Rebranding “Gym Class”:
Veteran Teachers Lacing Up for the New Healthy Active Living Course

By

Sara Prodanos

A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Copyright by Sara Prodanos, April 2017
Abstract

This research project explored the various ways in which veteran Ontario high school Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers are experiencing and teaching the new 2015 HPE curriculum. The goal is to monitor the curriculum’s progress (from theory to practice) and to determine how veteran teachers are reportedly implementing the curriculum change. Two Ontario veteran HPE teachers were interviewed about: new terminology (health and physical literacy); new assessment procedures (self-assessment in fitness testing); and new instructional models (Teaching Games for Understanding [TGfU]). Analysis of existing literature on the topic as well as an analysis of data collected from the interviews suggest that implementation relies on individual teachers’ beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogy as well as their interpretations of the new curriculum document. However, the curriculum has only been implemented in the 2015/2016 school year and is fairly new to all teachers. Currently, teachers have reported challenges with implementing the new curriculum as they have a lack of resources and supports for teaching sensitive topics in HPE classes. Overall, however, veteran HPE teachers are beginning to make these changes to the Ontario 2015 HPE curriculum, but real curriculum change will likely take more time.

**Key Words:** Health and Physical Education, Ontario, curriculum implementation, health and physical literacy, TGfU
Acknowledgements

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my family members for supporting and believing in me throughout this process. I would like to send a special note of gratitude to my mom for constantly being a support system for me. It is because of you that I have made it this far. Thank you so much mom; for all that you do, I am thankful. I love you.

I would like to thank all my OISE Master of Teaching professors for helping to prepare me for a career as a high school Health and Physical Education teacher. However, I must say a special thank you to my research professor, Lee Airton. You have fostered in me a love for research that I have never known. Thank you so much for your excellent guidance, patience and commitment to this project.

I wish to acknowledge my Master of Teaching I/S cohort 253 classmates for being helpful throughout this two-year program. I will never forget the amazing times we’ve had together. I applaud you all on a job well done. We did it!
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Research Context</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Purpose of Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Research Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Background of the Researcher</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Overview</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Literature Review</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 State and Status of Physical Education Worldwide</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Curriculum Changes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 New terminology: Health and physical literacy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 New assessment practices: Self-assessment in fitness testing</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 New instructional approach: Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Barriers and Supports: Creating “Real” Curriculum Change</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Teachers’ beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogy</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Teachers’ interpretations of the new curriculum</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.3 Stages of curriculum change 28
2.3.4 Successful curriculum change 30
2.4 Conclusion 31

Chapter Three: Research Methodology 33

3.0 Introduction 33
3.1 Research Approach and Procedures 33
3.2 Instruments of Data Collection 34
3.3 Participants 36
   3.3.1 Sampling criteria 36
   3.3.2 Participant recruitment 37
   3.3.3 Participant biographies 39
3.4 Data Analysis 40
3.5 Ethical Review Procedures 41
3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths 42
3.7 Conclusion 43

Chapter Four: Research Findings 44

4.0 Introduction 44
4.1 Teachers’ Interpretations of the New Curriculum 44
   4.1.1 Eclectic interpretation: Anna 45
   4.1.2 Innovative interpretation: Megan 48
4.2 Teachers’ Understandings of the New Curriculum 50
4.2.1 Teachers’ understandings of new terminology: “Health and physical literacy”

4.2.2 Teachers’ understandings of new assessment practices: “Self-assessment in fitness testing”

4.2.3 Teachers’ understandings of the new instructional approach: “TGfU”

4.3 Reported Challenges with Implementing the New Curriculum: Lack of Resources and Lack of Supports for Sensitive Topics

4.4 Conclusion

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Broad: The educational community

5.2.2 Narrow: My own professional identity and practice

5.3 Recommendations

5.4 Areas for Further Research

5.5 Concluding Comments

References

Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Appendix B: Interview Protocol/Questions
Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

For decades, Health and Physical Education (HPE) has been a major social topic in education. An individual’s health and physical fitness has a major influence on the way we live our lives. Being educated on health and physical activity is important because it helps students “develop an understanding of what they need in order to make a commitment to lifelong healthy, active living” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7). The new 2015 Health and Physical Education curriculum states:

