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# Exploring religious education and health and physical education key learning area connections in Primary Schools.

Lynch, TJ

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# **Exploring Religious Education (RE) and Health and Physical Education (HPE) Key Learning Area connections in Primary Schools**



Timothy Lynch EdD.

[www.timothylynchmonash.com](http://www.timothylynchmonash.com)



## Three major themes

- Curriculum connections
- Spirituality and HPE 
- Acknowledgement of connections within Catholic Education



# **RE Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE)- Gospel-oriented community**

- **educational dimension (RE program)**
- **faith formation dimension (school community)**



# **Spirituality** (within and beyond Christianity)

**BCE Religious Education Years 1 to 10  
Learning Outcomes guideline document  
(2003)**

- **Scripture;**
- **Beliefs;**
- ***Celebration and Prayer;***
- **Morality**



## Queensland P-10 HPE curriculum documents

**“sense of connection to phenomena and unusual events beyond self and usual sensory and rational existence; a sense of place within the universe”**

**(Queensland School Curriculum Council 1999a, 26).**



## **Health and Physical Education (KLA)**

- various dimensions of health, which develops the students' physical, social, emotional, mental and **spiritual** growth
- (Queensland School Curriculum Council 1999b; Hutton 1999).



## **P-10 Queensland HPE syllabus**

- **three strands of HPE:**
  - 1) enhancing personal development;**
  - 2) developing the concepts and skills for physical activities; and**
  - 3) promoting the health of individuals and communities**





**“Within the Catholic Christian tradition,  
personal and social development  
focuses on the lifelong journey towards  
wholeness as a person created in the  
image of God and one who contributes  
to the common good”**

**(Brisbane Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane 2003, 60).**



# Spirituality and HPE (Physical Activities)

- Strong support for physical activities increasing opportunities to experience God has come from many key figures throughout the history of the Catholic tradition, including:
    - St. Paul,
    - Clement of Alexandria,
    - St. Dominic,
    - St. Thomas Aquinas,
    - Pope Pius II,
    - St. Ignatius,
    - Pope Pius XI,
    - Pope Pius XII,
    - Pope Paul VI and the
    - late Pope John Paul II
- (Feeney 1995)



**“Are not these athletic values the deepest aspirations and requirements of the Gospel message?” (John Paul II 1980, 10).**

**successfully exploited to nourish children’s spirituality through**

- **Godly Play method** (Berryman 2009; Hyde 2010) **and**
- **drama** (Grainger & Kendall-Seatter 2003).



## Can more be done?

**Physical activity which includes play is a natural part of children's life and is imperative within their world, their culture.**

