

Conclusion and Recommendations

Abstract The purpose of sharing this partnership story is to promote quality learning experiences in physical education, and subsequent promotion of health and wellbeing. Data gathered suggest the learning opportunities created through partnerships were relevant, engaging, contemporary, physically active, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate for all stakeholders, namely, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) university pre-service teachers, primary school children, and primary teachers. This story is about the localisation of non-funded partnerships in Gippsland, Victoria, Australia. Stakeholders were predominantly of the Australian national level but were also international.

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This story is told by interweaving journey threads, from which emerge community collaborative themes. These themes include Partnerships, Social Justice, Mentoring and leadership, and Problem-solving. The story offers direction for the future of Health, Well-being and Physical Education (HW & PE) within communities which is timely and relevant given the recent release of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Partnerships are identified by the UN as essential for implementing the SDGs, which apply to all nations around the world. This is significant as Goal Three and Four directly relate to HW & PE. The story that unfolds has a focus on the physical dimension of health which not only has physical health benefits but also promotes mental, emotional, and social wellbeing (UNESCO 2015; Lynch 2005). The physical dimension which in schools is embedded within the PE curriculum is optimised when quality physical education (QPE) is enacted; this involves planned, progressive, and inclusive learning experiences (UNESCO 2015). Both data gathered in this programme and through research (UNESCO 2015) suggest QPE is enhanced when partnerships are established.

Within the Best Start initiative strengths were combined within the local, national, and international communities to “increase the scale of effectiveness of activities, reduce transaction costs, bring together resources and tools that otherwise would not be available to one actor only and it helps to mutually understand perspectives that otherwise would not be understood appropriately” (Leisinger 2015). Thus, the community collaborations creatively optimised the resources available within a rural community through connections with the wider state of Victoria, as well as Australia and UK. Access to basic services, facilities, good parks, playgrounds, play spaces, and close, affordable, and regular transport is reportedly low in rural Victoria (DEECD 2013). Implementation of the HPE learning area was carried out by generalist classroom teachers in all but one of the six partner schools. This particular school had a delegated PE teacher, but the teacher had no specialist training. Hence, collaboration was seen to be advantageous for all stakeholders and for future provision of quality HPE lessons at no or minimal cost. Furthermore, Manning (2014) urges the strengthening of resources in disadvantaged communities for the wellbeing of children. Hence, partnerships were associated with social justice, as was the Australian curriculum.

Within literature and the Australian curriculum, this type of community collaboration adopts a strengths-based approach, embedded within

to improve. Hence, partnership benefits and efforts need to be prioritised and perceived as an investment. Pioneers who lead in partnerships and evidence drive and success need to be supported through funding, time, and workload to allow possible communication opportunities and efforts required to discover possibilities to collaborate.

While the UN is supporting partnerships on a global level, there are gaps in the layers in between global and local. All partnerships begin small at grass-roots level and need fuel to grow as they are built on trust. The localisation of partnerships for this reason requires continued research so that amendments can be made to optimise the opportunities. An obvious barrier that could and should have ended the Best Start programme before it began was the leader requiring a Certificate IV qualification. Another was the university ITE units being taught biennially. Within this journey, it is essential that systems in place within universities, schools, leisure centres, and educational policies that threaten sustainability are identified. Once they are identified, then every effort must be made to minimise policy barriers so that partnerships are achievable and sustainable.

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