Healthy, active living benefits both individuals and society in many ways - for example, by increasing productivity and readiness for learning, improving morale, decreasing absenteeism, reducing health-care costs, decreasing anti-social behaviour such as bullying and violence, promoting safe and healthy relationships, and heightening personal satisfaction. (Ontario Ministry of Education, p. 7)

However, ‘Physical Education’ (PE) programs in schools have had a storied history in Canada. Looking back and reflecting on the evolution of PE over the past century in Canada is truly insightful. Its history encourages one to ponder how much things have changed, and yet, how some things remain unchanged. Egerton Ryerson was one of the first visionaries for PE in Canada in the 1800s (Cosentino & Howell 1971; Keyes, 1989; Morrow & Wamsley, 2005 as cited in Chorney & Forsberg, 2014). As the first Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada, Egerton launched an appeal for a PE program in schools: a program focused on instilling discipline and moral values in young children (Mandigo, Corlett & Lathrop, 2012 as cited in Chorney & Forsberg, 2014). Shortly after, he created a complete course of physical exercises that included military activities such as tactics and marching, which eventually lead to the federal
government offering a grant of fifty dollars to any school administering “drill and gymnastics” (Chorney & Forsberg, 2014, p. 3). In 1892, a law made PE and gymnastics compulsory in all Canadian schools. Since then, PE’s history is steeped in critical events, and rich with individuals, associations, organizations and departments that played instrumental roles in the development of PE from a simple form of physical training (in its early inception) to a more complex field of study today (Chorney & Forsberg, 2014). HPE has become a part of the curriculum for most jurisdictions around the globe. Its collective goal is to teach students “attitudes, knowledge, skills and abilities required to live active and healthy lives” (Deacon, 2001, p. 8).

However, over the past twenty years, the global health crisis due to physical inactivity and unhealthy diets has increased (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013). In 1996, it was found that young children were leading increasingly sedentary lives, with physical activity frequently displaced by television viewing, Internet surfing, and video gaming (Berenson, Myers, Stikmiller & Webber, 1996). In 2000, over half of Canadian children and youth aged 5-17 were not active enough to meet the international guidelines for optimal growth and development (Craig, Cameron, Storm Russel, & Beaulieu, 2001, p. 22). For adolescents, this number increased from 64% in 2000 (Craig et al., 2001) to 82% in 2002 (Craig & Cameron, 2004 as cited in Physical Health and Education Canada, 2017). Concerns with this lifestyle change are still being studied today in relation to childhood obesity levels. Statistics Canada (2015) found that in the late 1970s, the prevalence of childhood obesity in Canada was about 5%. A more recent study in 2013 showed that overall, obesity among Canadian children and adolescents aged 3 to 19 was roughly 13% (Statistic Canada, 2015).

The relationship between physical inactivity and increase childhood obesity is still being studied today. In 2002, the WHO reported that in a 2001 study, 1.9 million global deaths were
attributed directly to physical inactivity. Specifically, “physical inactivity caused 15% of some cancers, diabetes and heart disease” (p. xvi). What’s most tragic about this epidemic is that there has always been one simple solution: leading healthy lifestyles and participating in physical activity. This ‘cure’ starts with school’s Physical Education programs encouraging students to participate in and foster a love for health and physical activity. However, Ryan and Poirer (2012) found that most Ontario students do not continue to take secondary physical education after they have completed their required compulsory HPE class in grade 9 in order to graduate. Some of the issues related to this decrease in participation included “self-confidence; motivation; perceived value of physical activity; opportunities for physical activity; marking scheme; competition; co-ed classes; teaching approach; and peers as possible problems and solutions” (p. 1).

The 1999 Health and Physical Education curriculum arguably struggled to promote lifelong participation in physical activity for several reasons. In general, the 2015 curriculum is more detailed and inclusive to all students’ needs and interests. In comparison to the new curriculum, the old curriculum prioritized “regular and enthusiastic participation in physical activity” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 4) as its means and end. The most prominent differences in the two curricula are seen when analyzing the open level “Healthy Active Living Education” (PPL1O) course for grade 9 students. In the 1999 curriculum, PPL1O’s focused on teaching student’s movement skills and principles, personal fitness, physical competence, as well as safety and injury prevention. Students investigated issues related to healthy sexuality, and the use and abuse of drugs. They also develop goal-setting, communication and social skills through activity-based learning. “Physical activity,” “active living,” “healthy living,” and “living skills” were the four strands in the PPL1O course. The specific expectations section for all four strands involved some component of physical activity. By contrast, the PPL10 course in the 2015
curriculum includes “focus course options” (Ontario Ministry of Education, p.89) and teacher/student prompts throughout the strands. Overall, the PPL1O course provides students with the “knowledge and skills” to make healthy choices now, and lead a healthy, active life in the future (Ontario Ministry of Education, p. 89). The three strands in the 2015 PPL1O course include, “active living,” “movement competence: skills, concepts, and strategies,” and “healthy living” (Ontario Ministry of Education p. 92-108). “Living skills” isn’t considered a strand on its own, but is learnt, assessed and evaluated throughout the other three strands (Ontario Ministry of Education p. 90-91).

