

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



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### A Defining Time

Health, Physical Education,  
Sport & Recreation

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MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

**Editors**

Dr John Quay and Dr Amanda Mooney

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## **Editorial**

It is with pleasure that we present the full papers of the 28<sup>th</sup> ACHPER International conference.

The papers presented here make an important contribution to the field of Health and Physical Education in Australia at this important time, this defining time, when we are dealing with cementing our place in the Australian Curriculum.

A noticeable thread running through the papers is acknowledgment of the importance of various Australian jurisdictions – Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales – to commentary on issues to do with the broad notion of Health and Physical Education. Such identification of State perspective points to a diversity that can only continue to enrich an Australian Curriculum. Additionally, the international perspective contributes to a curriculum discussion that spans more than just one nation.

Consideration is given, across the papers presented, to a range of concerns which continue to define the future development of Health and Physical Education. Much is said about pre-service teacher training and the issues that face this very important section of our community – both lecturers and students. And then there are issues that pervade the contemporary classroom, such as social media and sexuality. How are we confronting these challenges?

Models of teaching and learning in Health and Physical Education are central to the ways in which we discuss our practice, and these feature prominently in the papers presented.

In considering our future it is always relevant to consult the past. The historical perspective is presented around both Health Education and Physical Education as these have developed in Australia. Such retrospection cannot but help inform our attempts to continue to improve. We also welcome perspectives from different countries and different cultures. These continue to add to the intercultural dialogue that must form part of the global future of Health and Physical Education.

Overall, we believe that this collection of full papers helps to illuminate the current situation in Health and Physical Education, enabling us to learn from each other as we all attempt to adjust to an ever changing Australian and international context that continually asks us not only to define, but to redefine, Health and Physical Education.

We commend this collection to you and hope that the papers included will help you in the ongoing quest to improve your understanding and your practice.

**Dr John Quay and Dr Amanda Mooney**  
ACHPER International Conference Program Directors

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## **A case study of a Queensland Senior Physical Education syllabus: does the rubber (ever) meet the road?**

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This paper will explore statements in the Senior Physical Education Syllabus (2004) and inconsistencies in terminology and concepts that have been identified. In 1998 the Board of Senior Secondary Schools Studies (now known as the Queensland Studies Authority) published the Queensland Senior Physical Education Syllabus. The QSA is “a statutory body of the Queensland Government” (QSA, 2013) which provides for “kindergarten to Year 12 syllabuses, guidelines, assessment, reporting, testing, accreditation and certification services for Queensland schools” (QSA, 2013). At the time of publication the Queensland Senior Physical Education Syllabus was credited with being ‘unique’ and it was suggested that “there is very little else currently underway in the English-speaking world to match developments in Queensland” (Penney and Kirk, 1998, p. 43). Whether this syllabus would translate into workable document for teachers, students and district panellist’s (individuals who ensure consistency of standards and work programs throughout the state of Queensland) was another matter. This paper will review literature to evaluate Queensland Senior Physical Education Syllabus themes such as: the intelligent performer, suggesting and naming six specific teaching styles to be used; integration of theoretical subject matter and physical performance; learning in, about and through physical activity; and, assessing higher order thinking skills (HOTS) such as *evaluating*. It was these concepts that led Penney and Kirk (1998) to form the view that the Senior PE syllabus was innovative and cutting edge. Issues and concerns raised from this analysis will be discussed in the context of the Queensland Senior Physical Education Syllabus (2004) and the role of teachers in implementing a syllabus document which may be perceived to be based on some contentious or imprecise concepts and ideas. A doctoral study on teaching styles by SueSee (2012) highlighted the need to explore these aspects. If syllabus documents are built on concepts which could be ill-defined then it may be argued that student results will be produced which are open to uncertainty. A discussion of, and detailed scrutiny of syllabus planning and implementation issues and concerns, is important as Australia moves towards the implementation of a national syllabus document for HPE. This discussion to be undertaken will be based on research by SueSee (2012) and through experiences of a teacher of senior physical education for 19 years. This presentation seeks to highlight aspects related to the underlying assumptions of syllabus documents and their actual implementation and educational outcomes.

