegemonic with counterforces seeking power through populism. For us, it is important to consider whether the language of emancipatory politics that represents the Queensland HPE syllabus is actually a version of socially critical language to meet an essentially conservative educational agenda. Thus, critical analyses of syllabus documents, and this one in particular, to explore the relationship between language use and stated intentions are of significant importance.

Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis Research

Methodologically, critical discourse analysis is something akin to a soup made up of many ingredients (Gee, 1999). These ingredients are not mixed in equal measure and Gee openly admits in his method of discourse analysis, he has borrowed extensively from others to inform his position. As he says:

Whatever the approach we take, it holds out the hope that various micro-communities of researchers working in diverse fields can begin to come together, seeing that, using somewhat different, but related tools, terminologies, and theories, we are all contributing to a "big picture." (Gee, 1999, p. 5)

Fairclough (1992) argues that the analysis of text is the analysis of signs and, drawing from de Saussure (1959), he suggests that the analysis of signs occurs in longer stretches of text that "consist of a meaning combined with a form, or a 'signified' combined with a 'signifier'" (p. 74). In addition to the analysis of signs, researchers supportive of critical discourse analysis suggest that critical discourse analysis requires additional attention in terms of the motivation for text production (see Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Henderson, 2005; Luke, 2002). Of significance, Luke (2002) suggests that critical discourse analysis is about the relationship between the fine-grained microanalysis of texts and the macroanalysis of the social formations in which the texts themselves are implicated. Moreover, he

argues that although there have been attempts to generalize the approach to critical discourse analysis, its major characteristic is the “recursive analytic movement between text and context” (p. 100), and that such analytical movement relies on various tools drawn from linguistics, semiotics, literary criticism, and social theory, and in doing so it attempts to capture the micropolitics of texts and the macropolitical landscapes in which they exist.

When discussing method, Rogers (2004) suggests that there is no formula for conducting critical discourse analysis and that researchers drawn to its use are concerned with “a critical theory of the social world, the relationship of language and discourse in the construction of the social world, the relationship of language and discourse in the construction and representation of this social world” (p. 3). As such she suggests that critical discourse analysis requires a methodology that allows researchers to describe, interpret, and explain the complexity of these relationships.

In a practical sense, Van Dijk (2001) says there can be no complete discourse analysis because there are so many relevant units, dimensions, strategies, and other structures of discourse that a so-called full analysis of even a short piece of text would take months and run to hundreds of pages. It follows then, that such an analysis of a large text like a syllabus document is simply impossible. As a consequence, the analyst is drawn to make choices about what it is that needs analyzing. Structures must be chosen that are relevant for study of a social issue, and this Van Dijk (2001) suggests “requires at least some informal ideas about text–context links that tell us which properties of discourse may vary as a function of which social structures” (p. 99).

Drawing on Van Dijk’s (2001) advice, we were guided by a particular method that was then adapted for the purposes of this project and the questions we were asking. We made attempts to link the macro and micro issues within the task and therefore used some aspects of linguistic analysis and linked these with the broader social issues for a more macroanalysis. For this, Fairclough’s (2001) analytical framework (modeled on Bhaskar’s idea of “explanatory critique,” 1986) seemed to offer the best possibilities. Fairclough’s (2001) framework (see also Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) was modified to suit our research objectives because the entirety of the framework exceeded our needs. We have tabulated our modified framework (Table 1) for convenience.

For the purposes of this article, the syllabus was divided into its Rationale and Outcomes sections across the three streams. A linguistic analysis was conducted on the Rationale and the language of the outcomes (using the methodological aspects of Stage 2 in the above framework) with the outcomes being further analyzed on a more macro level using the principles of ideology and hegemony as the analytical frames. Further analysis is presented using the frames of text production and consumption. It is appropriate to indicate that the tasks of analysis were not evenly distributed across the research team. The lead author led this phase of the project and provided a comprehensive review of the literature and guidance on the techniques of critical discourse analysis. The actual processes were then agreed upon and the modified models developed. Each team member then undertook a first level of analysis. This was then brought to the next project meeting, whereupon differences and disagreements were reconciled by constant referral to the agreed models. The ensuing agreements of this dialectic process were then

Table 1 Critical Discourse Analysis Analytical Framework (After Fairclough 2001, p. 236) Modified to Serve the Needs of This Project

Stage	Description
1. Focus on a social problem that has a semiotic aspect 2. Analyze the network of practices it is located within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The discourse (the semiosis itself) by means of structural analysis: the order of discourse • Linguistic and semiotic analysis 5. Reflect critically on the analysis	Social problem is identified rather than a research question—facilitates the critical intent of the approach—the production of knowledge leading to emancipatory change Objective here is to understand how the problem arises and how it is rooted in the way social life is organized, by focusing on the obstacles to its resolution—on what makes it more or less intractable
Additions for Fairclough's Model for the Purposes of this Project	
Text production Text consumption	How has the text (syllabus) been produced What do we know about how the text is consumed, what are the intentions for consumption

written as the findings section of the paper by the lead author. This was the second level of analysis and findings were tabled at the next project meeting. At this meeting, the final adjustments were made and agreed upon.