The key difference between the two Health and Physical Education curricula (1999 versus 2015), is the main focus of the curricula. In 1999, the focus was on lifelong participation in physical activity, whereas in the 2015, the focus is on lifelong healthy and active living (Ontario Ministry of Education). The main contributor to this change of focus is the integration of two innovating terms, “physical and healthy literacy” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7). Being literate in both of these subjects means that students will be competent in both physical and health ideas, terms and concepts, and will be able to use their knowledge in order to make good decisions about their physical and health development throughout their life time (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). In today’s ever-changing society, it is more important than ever that teachers instill these attitudes and aptitudes in children and adolescents to address the health crisis in Canada.

1.1 Research Problem

The research problem is that the Ontario Ministry of Education implemented the 2015 HPE curriculum over the past few years. Therefore, the veteran teachers who I will be interviewing (who have been teaching HPE classes for a minimum of 10 years) are brand new to the
curriculum transitioning process. Increasing amounts of research have been done on the importance of living a healthy and active lifestyle. Ryan and Poirer (2012) argue that Physical Education in secondary schools is a practical means to draw attention to, and cultivate core values within our youth. HPE benefits the whole person including the mind, body and spirit, and it develops self-esteem, self-actualization, self-understanding and positive interpersonal relations with others, to help students make their own self-body-world connections. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2015) has finally put into action a HPE curriculum that encompasses a holistic approach to Health and Physical Education. Compared to its previous version, Lu and McLean (2011) argue that the focus of the new curriculum targets five aspects of wellbeing: “physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social” (p. 6).

Two important concepts that have been consciously and thoroughly discussed in the 2015 HPE curriculum is mental health awareness as well as inclusion of all abilities. Lu and McLean (2011) specifically discuss the importance of mental health concepts which are emphasized throughout the strands and encouraged to be integrated into lessons, wherever possible. The focus is not on mental illness and disease as it was in previous years, but more optimistically on the development of skills for supporting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing (Lu & McLean, 2011). In regards to HPE for all students of all abilities, the new curriculum has adjusted its assessment and evaluation tools and included the terms ‘health’ and ‘physical literacy’ (defined further in section 2.3). Traditionally, HPE classes used physical fitness testing, where ability was scored and evaluated through governmental standardized tests. This immediately alienated children with disabilities (especially physical disabilities) from performing fully in their HPE classes (Stanec, 2008). Stanec suggests that it is critical that those students who are being marginalized by their perceived abilities or disabilities are still included
in HPE classes every day and shown a positive experience during fitness challenges. Therefore, teachers must adapt and plan to provide a variety of activities, that are available for student choice to attract even more students, especially those students who can identify with this ability issue (Stanec, 2008).

Throughout the 2015 HPE curriculum document, there is an emphasis on inclusion and equity. This section in the documentation outlines respect for diversity, where all are welcome, regardless of “ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientations, socio-economic status, or other factors” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 72). The new curriculum has drastically changed, and has effectively abandoned the traditional views, values and beliefs that made physical fitness and ability superior to living skills, integrating a holistic approach for teachers to encourage student empowerment, engagement and enjoyment.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how educators describe and perceive the transition from the 1999 to 2015 Physical and Health Education curricula. Teachers have only been exposed to this new curriculum for a year now. This study provides insight into the success or downfall of the new curriculum from the perspective of veteran Health and Physical Education teachers, based on their perceptions of student enjoyment, interest, and lifelong healthy and active living. ‘Veteran teacher’ was defined as a teacher who has been teaching Health and Physical Education in the secondary school system for a minimum of ten years.