**Keywords:** critique; physical education; curriculum; pedagogy

### **Introduction**

The Queensland Senior Physical Education Syllabus (from this point referred to as the QSPES) is a fundamental document relevant to the teaching of physical education in the Australian state of Queensland. The QSPES (1998) underwent its first rewrite in 2004 and in 2010 a further re-write of the syllabus was produced and implemented into Queensland schools in 2011. The QSPES (2004) had numerous concepts that while innovative they were questionable in their application and definitions. The first of these that will be discussed centres around the concept of integration and the intelligent performer. This integration of physical activity and theoretical knowledge learning experiences is “central to the construction of meaning in physical education” (Queensland Studies Authority, 2004, p. 2). The 2004 QSPES was chosen as it was the current syllabus document when the study was being undertaken.



## **The Intelligent Performer**

The intelligent performer is a key concept of the 2004 QSPES. This concept derives from work by Kirk (1983) where he suggested that intelligent performance would require “a high level of dexterity, and be so effective in relation to a particular sports situation” (p. 43). He proposed that the second part of intelligent performance would require “that the performer has intended to act in this way and not in another, and on the basis of his actions, his own repertoire of skills, and the immediate circumstances of the game” (p. 43).

The *rationale* of the QSPES (the 2004 edition will be referred to for this paper at all times unless otherwise specified) states that physical education involves the study of physical activity and engages “students as intelligent performers learning in, about and through physical activity” (QSA, 2004, p. 5). The terms (*in, through* and *about*) are based on Arnold’s (QSA, 2004) three dimensions of movement that acknowledges that the dimensions “are not mutually exclusive but overlap and interrelate with each other” (QSA, 2004, p. 1). It is suggested by the QSPES (2004) that it is the integration of the three dimensions that are “central to the construction of learning experiences in physical education” (QSA, 2004, p. 1). These integrated learning experiences will generate intelligent performers capable of “rational and creative thought at a high level of cognitive functioning” (QSA, 2004, p. 5) and will involve “students as decision makers engaged in the active construction of meaning through processing information” (QSA, 2004, p. 5). From these definitions it can be seen that the QSPES (2004) was significantly influenced by aspects of Kirk (1983) and Arnold’s (1985) work with regards to the two concepts outlined.

The concept of the intelligent performer also has some overlap within the Global Aims section of the QSPES (2004) which lists a range of characteristics of a person who may be considered physically educated. In particular, two of the Global Aims seem to indicate an intelligent performer could use knowledge of their past performance to improve their future performance. Two of the Global Aims suggest that a student should:

“demonstrate the ability to select and use information in order to evaluate and enhance learning in, about and through physical activities” and “demonstrate the application and evaluation of movement concepts and principals to performance in physical activities” (QSA, 2004, p. 4).

This reference to using information and the application of movement means the student must already have this knowledge to use it or apply it. Consequently, this means the student will recall this knowledge from *memory*. Presuming this is a *memory* task then it is not higher order thinking (or a high level of cognitive functioning) as defined by the QSPES (2004), as creative thought is not demonstrated. The alternative concept to accept is that the earlier definition is not correct and *evaluating* can be undertaken using *memory* as well as *creativity*, and completed in a new environment. This ambiguity of terms must be questioned as these two assumptions cannot be accurately assessed by the QSPES (2004) criteria. An examination of literature from the field of cognitive psychology would shed more light on this seemingly contradictory terminology contained within the QSPES (2004).

Masters, Poolton, Maxwell, and Raab (2008) taught two novice groups a table tennis shot explicitly or implicitly. Explicit training was considered to be step-by-step

instruction about movement patterns, while implicit training was done by providing analogical instruction (e.g., “swing your racquet in an arc”). The researchers found two interesting results that would seem to contradict what it means to be physically educated in QSPES (2004) terms.

