

Listening to Primary Schools: Australian Health and Physical Education (HPE)

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Abstract

This research investigated Australian Government Primary School Principal's perceptions of a University Pre-service Teacher Education course where the graduate teacher is qualified as a generalist primary classroom teacher and a Health and Physical Education specialist. Research suggests that the optimum time for children to learn and refine their motor skills and to be introduced to positive HPE experiences is during preschool and early primary school years. The research data were gathered using surveys completed by 138 government primary school principal participants in the state of Victoria, a large number considering the demanding role of school principal. There were two ethical clearances that were granted before this research was conducted. They were the ethical clearance from Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). The key findings were that principals: 1) strongly desire to have specialist HPE teachers in their schools; 2) want HPE specialist teachers who are interested and want to be working with primary aged children. Furthermore, HPE specialists who are able, willing and qualified to teach as generalist classroom teachers. Such a course requires a tertiary education structural change and would involve for the first time in Australia's history, primary education pre-service teachers being given the opportunity within their university courses to specialize in developmentally appropriate Health and Physical Education.