1.3 Research Questions

The primary research question that is guiding this study is: how are veteran Ontario high school Health and Physical Education teachers experiencing and teaching the new 2015
curriculum? Sub-questions to further guide this inquiry include:

- What are these teacher’s perceptions of the new curriculum and its process?
- What kind of change are these teachers implementing with their students using the 2015 curriculum?
- What are the perceived barriers and supports (e.g., training, course profiles, ministry documents, etc.) are these teachers experiencing when implementing the new curriculum?
- How do these teachers perceive the older and newer curricula in comparison to each other (e.g., strengths and weaknesses; value/relevance to students, etc.)?

This project also aims to discover if veteran Health and Physical Education teachers are in fact using the new curriculum or reverting to their old lesson plans. My research project also acts as a curriculum review for the 2015 Health and Physical Education curriculum.

1.4 Background of the Researcher

As a Health and Physical Education graduate who has always been involved in sports; it is very important to me to research this topic to gain insight into my field of study. Sports have changed my life. My involvement in sport has been integral to my development as a person, and has taught me the importance of staying active and having a healthy lifestyle. I have always been very athletic and I have my parents to thank for that. They understood the importance of sport in regards to life-long health benefits and made sure that my sister and I were heavily involved in many different sports at a young age. I quickly manifested a love for team sports like basketball, soccer and volleyball. I became very enthusiastic about these sports and became more and more successful over the years. In elementary school and high school, I was successful in all aspects of physical fitness: school teams, extra-curricular teams and physical education classes. I became the Athlete of the Year in my final year of elementary school and high school, and I was the
captain of many different teams. As a high school student, I discontinued with Health and Physical Education following the required grade nine course because the dynamic of most “gym classes” were primarily sports-based and I was already involved in sport inside and outside of school. My love for physical activity and sport manifested way before high school and therefore, my passion and interest for Health and Physical Education continued into my post-secondary studies at Queen’s University.

My two teachable’s are Health and Physical Education and Social Science. In the HPE program at Queen’s I took courses like anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics, but it wasn’t until my third year that I could look at health, physical activity and sport through a psychological and sociological lens. In ‘Psychology of Sport and Exercise,’ I analyzed the complexity of athletes’ behaviours and how this effects sport performance and physical activity involvement in fitness and recreational settings. In ‘Fitness, the Body and Culture,’ I discussed how bodies are connected to the broader social and political themes in society and analyzed the modern-day issues related to fitness culture: identity, body image, consumerism, and beauty. In ‘Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Sport and Physical Activity,’ I explored the social significance of sport in Canadian society looking specifically at the business of the sporting world, the relationship between sport and the media, and the social relations of class, race, gender and sexuality. To date, the most memorable courses I had at Queen’s were the activity-based courses where I had the opportunity to work with children, the elderly, and person’s with a disability in a physical education setting. I learned to use sport as a lens to critically view our society and I was astonished to see how sport is a multifaceted concept, not just a game.

Proficiency in these courses lead to my enthusiasm to understand the relationship between ideas about fitness, exercise and sport, and the social differences of inequality like race, class,
ability, sexuality, age and gender. I reflected on my participation in sport and physical activity growing up, and how the intersectionality of my biological, social and cultural identity may have all positively influenced my continued participation in physical activity and sport throughout my life. However, if I wasn’t given the opportunities to be involved in sport and share a love for physical activity with my family, teammates and friends, I would have only been exposed to my field of study in a school through educational ‘gym class.’

I’m particularly interested in this research topic because I believe that the 2015 Health and Physical Education curriculum has made revisions to cater to student’s needs in an ever-changing world and has put an emphasis on long-term healthy and active living goals. As a teacher candidate, I want to be able to inspire my future students to live a healthy lifestyle throughout high school and beyond. I’m concerned with the student’s whose only experience with health, physical activity and sport is in a school setting where physical participation is graded and student’s physical abilities are evaluated. It is essential for me to change students’ stigma about Health and Physical Education courses from the traditional view of a “gym class” that is primarily sports-centered, and rebrand it as a multi-dimensional “healthy living” course that encourages students to develop physical and literacy skills that are essential for overall wellbeing.