First, when participants were asked to perform in a time constrained environment (i.e., little time to perform a skill and make a decision) those that had been instructed implicitly showed “characteristics that normally are not evident in perception-action behaviour until the performer is much farther along the road to expertise” (Masters et al., 2008, p. 78). The second interesting result was that “analogy learning resulted in less movement-related knowledge than did explicit learning, suggesting that a smaller amount of movement information was accessible to working memory for online control of movement” (Masters et al., 2008, p. 76). Put simply, learners who were taught with an analogy did better learners taught explicitly in performing a table tennis skill and decision at the same time. Yet they knew less about explicit knowledge “relevant to the mechanics of the movements” (Masters et al., 2008, p. 76). So while the implicit or analogy group performed better, they knew less about the mechanics of their movements. Ironically, if assessed by the QSPES (2004), they would be termed to be less physically educated as they would not be able to “use information in order to evaluate and enhance learning in, about and through physical activities” (QSA, 2004, p. 4). If we accept this information and its ramifications for skill learning it can be argued that the concept of the intelligent performer is as defined by the QSPES (2004) needs closer examination.

Similarly, Howard and Howard (1992) required participants to observe a screen divided into four equal sections. An asterisk would appear in one of the sections on the screen. Under each of these four equal sections was a key. The task required the participant to press the key corresponding to the position of the asterisk as quickly as possible. The position of the asterisk was following a complex pattern. The participants showed evidence of learning the pattern as their response speed improved over time. However, when they were asked to predict where the asterisk would appear next, their performance was not indicative of knowing explicitly.

From this research it appears that there could very likely be students in physical education classes that appear able to learn and perform skills, yet are unable to explain concepts or lack the ability to speak about the knowledge that was used in performing a skill. This phenomenon clearly contradicts and questions the concept of the *intelligent performer* being “analysts, planners and critics in, about and through physical activity” (QSA, 2004, p. 1).

Any syllabus built around such foundations will most likely find difficulty in its application, teaching, implementation, and assessment. It can be argued that if these three principles are cornerstones of the QSPES (2004), and they are ill-defined, contradictory and questionable, then it is quite likely that teachers will display difficulty in applying it, teaching it and assessing it. If a syllabus document is not clear about what it aims to do, how to do it, and how to assess its educational objectives, then its outcomes will not be what it originally desired.

### **Range of Teaching Styles**

Another innovative aspect of the QSPES (2004) was that it suggested the use of specific teaching styles to be used to assist in the achievement of educational objectives. The QSPES (2004) calls for “a range of pedagogical approaches, for example, guided

discovery, inquiry, cooperative learning, individualised instruction, games for understanding and sport education” (QSA, 2004, p. 28). While it is suggested in the QSPES (2004) to use such teaching styles, it also presumes that teachers will know when to use these in terms of meeting the *general objectives*. There is also a presumption that the styles suggested by QSPES (2004) are appropriate. Literature relating to teaching styles from Mosston and Ashworth’s *Spectrum of Teaching Styles* (2002) will be examined and used to make such judgments. The *Spectrum of Teaching Styles* has been selected for a few reasons. The *Spectrum of Teaching Styles* has had almost fifty years of research and refinement conducted on it. Cothran, Kulinna, Banville, Choi, Amade-Escot, Macphail, Macdonald, Richard, Sarmiento, & Kirk (2005) describe the Spectrum of Teaching Styles (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002) as “arguably the most pervasive influence on the international field of physical education pedagogy” (p. 194). Similarly, Arti (1995) suggested that “No single book has been translated into more languages, been used by more teachers and teacher educators, and endured so long in our field” (p. 421). Within the field of physical education no other model of teaching styles has been so thoroughly researched or has been scrutinised as intensively or for as long. It now has widespread acceptance (though not always with good understanding) in field of physical education and it allows for a conciseness in defining the differences in the anatomy of every teaching style outlined. The differences are determined by “who makes which decision about what and when” (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002, p. 20).

The first teaching style that the QSPES (2004) suggests should be used is *Guided Discovery*. Whether or not this is Mosston and Ashworth’s (2002) *Guided Discovery Style-Style F* is not specified however this lack of clarity is a recurring theme in parts of the QSPES (2004). According to Mosston and Ashworth (2002) *Guided Discovery Style-Style F* is a style characterised by the logical and sequential design of questions that lead the student to discover a predetermined concept, principle or relationship. It is the first style from the *production* cluster meaning that it is the first time that the learner or student will be producing knowledge which is new to the learner. From these characteristics (producing new knowledge) it can be concluded that this style would be appropriate for teachers who are designing learning experiences that allow the student to demonstrate behaviour or thinking that would fall under the *general objective* descriptors for *evaluating* in the QSPES (2004). Whether or not this is what the QSPES (2004) is suggesting is not clear, but it would seem from Mosston and Ashworth’s (2002) definition that it is not appropriate for reproducing knowledge and therefore not suitable for the QSPES (2004) general objective of *acquiring*.