The Findings

Linguistic Analysis

Given Van Dijk's (2001) advice about the impossibility of a complete critical discourse analysis on *any* text, we must accept that findings are always limited by scope that potentially but not necessarily limit impact. We have focused our linguistic analysis on the processes (verbs) found within the statements of the rationale of the document and within the outcome statements, which make up the bulk of the syllabus text. Specifically, we were interested in the mood and modality of the statements based on whether transitive or intransitive verbs were used.

The rationale is arranged as a series of statements each with specific examples of what children *will do* as they experience the syllabus across the years of compulsory schooling. So according to the rationale, children:

- use their creativity to . . .
- draw conclusions about . . .
- develop positive attitudes to . . .
- reflect on what they have learned

The verbs in this section are all transitive (i.e., they take a direct object) and show a strong modality suggesting strength and certainty. In addition, the mood is declarative, similarly underlining the absolutism upon which the Rationale for the syllabus is founded. There is little sense that given the diverse nature of the learners at which the syllabus is aimed that it could be experienced in different ways. However, the work of Laws and Fisher (1999) in the United Kingdom shows how “curriculum” is experienced differently by different children.

In addition, there are statements within the Rationale that attempt to position the syllabus within the broader realm of school and indeed society. Again these statements are declarative in mood with a high degree of certainty in modality. So statements about recognizing the significance of physical activity and the development of positive attitudes about physical activity assume, indeed presume, that such things *will* occur for all children when there is ample published material to suggest otherwise. Whereas one might expect the language of curriculum to be immersed in such declarative tones, it seems to us that this is a potential problem; the certainty inherent in the language of the document is perhaps inconsistent with the uncertainty of life and, in the syllabus’ terms, with its diversity. Those marginalized by school physical education perhaps as a consequence of its focus on the body, on motor competence, and frequently on competition are unlikely to feel as positive about physical activity as others for whom such things are not as troublesome. Throughout the Rationale section and Outcomes section, there is little acknowledgment of the diverse attitudes toward physical activity and what this might mean for teachers of physical education in schools. The consumption of this document is guided by the language within it, which potentially runs counter to the very principles it is seeking to uphold.

Further Linguistic Analysis: The Nature of Processes in the Learning Outcomes

Most processes (the action words or verbs) that describe what it is that students will do (and therefore the circumstances that teachers must create for this to happen) are void for the most part of what we call *critical action*, by which we mean action that is aimed specifically at social change or, more accurately, social betterment. As can be seen in Table 2, students who study HPE in Queensland as guided by the parameters of the syllabus, are required to spend much of their time describing, explaining, and demonstrating; seemingly little time performing; and no time being engaged in activities that might be considered to be resisting or challenging.

Ideological and Hegemonic Analysis of Outcomes

For the purposes of representing our analysis and in the interests of brevity, we have selected samples of the outcomes from two of the three strands. We chose statements drawn from what is described in Australia as the middle years of schooling (years 4–9 or ages 9–14) so that primary (elementary) and high school were represented.

Table 2 Processes Required to Reach the Core and Discretionary Outcomes in the Queensland 1–10 HPE Syllabus

Most common processes (accounting for almost 48% of all processes)	Examples of less common processes (less than 3%)	Processes that suggest social action in the form of change	Processes not apparent
Describe (8.57%), explain (10.47%), demonstrate (12.28%), identify (6.66%), evaluate (7.69%)	Devise, design, analyze, create, implement, perform	Plan (strategies to overcome inequities) single example	Change, deconstruct, critique, challenge, revise, reject

Strand One: Promoting the Health of Individuals and Communities

Outcome 2.2: “Students explain the benefits of eating a variety of nutritious foods and plan ways to increase these in their diets” (paraphrased for space).

Outcome 2.4: “Students identify places where health products and services may be obtained and suggest reasons why people choose different health products and services.”

Outcome 3.5: “Students describe features of places where they live and work and play that influence the health of themselves and others and propose ways they can help the people who are responsible for keeping these places healthy.”