1.5 Overview

This research project is organized into five chapters. I review literature in the areas of HPE curriculum relevance and credibility, integration of physical and health literacy, curricula change, and barriers and supports for curricula implementation in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 I elaborate on the research design by describing the research methodology, participant information, data collection and limitations to my study. In Chapter 4 I report my research
findings and discuss their significance in light of the existing research literature. Finally, in Chapter 5 I identify the implications of the research findings for my own teacher identity and practice, and for the educational research community more broadly. I also articulate a series of questions raised by the research findings, as well as related areas for future research. References and a list of appendixes are found at the end of my research project.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature in the areas pertaining to the state and status of physical education (PE) worldwide, the Ontario Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum changes, and barriers and supports for curricula implementation. More specifically, I review themes related to teachers’ transition to implement “real” curriculum change (Curtner-Smith, 1999). I begin by identifying the startling reality of the evolution of PE globally, by discussing Marshall and Hardman’s 2000 study and UNESCO’s 2013 study. Then, I explore in detail the many changes made to the 2015 HPE curriculum. I expand on the importance of new terminology (health and physical literacy), new assessment procedures (self-assessment in fitness testing) and new instructional models (Teaching Games for Understanding [TGfU]). Lastly, I discuss the inevitable barriers and supports that come with the implementation of a new curriculum. I explore the constant concern in PE programs for the “theory to practice gap”: how teacher’s beliefs and intentions and teaching pedagogy shape their teaching practice (Butler, 2014). I build on that by explaining the varying teacher interpretations of curriculum change from the perspective of a (a) conservative, (b) innovative and (c) eclectic teacher, and then I outline the many stages of curriculum change, which hopefully leads to real curriculum change.

Due to the recent implementation of the 2015 HPE curriculum in Ontario, there is little research from a Canadian perspective. Therefore, in this chapter, I draw upon studies of PE curriculum change in countries with similar education systems as Canada: the UK and Australia.

2.1 State and Status of Physical Education Worldwide

As discussed in Chapter 1, Canada is undergoing an extreme health crisis due to unhealthy lifestyles and inactivity. Before the technological age, people were forced to be involved in much
more physical activity and labour. Physical activity like walking, lifting and hand work were once an inescapable part of a person’s normal daily routines. Today, being active in order to stay healthy requires planning exercise into busy schedules. HPE programs in schools across Canada should be the ideal place to invest proper resources to address the health crisis, since there is a need to increase opportunities to be physically active. However, the ideology that HPE is irrelevant in today’s society, and lacks quality instruction is prominent in Canada and around the globe.

In 1998-99, Marshall and Hardman (2000) decided to investigate this issue further. Data was collated from a globally administered semi-structured questionnaire and an extensive literature survey. Their findings revealed the disheartening news that PE programs across the globe, were in a perilous state. Marshall and Hardman uncovered many issues that related to the public’s, teachers’ and students’ skepticism towards the success of PE in education. They found that there is a “credibility gap” between law/policy and actual implementation of compulsory PE programs globally. Marshall and Hardman (2000) found that 92% of the countries/states studied, PE is a statutorily required subject for students (compulsory). However, while many countries/states have compulsory PE, actual implementation of PE does not meet the statutory expectations. In 71% of the cases, PE appeared to be implemented in accordance with legal expectations, while the remaining 29% are often dropped at the priority of other subject areas, or at best there is minimal provision (Marshall & Hardman, 2000, p. 205). More specifically, Canada’s statistics are even more discouraging. In 2000, 43% of the schools in Canada that had compulsory PE programs, did not meet the provincial requirements (Marshall & Hardman, 2000, pp. 206). This “credibility gap” between policy and actual implementation is due to a “lack of official assessment, loss of time allocation, financial constraints, diversion of resources
elsewhere, inadequate material resources, deficiencies in numbers of properly qualified personnel and, in some instances, attitudes of significant individuals” (Marshall & Hardman, 2000, p. 206).

In a more recent study, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) collaborated with the UK based North Western Counties Physical Education Association (NWCPEA) in a joint project to survey the current situation of PE in schools across the world. Hardman worked with UNESCO on this project as well, making the procedure, methodology and analysis very similar to the Marshall and Hardman 2000 study discussed above. UNESCO’s goal was to document the development of Quality Physical Education (QPE) programs in schools, as well as QPE teacher education training around the world. The study combined the UNESCO (2013) survey questionnaire (seeking both quantitative and qualitative data), with information derived from recent and current international, continental, regional and national physical education-related studies. The survey was distributed to UNESCO Member States’ National Commissions and to physical education/school sport-related personnel (PE specialists and ‘generalist’ teachers responsible for teaching PE in schools). Data was generated from 232 countries/autonomous regions in “Africa (43), Asia (23), Europe (57), Latin America (23), Middle East (14), North America (61) and Oceania (11)” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 7) . Similar to Marshall and Hardman’s study, the UNESCO study generated some appalling global findings:

1) Despite official commitment to PE through legislation, implementation and delivery of QPE programs is far from assured.