Inquiry is the next teaching style suggested by the QSPES (2004) that would be of use in creating appropriate learning experiences. Like many of the teaching styles suggested by the QSPES (2004) it does not define what it is, suggest when to use it or, which of the *general objectives* it would be appropriate for. Similarly, the QSPES (2004) presumes that teachers know what inquiry teaching is and have a shared understanding of it. This ambiguous use of the term is common according to Mosston and Ashworth (2002) who suggest that:

this pedagogical term is inconsistently used in the literature and the classroom. Some examples of inquiry teaching (based on the decision and content design) represent the Practice style (guided practice), while others are examples of a divergent process representing either the Practice style or the next style-Divergent Production. Since the general term inquiry does not indicate a specific cognitive operation, it could apply to many different teaching-learning behaviours. (p. 222)

Cuevas, Lee, Hart, and Deaktor (2005) suggest, with regards to inquiry learning, that it is difficult if not impossible to give a definition that is commonly accepted. Considering this it seems unlikely that teachers of QSPES (2004) would have their own common definition of what inquiry learning is.

The QSPES (2004) also suggests that learning experiences should draw on the pedagogical approach known as *cooperative learning*. As with many teaching styles, it is difficult to find a definition that is consistent in meaning. For example, Johnson and Johnson (2001) define cooperative learning as “the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximise their own and each other’s learning” (p. 455). Similarly, Shoval (2011) suggests that it is children in small groups being “asked to perform external interactive activities, such as performing experiments, demonstrating ideas to their peers, helping each other and talking to each other” (p. 453). As with the two previously mentioned teaching styles, there is a lack of clear definitions regarding the suggested teaching styles in the QSPES (2004), no explanation given for this teaching style and no suggestion is given for which *general objective* it can be used for. Mosston and Ashworth (2002) offer their thoughts on the use of this term in such a manner when they suggest that “the label ‘cooperative learning’ does not carry a fixed decision structure; therefore, the decision within the group situations must be determined before learning conclusions can be made” (p. 111). Again it appears that the writers of the QSPES (2004) presume a shared common definition and understanding of teachers’ knowledge about when to use such styles, how to use them and which *general objectives* they are appropriate for. Quite clearly a theme has been identified here where clarity of definitions is needed but unfortunately lacking.

### **Poorly Defined Criteria and Contradiction of Integration**

The third general objective *evaluating* is defined by the QSPES (2004) as “the ability to evaluate knowledge, understandings, values, attitudes, capacities and skills in, about and through physical activity” (QSA, 2004, p. 6). In contrast, Bloom defines it:

as the making of judgments about the value, for some purpose, of ideas, works, solutions, methods, materials, etc. It involves the use of criteria as well as standards for appraising the extent to which particulars are accurate, effective, economical or satisfying. The judgments may be either quantitative or qualitative, and the criteria may be either those determined by the student or those which are given to him. (Anderson & Sosniak, 1994, p. 25)

That there are differences between definitions between the two documents is not so unusual. Other definitions of *evaluation* have developed over the years to attempt to explain the functions that take place when a person attempts to *evaluate*. For example, Halpern (1996) believes “evaluation is also a creative act because the problem solver must be able to recognise when a good solution has been obtained” (p. 372). At other times evaluation has been closely linked to critical thinking. Again Halpern (1996) posits:

When we think critically, we are evaluating the outcomes of our thought processes-how good a decision is or how well a problem has been solved. Critical thinking also involves evaluating the thinking process-the reasoning that went into the conclusion we’ve arrived at or the kinds of factors considered in making a decision. (p. 5)