These outcomes and others like them throughout the document (at different levels and in different strands), while apparently well intentioned to fit with the general structure of outcomes-based education and the tenor of this particular syllabus, seem to be codependent on a level of economic comfort, perhaps even advantage. Moreover, they appear to be founded on essentially monocultural European norms and standards. This would not have been the intention of the syllabus writers, but lived experiences beyond the school gate of some children may mean that their perceptions of concepts such as diet or risky behavior are more likely to be governed by these experiences than by abstract (for them) learning in schools. For example, Crawford (1986) found that the working class and the middle class attached very different meaning to the concept of health. Indeed, the concept of the healthy citizen that underpins the syllabus document is based on the shaping of the middle class child (Tinning & Glasby, 2002).

In failing to explicitly address such issues, the syllabus document reinforces middle-class Anglo-European agendas while marginalizing the more diverse and heterogeneous agendas of multicultural and working-class people. This is hardly consistent with the underlying principles of social justice, diversity, and supporting environments!

Strand 2: Developing Concepts and Skills for Physical Activity

Overarching Statement for Level 2 (Grade 2/3—About 8 Years of Age): “Students understand the basic body actions of fundamental movement skills” (paraphrased for space).

Overarching Statement for Level 3: “Students understand that fundamental movement skills can be used in a range of activities . . . these skills can be demonstrated to meet the requirements of these activities” (paraphrased for space).

Overarching Statement for Level 5: “Students understand that the application of strategies and basic movements can improve performance . . . understand the principles of training” (paraphrased for space).

The phrase “fundamental movement skills” is in abundance throughout this section of the syllabus. The word *fundamental* ordinarily might not be perceived as contentious. At its root and in this case, *fundamental* refers to “basic,” or movement so simple that it might be perceived as “normal” to expect all children to

possess such skills. Given this potential to link “fundamental” with “normal,” we are compelled to ask just what normal could mean. There are connotations of normal distributions of populations here, and yet the syllabus foregrounds diversity. Wright (1997) has previously shown how the choice of what are fundamental movement skills is essentially a gendered one, which tends to favor males. There are similarly connotations in the word *fundamental* when seen as normal that conjure a sense of “acceptable” or even expected. Perhaps of more concern, if fundamental were to be considered as the norm, how are children to be described if they fail to master fundamental movement skills, in other words, basic, foundational skills? It is important to note that the syllabus does not refer to fundamental movement *patterns*, but skills, which, according to just about every standard text in our field are acquired through sustained quality practice and feedback. Furthermore, the word *fundamental* appears not to be able to account for the gendered differences as described by Wright (1997) above. This again would appear to be at odds with the proclaimed standpoint of the syllabus and which eschews the use of gendered language yet misses the potential for gendered concepts below the level of the language. This argument may seem like a long bow to draw, but language does have a bad habit of categorizing people, whether it was intended or not and, of course, intention is never seen—only the label! In this example, the orientating discourses of the syllabus (social justice, diversity, and equity) again would seem to be contradicted in the syllabus language.

It is only at Level 6 and beyond (considered in Queensland as the *senior* phase of schooling) where any real indication of how the social justice principles may actually apply to the syllabus. In Level 6, the final sentence of the overarching statement of the physical activity strand suggests that students *will* understand that there are inequities in participation in physical activity. In one of the outcomes (the final one listed), the children need to demonstrate planning strategies to overcome inequity. Again, the language of “understanding” dominates, and seemingly after 9 years of compulsory education—where the language of the syllabus has a strong focus on the individual developing strategies and fundamental motor skills—the children now need to show an understanding of inequity. We applaud the inclusion of this outcome in the physical activity strand, but, as is indicated in Table 2, it is the sole example of its type in the entire syllabus document. We are drawn to ponder whether the preparatory work along emancipatory lines might have been more in keeping with the intentions of the syllabus.

Some Conclusions

Linguistic Analysis

The linguistic analysis (the micro level) shows that the syllabus is written (perhaps as we might expect) in a modality that expresses strong claims of certainty, in a mood that is declarative and with predominantly transitive verbs (processes) and action verbs (that take a direct object). What this suggests is that the syllabus is unequivocal in its requirements of teachers and indeed its expectations of outcomes irrespective of whether they are appropriate for the diverse populations the syllabus is trying to serve. Moreover, these verbs or processes are clustered around particular student actions (see Table 2), suggesting that the syllabus is also

unequivocal in its content—the notions of challenge, change, or resistance being absent.

Although in places reference to the notion of diversity can be found in the syllabus document, the unequivocal nature of the language used is actually antithetical to diversity. We are not suggesting a conspiratorial sleight of hand here. More reasonably, this is a criticism of the form or genre of syllabus documents as a class of text. However, since the syllabus is expressed in this way, it can easily be read as definitive and therefore, one assumes, represents a strong *regimen of truth* (see Gore, 1993). Drawing from Foucault (2002), the language of this syllabus defines the object of it, namely, health and physical education. In terms of the orders of discourse, the semiotic structuring establishes the social order of the syllabus and the declarative nature of the language creates an order that places the discourses of health, physical activity, and personal development at the forefront of young people's lives. This structuring also establishes an uncontested link between all three, such that one cannot exist without the other.