2) In secondary schools, there is an average of 100 minutes weekly that is allocated to PE curriculum (range of 25-240 minutes).
Globally, and for the most part regionally, PE is actually considered to have a lower status than other subjects, leading to a higher frequency of PE lesson cancellations.

Officially, many countries claim to commit to a ‘broad and balanced’ range of activities, but in practice, competitive sport activities such as Games (team and individual) and Track and Field Athletics pre-dominate PE programs.

Collectively, the experiences acquired from unwilling engagement in competitive sport-related PE lead to a lack of interest and motivation in PE and a growing number of students do not take PE classes after the mandatory year.

Monitoring assessment or evaluation of PE is irregular, infrequent, and rarely carried out. There may be no administrative system in place, or there may be a shortage of appropriately qualified/experience personnel to facilitate the process.

Concerns about the quality of PE teacher training, teaching and teaching resources, inadequate supervision of practice, lack of professionalism and appropriate ethics and impacts on the quality of school pupil experience are globally evident.

There are general global and regional concerns about PE facilities (indoors and outdoors) as well as associated amenities (such as changing rooms and showers), equipment provision and inadequacies in facility maintenance (2013, pp. 7-9).

Overall, the findings of the UNESCO-NWCPEA Project’s PE Survey (2013) provided information about QPE programs at a global level. Both Marshall and Hardman’s 2000 study and UNESCO’s 2013 study revealed some startling realities. Even after years of research and monitoring, some countries have improved, some have remained static, and others have progressively worsened. I can assume that the Canadian statistics in this section were worse than other countries because the old 1999 HPE curriculum was still being used at the time of both of
theses studies. Due to the recent implementation of the 2015 HPE curriculum in Ontario, there is little research on teachers’ experiences of transitioning from the 1999 to 2015 curriculum. Therefore, in this chapter, I draw upon studies of PE curriculum change in countries with similar education systems as Canada: the UK and Australia.

2.2 Curriculum Changes

The key difference between the two Ontario Health and Physical Education curricula (1999 versus 2015) is the main focus of the curricula. In 1999, the focus was on lifelong participation in physical activity, whereas in the 2015, the focus is on lifelong healthy and active living. In this section I will be discussing the three main curricula changes that allow the 2015 curriculum to better achieve its goal to create healthy and active students for life. In today’s ever-changing society, it is more important than ever that teacher’s implement the new terminology, new assessment practices and new instructional approaches in order to address the health crisis in Canada.

2.2.1 New terminology: Health and physical literacy

The 2015 HPE curriculum has abandoned the traditional practices and ideas about physical education and adopted two terms that are crucial to the success of the program: health and physical literacy. In the Physical and Health Education Journal, academics like Corlett and Mandigo (2012), and Tremblay and Lloyd (2010) broaden the understanding of the word “literacy” to mean more than the ability to read and write, but a “continuum of learning to achieve goals, develop knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society” (p. 18).

According to Corlett and Mandigo (2012), being physically literate is more than knowing basic movements skills, but having the ability to ‘do movements’ and know ‘what to do’ in
diverse contexts of challenge. Corlett and Mandigo define physical literacy further, by including an individual’s competence in a wide variety of physical activities, development of fundamental movement/sport skills and the ability to read and react to surrounding areas as well. Tremblay and Lloyd (2010) also find that physical literacy includes the foundation of characteristics, attributes, behaviours, awareness, knowledge and understanding related to healthy active living and promotion of physical opportunities. Both of these explanations work in accordance to the 2015 HPE curriculum’s definition for physical literacy. The curriculum adds ‘personal components’ as well ‘interpersonal components’ in their definition as well, where students have “confidence, are motivated, creative, and have the skills to make healthy, active choices, for themselves, others, and their environment” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7).