Once again another discrepancy between cognitive definitions of evaluating emerges. This definition does not refer to *creativity*, but rather more to *memory*, as the thinker or student is doing this thinking after the event. This concept or definition of *evaluation* as requiring *creativity* or original thought is also suggested by others. For example, Maier (Lewis & Smith, 1993) “used the terms reasoning or productive behaviour in contrast with learned behaviour and reproductive behaviour” (p. 132). He believed that learned behaviour came from “contiguous experiences with previous repetitions of the relationships involved in the learned behaviour pattern” (Lewis & Smith, 1993, pp. 132-133). Conversely reasoning or productive behaviour is behaviour integrations that are made up of two or more isolated experiences that are qualitatively different: “they arise without previous repetition and consequently are new. This constitutes reasoning” (Lewis & Smith, 1993, p. 133). Newman (1990) also makes clear distinctions between lower and higher order thinking by defining lower order thinking as “only routine or mechanical application of previously acquired information such as listing information previously memorised and inserting numbers into previously learned formulas” (Lewis & Smith, 1993, p. 133). Higher order thinking was different in that it “challenges the student to interpret, analyse, or manipulate information” (Lewis & Smith, 1993, p. 133). An interesting point is advanced by Newman (1990) when he suggests that “higher order thinking is relative – a task requiring higher order thinking by one individual may require only lower order thinking by someone else” (in Lewis & Smith, 1993, p. 134). Lewis and Smith (1993) extend on this point further by declaring:

whether or not an activity requires higher order thinking will depend upon the intellectual history of the learner. If it is possible for a learner to achieve his or her purpose through recall of information and without the need to interrelate or rearrange this information, then higher order thinking does not occur. (p. 136)

The QSPES (2004) does not attempt to distinguish between such points as whether the knowledge is new or original for the student in its definition of *evaluating* (QSA, 2004, p. 6), or if the learner has had previous intellectual history with the task. When the exit criteria matrix is examined (QSA, 2004, pp. 54-55) the concepts of new or unrehearsed contexts is introduced. A point worthy of note is that the exit criteria sheet only applies this concept (of the student having to perform in a new or unrehearsed context) to the physical performance and not the written work or *Focus Areas*. The *Focus Area* is sometimes referred to as the *theory* work. This difference in assessing *evaluating* in two different ways is not explained in the QSPES (2004). Why performing a motor program in a new or unrehearsed environment is of paramount importance for achieving an ‘A’ or ‘B’ standard in one situation yet not when *evaluating* an application of principles or facts not relevant in another is contradictory. This difference suggests that, with regard to the Focus Areas, *evaluating* is allowed to involve recall of known information or the evaluation of known facts or concepts and is by definition a task which requires memory. The QSPES (2004) does it justify or explain why this is. Neither of these terms are mentioned in the descriptors for an ‘A’ or ‘B’ standard with regard to *evaluating* when the QSPES (2004) exit criteria is examined for assessing the *Focus Area*. It can also be suggested that by having these two different assessment criteria for the same cognitive process or General Objective contradicts the concepts of the intelligent performer and that the concept of using a cognitive taxonomy descriptor for a motor-learning behaviour is evidence of the QSPES (2004) writers struggling with this concept. The point has previously been made that higher order thinking (including

*evaluating*) is contextual and, if the *evaluating* of a situation has been done previously, and the student is asked to perform such a task repeatedly, it becomes recall. If *evaluating* is performed as described then it has become a *memory or reproduction* task and not a new task. Therefore *evaluating* (HOTs) can be both done as both *reproduction* and *production* thinking.

### **Evaluating and the QSPES simple and complex performance environments**

The QSPES (2004) does not attempt to distinguish between such points as to whether the knowledge is new or original, or if the learner has had previous intellectual history with the task, in its definition of *evaluation* (QSA, 2004, p. 6). However, when the QSPES (2004) speaks about Simple and Complex Performance Environments (used to assist teachers to decide on the exit level of achievement or grade for students), it does allude to some of the above concepts. For example it speaks about *simple environments* as:

a rehearsed, practised or mainly uncomplicated circumstance in which students experience opportunities to apply skills, tactics and strategies, and the outcomes are predictable and decisions making is limited. In this environment the student will have more space and time to make a few simple decisions. These skills, tactics and strategies may include a basic drill, a drill completed slowly, a limited number of skills, a single strategy or no opposition could all be qualities of a simple performance environment. (QSA, 2004, p. 28)

The concept of *predictability* is not only established here, but also the part it plays in apparently limiting decision making. Something is usually predictable due to the situation being experienced before. That is, there must be memory of an event occurring for an individual to predict with any kind of certainty what will happen. If the prediction is not based on memory (or thought) then it must be considered luck to an extent and the QSPES (2004) does not assess luck. With reference to rehearsal, it can be argued that something has been practiced over and over, or rehearsed. These two concepts, along with the mention of limited decision making, imply the learner's cognitive operation is *memory* when performing in a simple performance environment.