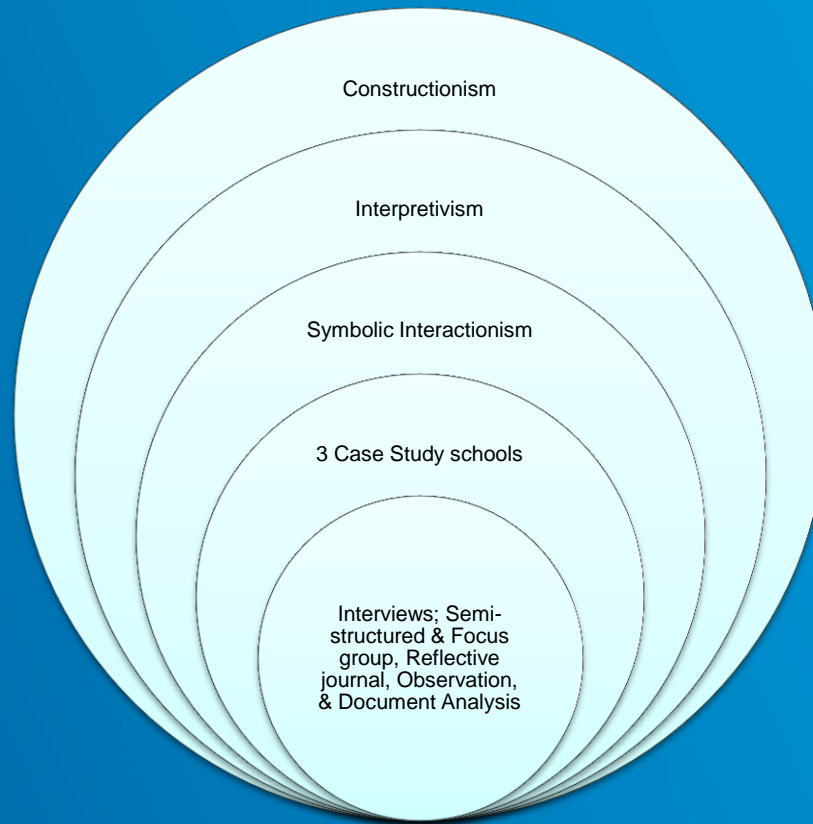


## Research Purpose

**Are connections  
made by teachers  
and students in  
practice?**



# Research Design





# Analysis of data

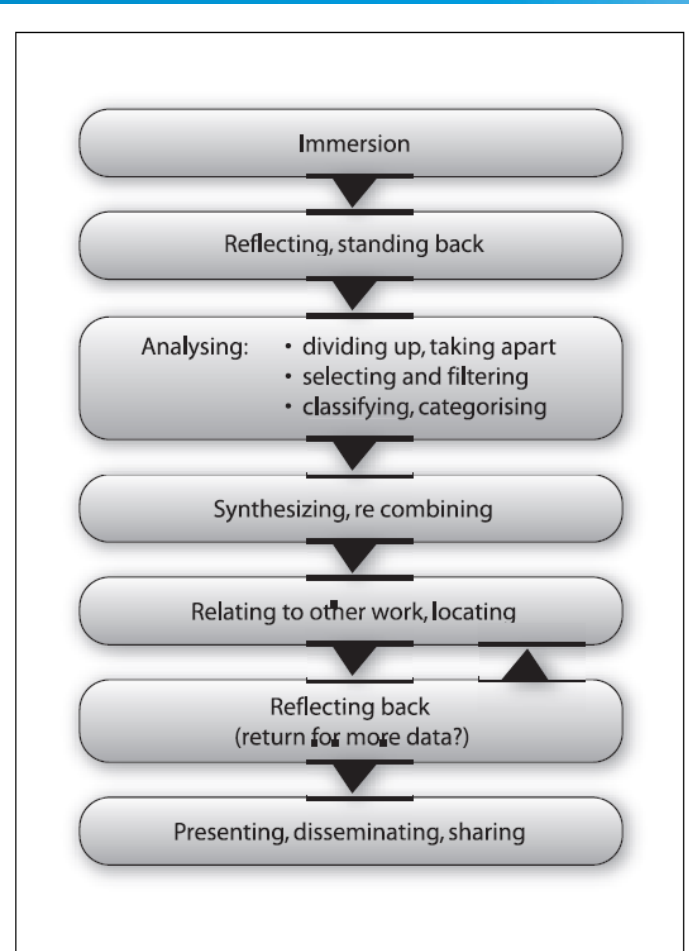


Figure 1: General stages in making sense of qualitative data (Wellington, 2000, p.141).



Stage 1	Analysis of data for each case study/school using Wellington’s table of analysis.
Stage 2	Narrative/Descriptive report given as an analysis for each case study.
Stage 3	Cross case analysis again using Wellington’s table of analysis. This time analyzing whole stories or story sections.
Stage 4	Narrative/Descriptive report given for cross case study analysis.

Table 1: Process of data analysis.

Interview Transcript		Coding
I	Do you find the things you learn in Religion relates to HPE physical activity lessons?	-Gospel values -tolerance and understanding -cooperation -acceptance
P	It tells us that you have to be kind, not be mean to other people who are not as good at sport as you. Also to be a good sport, don’t say ‘Oh I didn’t win’ and get all grumpy and walk away or be mean to others.	

Table 2 Coding of Interview Transcript.





## Presentation of Findings – BCE Primary Schools

- Case Study One School (less than 200 students)
- Case Study Two School (200-400 students)
- Case Study Three School (over 400 students)

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three
Teachers' perception of students interest levels in PE	Medium	High	High
Number of students interviewed in each focus group	6	8	8
Number of Early Years student participants whose favourite subject was PE	0 (0%)	6 (75%)	0 (0%)
Number of Middle Years student participants whose favourite subject was PE	2 (33%)	3 (37.5%)	0 (0%)
Number of Upper Years student participants whose favourite subject was PE	0 (0%)	4 (50%)	0 (0%)
HPE specialist teacher	No	Yes	Yes

Table 5: Comparison of Case Study School Student Participants' Interest in PE.



# Summary of Cross Case Analysis

- All teacher participants and the majority of students from all three Case Study schools made connections between HPE and the Religious Education curriculum.
- Teachers – RE and PD strand (HPE)  
RE and the Physical Activity strand (HPE)
- Students – RE and Physical Activity strand (HPE)
- Case Study 2 & 3 schools identified the strongest connections



## Discussion

- Literature suggesting there are strong connections is supported in practice
- Teachers suggested that they should be articulated and optimised
- Students discussed experiential gospel values as areas of strong connection
- Regular lessons – shared more connections



## Conclusion

- **Can more be done with physical learning and the connections RE has with HPE?**
- **Small scale sample the data generated was limited by nature. Recommended that a large scale research project be conducted to ascertain verisimilitude of findings.**