In terms of text production, the Rationale section encourages this link to be seen as an expectation. The use of the process words (verbs), however, suggests a somewhat sanitized approach to syllabus writing. It seems then, that texts of this nature will only get sanctioned (given official approval) if they are constructed using uncontentious, politically acceptable (sanitized) language. In the case of the Queensland document, its emancipatory ambition is stated up front as a kind of register of its political lineage. Its socially liberal agenda reflects the political correctness of the time of its writing. However, the language of the rest of document fails to support its apparent ambition.

Hegemony and Ideology

Given the declarative nature of the language of the syllabus and the nature of the process words in the outcome statements, we can take the ideology within the syllabus as being invested with significant power. For the most part, the discourses of health (predominantly in Strand A) are framed by middle-class attitudes about the sorts of dietary habits children “ought” to have and the sorts of healthy behaviors in which they ought to engage (see Tinning & Glasby, 2002). Moreover, except for a few places in the syllabus, there seem to be assumptions about availability of good living conditions, of safe and ample play space, of adequate nutritional food, and of ample economic and other healthy lifestyle resources. In addition, this is neatly folded into the neo-liberal discourse of individualism, whereby each person has total agency over his or her life and the capacity to assume responsibility for health, physical activity, and general self-regulation. There is little of a transformative agenda within the rubric or the language of the outcomes that suggests a teacher might be looking for some kind of social action from the pupils in the form of change, challenge, or resistance. Although the syllabus claims to seek higher order thinking in children, it seems to assume no role in social betterment other than presumably through the achievement of some limited outcomes. Such achievement is unlikely to result in behavioral change in favor of social betterment. Rather, children will simply be compliant in the achievement of those outcomes.

A similar pattern emerges in Strand B, *Developing Concepts and Skills for Physical Activity*. There is little talk of disability or limited movement capacity, and the syllabus perhaps even seeks to normalize the target population by repeatedly talking about fundamental movement skills without ever challenging what *fundamental* might mean and whether such skills are indeed fundamental for all (Wellard, 2006; Woodard & Surburg, 2001). The issue of these fundamental skills also being culturally situated within the dominant forms of Australian sport seems also to be regarded as unproblematic, in spite of Australia's claim to be a multicultural society (Mackay, 1993). There are statements that relate to choice but almost nothing that relates to the little or no choice that some students might have. Similarly, the associations between choice and societal dynamics of race, ethnicity, and class are left largely untouched. Although it is reasonable to expect children to "improve" across the life (or duration at least) of a syllabus, there is a high expectation of significant levels of motor competence that belie the notion of social justice through diversity and supportive environments.

Text Production and Consumption

The text (the syllabus) has been produced using a certain kind of language to promote a certain kind of use—an official manual or a guidebook. The language use, though ambiguous about how outcomes are to be achieved, is unequivocal about outcomes themselves. The language of the outcomes underscores the assumed truth within the syllabus. In addition, we have suggested that the syllabus is underpinned by a particular set of neo-liberal middle-class values that relate to health, personal responsibility, and engagement in physical activity leading to motor competence. As we have already argued, the text has been produced within certain limitations with respect to receiving the endorsement (signing off) from the over-seeing government minister. Under such circumstances, perhaps it is naive to expect anything other than a conservative document that will appease the state apparatus. The irony in the case of the Queensland HPE syllabus is that even if the state is advocating socially liberal policies, it is structured by language that privileges neo-liberal discourses, such as individual achievement, valorized middle-class values, and expectations of personal responsibility. Accordingly, one can reasonably assume that the text will be interpreted by teachers in ways that might be influenced more by their biographic heterogeneity and the social context in which they teach than by the principles on which the syllabus rhetoric is based.

In accord with this observation, the larger study from which this article was drawn is attempting to better understand the ways in which teacher identity influences the ways in which the syllabus is interpreted. Certainly, Queensland teachers of health and physical education seem similar to their American counterparts in their values orientation, which favors *subject mastery* (Ennis & Chen, 1993; Ha & Xu, 2000; Solmon & Ashy, 1995). It is not unreasonable to suggest that this is a conservative orientation that reveals little in the way of emotional attachment to social justice or social change. One wonders then if the syllabus can genuinely encourage an emancipatory agenda. Such an outcome is perhaps only possible through the practices of teachers who already hold such agendas and work beyond the rhetoric of the outcomes. Indeed, the next phase of the larger project is to

analyze interview data and orientation indices to better understand the relationship between health and physical education teachers who construct their identities in certain, but not regular, ways and a syllabus that, though embracing emancipatory politics, has, given its structure, the capacity to be interpreted in different ways.

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