One issue that arises with the definition of *predictability* is what is simple to one person is not simple to another. The simplicity or complexity is contextual or relative to the learner and is based on the learner's experience, practice or skills that they possess at the time. The concept is similar to the view held by Lewis and Smith (1993) on higher order thinking being contextual. These skills become simpler the more they are practiced and if they are already known or mastered. If this notion is accepted then the environment also becomes a more simple performance environment as it becomes more predictable. Based on this assumption, it is not surprising that a teacher may create opportunities to practice a skill over and over until it becomes automated and predictable, and the learner will be required to use little or no decision making in what the QSPES (2004) would still term new or unrehearsed environments. To create these opportunities the teacher would more than likely use teaching styles from the *reproduction* cluster, where the learner will be asked to reproduce knowledge or skills. This point clearly illustrates a problem with the QSPES (2004) definition of complex performance environment.

## **Predictability**

The concept of predictability and how it is increased is also related in some capacity to becoming a skilled performer. It can be suggested that a skill becomes predictable or increases in predictability when it is practised over and over so that the outcome becomes more certain. It can be argued that predictability is not always associated with how complex the environment or skill is, but is also associated with how skilled the performer is and their previous experiences that will impact on this. A skill or performance environment can still be considered complex, yet be simple or predictable to a highly skilled individual who has practised the skill to reach a high level. If the learner has practised the skill (or skills) over and over, then they are now recalling the movement from *memory*. If this argument is accepted, then it may be ironic to conclude that a tennis player playing in the Wimbledon final may be in a simple environment due to them practising their skills so often. What may be equally ironic is the answer to the following rhetorical question; *'If a student comes to a Queensland Senior Physical Education class as a National level athlete, will the assessment piece really only be a simple environment to them due to their exceptionally high skill level developed through repetition of skills and environments over and over'*? The answer to this question seems to be a 'Yes'. Hay (2008) found this was occurring when, during an interview with a teacher about assessment, the following comment was recorded:

Yeah, well, his general range of skills was very well developed right from the start. He could accurately set, dig and spike without any tuition from me ... He knew when to play the different shots and he was very strategically aware of...at a reasonably high level. I wouldn't say he was outstanding in that area, but he was certainly at a level which was an 'A' standard according to the criteria of this course. (p. 290)

However, if the teacher had read the QSPES (2004) criteria sheet they would have been faced with a dilemma. The descriptors for the *evaluating* learning objective refer to "new or unrehearsed contexts" (QSA, 2004, p. 55). Yet if this student was already at such a high level, it may appear almost impossible for the teacher to create such contexts to assess the student under.

What is confusing though is that more can be ascertained from the definition of a *simple performance environment*, about whether or not *memory* is involved, than can be construed from the definition of a *complex performance environment*. For example, a *complex performance environment*:

Is one in which students are required to make decisions to changing or new circumstances. It is often a new or unrehearsed situation and in these contexts students are expected to apply knowledge, tactics and strategies in which outcomes cannot always be predicted. A complex performance environment is a "real-life" situation and may include competitive circumstances. (QSA, 2004, p. 28)

At an initial glance of this definition the first line mentions that it is changing or new circumstances that define a *complex performance environment*. This is another poorly termed and confusing definition. Changing circumstances does not necessarily connote that the learner must use *discovery* or *creativity* (production of new knowledge) in this process. It may require the learner to use these two conscious thought processes. Conversely, it may also not require the learner to use them. An environment may change but if the student has witnessed the change before then it is more likely that they

can predict what will happen (from *memory*) and will not draw on *discovery* or *creativity* to deal with the change. Nevertheless new circumstance certainly does mean that the learner will be required to draw on the conscious thought process of *discovery* or *creativity* in such an environment as they have not seen it or experienced it before, hence why it can be defined as new. It can be seen that this definition of a *complex performance environment* is contradictory or poorly defined. Throughout the QSPES (2004) the definitions provided for this *complex performance environment* constantly swap or overlap between referring to *memory* (i.e., *changing* or *often new*) and *discovery* or *creativity* (*new circumstances* or *unrehearsed*) to define what it is assessing and how specific standards or *general objectives* will look.

### **The ‘New’ QSPES (2010)**

The current version of the Queensland Senior Physical Education Syllabus (QSPES) was published in (QSA, 2010) and with it comes some noticeable changes. Firstly, the exit criteria become renamed as *dimensions*. The four dimensions remain as *acquiring*, *applying*, *evaluating* and *attitudes and values* (QSA, 2010). Many of the issues identified in this paper have been addressed in some capacity by the revised syllabus document – to the credit of the QSA. Most noticeable is that the terminology new or unrehearsed performance environments have been removed from the standards matrix and from the QSPES (2010). Gone also is a section explaining what constitutes a *complex performance environment*. The removal of the terminology new or unrehearsed means that *discovery* and *creativity* are no longer necessary to be used as the conscious thought process within the exit dimensions (criteria in the 2004 QSPES) of *evaluating*. Similarly the exit standards (previously exit criteria in 2004 QSPES) reflect this new focus by now describing the standards associated with an ‘A’ level in *evaluating* as:

The student work has the following characteristics:

- consistent and discerning reflection and decision making that enhances physical responses and outcomes in or about authentic performance contexts
- consistent and effective initiation of change or modification of personal and/or team strategies to solve problems in or about authentic performance contexts (QSA, 2010, p. 31).

It seems that the term *complex performance environments* have been replaced with the terminology authentic performance context (QSA, 2010, p. 31). These are defined as “contexts that are applicable to the performance of that activity” (QSA, 2010, p. 35). The way that *evaluating* is defined remains largely unchanged from the QSPES (2004). This definition is congruent with recognising the cognitive operation of *evaluating* can be completed with *memory* as the conscious thought process. All of these changes make the 2010 definition in the QSPES regarding *evaluating* more congruent than the 2004 QSPES. It may be confidently suggested that many of the changes to the QSPES (2010) took place because of feedback from practising physical educators and the research based arguments outlined in this paper.

Whilst it appears a number of the ‘mistakes’ or weaknesses with regards to terminologies in the 2004 QSPES were addressed in the 2010 version others were not. Unfortunately, shadows of the inconsistencies in terminology remain with regards to *evaluating* and the QSPES (2004) requiring *discovery* and *creativity* to be used or assessed. In the physical performance section of the 2010 QSPES it suggests that “performances involve the creative input of students and the application of technical skill in solving a problem or providing a solution” (QSA, 2010, p. 25). Similarly, in a



sample assessment unit for year 11 Aerobics provided by the QSA, the task asks the students to:

Create a 90 second Sport Aerobics routine to your selection of one Sport Aerobics music track of 152–155 beats/minute. The complete performance should reproduce the compulsory elements (high kicks, push-ups and jumping jacks) and skill elements (static strength, power, flexibility and dynamic strength) within the time and space (7x7m) constraints of a Sport Aerobics routine. (QSA Appendix, 2010, p. 1)

If the criteria or descriptions in the standards matrix (QSA, 2010) are examined there is no descriptor that allows *creativity* (meaning the production of new knowledge to the student) to be assessed. Equally, the task asks for reproduction (third line) to be used which requires *memory* as the conscious thought process. Clearly there is still some confusion with cognitive terminology or intent.

Although the focus of this paper is the inconsistencies in terminologies and concepts in the QSPES (2004) it is useful to briefly examine the national curriculum document being developed to see if it displays similar issues. It appears that the same confusion regarding cognitive intent may be seen in the descriptors for the broad learning sequence of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education. One descriptor for physical activity requires that:

Students learn to be creative in the way that they adapt and improvise their movements to respond to different movement situations, stimuli and challenges (for example changes in rules, change in music, restrictions in performance space, changes in equipment or number of performers) (ACARA, 2012).

Is this descriptor requiring students to only be creative when they adapt and improvise (meaning that the student produces new knowledge) or are they permitted to adapt and improvise with a known strategy (i.e., recalling from memory)? The Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education does elaborate by suggesting that:

[it] provides learning opportunities that support dance-making, games creation and technique refinement. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of the processes of creating movement in developing new thinking and feelings about movement (ACARA, 2012, pp. 25-26).

The fact that it alludes to new thinking is a positive sign. How accurately this is assessed with regard to new thinking being the defining characteristic of creativity remains to be seen. Although the national curriculum document is revealing with regards to including creativity as a characteristic of a physically educated person it can be argued that unless terminologies and concepts are specific and clearly defined teachers may not end up assessing what the syllabus writers had hoped for – a situation similar to that which occurred with the QSPES (2004).

In returning the focus to the 2004 QSPES a key aspect that was examined was the suggested teaching styles (i.e., guided discovery, inquiry, cooperative learning, individualised instruction, games for understanding and sport education) that were outlined. In the 2010 QSPES none of these styles are suggested (let alone expected) and the syllabus document instructed teachers to refer to the QSA website for examples of learning experiences. When the on-line material is consulted the QSA website still does not suggest any specific teaching style. It does suggest that a physical performance

involves “creative input of students and the application of technical skill in solving a problem or providing a solution” (QSA, 2010, p. 25). How this is accomplished is not suggested however if creative input is alluding to the production of new knowledge, then Mosston and Ashworth (2002) would argue that teaching styles from the production cluster must be used.

All syllabus documents, it is hoped, evolve over time and perhaps during the development of the 2010 QSPES it was realised by the authors of the document that some concepts were no longer relevant or were in fact causing problems similar to those discussed in this research. Perhaps the changes occurred because the syllabus writers were aware that some aspects raised here were contradictory, vague, confusing or led to assessment outcomes which may not have been equitable. While at this point it is easy to suggest that the QSPES (2010) has moved forward it is important to consider why lessons should be learnt. While the 2004 QSPES created a platform for the 2010 QSPES many students who studied under this syllabus document were awarded grades which contributed to university scores. From what has been raised here and by others (Hay, 2008) it is fair to argue that the consistency and equity of these results (under the 2004 QSPES) across the state are questionable. Similarly it does allow teachers to question the authority of organisations which are put in charge of upholding standards and writing syllabus documents such as the QSA. It may be suggested that while some of the questionable aspects of the 2004 QSPES have been addressed some teachers may feel inclined to wonder why we should believe that you have written a sound document this time.

## **Conclusion**

While viewed positively by some (Kirk & O’Flaherty, 2004; Macdonald & Brooker, 1997a, 1997b,) the QSPES (2004) has, according to Hay (2008), been the focus of little research with regards to its claims, ambitions and actual implementation at the classroom level. This paper has addressed how well some of its claims, ambitions and principles are questionable. Hay’s (2008) research on the process teachers engage in to assess their students’ ability in senior physical education in Queensland clearly highlighted this questionable nature when he suggested that “students’ achievements were influenced by the use of alternative criteria and standards” (p. 306). It could be argued that, if the QSPES was asking teachers to assess with the contradictory and ambiguous concepts and principles outlined in this paper, is the outcome that Hay (2008) describes surprising?

With the ACARA board announced in May 2009 and with Maths F-10, History F-10, English F-10 and Science F-10 already being implemented in 2013 and 13 more syllabus documents to come, what processes are in place to ensure similar questionable documents, definitions and principles do not emerge? To write and implement syllabus documents in this time period seems a hasty process.

The intent of this paper was to analyse the QSPES (2004) in detail and to ascertain what it is advocating for in regards to general objectives, teaching styles, learning experiences and exit criteria for assessment. A strong argument has been made that many principles, concepts and definitions are questionable and may have contributed to questionable assessment and confusion amongst both students and teachers. If documents are produced in this fashion then equity within educational outcomes seems unlikely and relevant authorities (usually in charge of maintaining

standards in the interest of equity and high quality educational outcomes) will begin to lack credibility amongst practicing professionals.

### Notes on contributors

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