Defining ‘health literacy’ is more simplistic. Ratzan and Parker (as cited in Nielsen-Bohlman, Panzer & Kindig, 2004) define health literacy as an individual’s ability to use their cognitive and social skills to determine their motivation and ability to gain access to, understand and use basic health information and services to promote and maintain good health. The 2015 HPE curriculum’s definition adds a time period to their definition: “across the life-course” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7). This is important to note, because adding “across the life-course” suggests that health literacy is a life skill. Rootman and Gordon-El-Bihbety (2008) argue that health literacy as a life skill is essential to an individual’s sense of empowerment, because they are able to use their knowledge about health to take control of and manage their own health status. Including health and physical literacy into the 2015 curriculum is a step in the right direction, but teachers still need to ensure that radical changes to pedagogy are carried out, in order to meet the challenges needed to transition their own thoughts and feelings from a traditional teaching practice, to a broader more balanced approach to the subject.
2.2.2 New assessment practices: Self-assessment in fitness testing

Research papers on assessment practices in HPE are relatively scarce literature; however, there is an abundance of scholarly evidence that indicate that physical fitness in children and adolescents are linked to fitness, physical activity and health outcomes in adulthood. Colley, Lloyd and Tremblay (2010) who are with the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute contribute to this conversation. According to Colley et al. (2010), fitness testing has been used as a form of assessment for approximately fifty years in North America. The purpose of testing physical fitness and the decision to continue fitness testing in schools has been debated for decades.

Fitness tests measure students’ level of cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, muscular endurance, muscular strength, power, balance, agility and speed (examples of cardiovascular fitness tests include the beep test, 12 minute run and the step test) (OASPHE, 2015). Traditionally, these tests would be completed twice a year, at the beginning and at the end of the semester/year, and students received a mark based on their physical improvement scores (OASPHE, 2015). However, Colley et al. (2010) states that one of the fundamental arguments against fitness testing is the fact that many genetic factors cannot be modified by physical education classes: “physical growth, biological maturation and behavioural development are complex and interacting contributors to physical fitness in children and youth” (p. 177).

Therefore, Colley et al. (2010) suggest a new standard and evaluation tool: assessing student’s physical literacy. Physical literacy is a multidimensional and interactive construct that captures the essence of what a quality HPE program should aim for. Colley et al. propose that physical literacy has four components: “physical fitness, motor behaviour, physical activity behaviours and psycho-social/cognitive factors” (p. 179). Based on this, the historical practice of
testing fitness in isolation is problematic, because it is only one component to a more complex individual. Mounting evidence supports this holistic approach to teaching students to be physically literate. By motivating students to be lifelong learners, to self-assess and self-monitor fitness achievement goals, students will achieve an overall healthy wellbeing, which is the primary goal of the 2015 HPE curriculum.

In Canada, the Ontario Association for the Supervision of Physical and Health Education (OASPHE) wanted to understand and identify the purpose and use of fitness testing and fitness standards as a means of assessing the physical fitness expectation in the curriculum. They talked to teachers throughout the province to determine their current practices with regard to fitness testing and completed a literature research review to determine the value of fitness testing and its role in supporting all students in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain or improve their personal fitness level (OASPHE, 2015). The OASPHE stated that fitness assessment helps students identify physical abilities and areas of physical fitness that need improvement. Baseline scores are also useful in setting individual goals and monitoring individual progress. However, physical fitness should be an educational process not a comparison to provincial standards. Therefore, fitness appraisals results/scores should not be directly used as a grade (pp. 2-4).

Not only did the OASPHE suggest solutions to the fitness testing debate, they introduced two new terms: “fitness appraisal” and “fitness assessment” (2015, p. 1). According to OASPHE a “fitness appraisal” is the tool that students will use to gather baseline data about their current fitness level in relation to the four health-related fitness components (also known as a fitness test) and a “fitness assessment” reflects the thinking process students will engage in to determine their course of action related to the baseline data they have gathered about their personal fitness.
Lloyd et al.’s (2010) approach to physical literacy and OASPHE’s (2015) suggestions about rebranding fitness testing as fitness appraisals/assessments coincide with the 2015 HPE curriculums main goals to improve students’ overall wellbeing, encouraging them to live healthy and active lifestyles.

2.2.3 New instructional approach: Teaching games for understanding (TGfU)

As discussed in Chapter 1, PE programs, curriculum and teaching has changed and adapted as critical events in Canadian history have shaped society; and as a result, education. PE has changed from physical training in war time, to health promotion in a post-war society, and now, the common purpose and mission of PE curriculum is the concepts of lifelong health and physical activity: students learning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be healthy and active for life (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). In Sheppard and Gleddie’s chapter on Curriculum Models, they explain how curriculum can be “what” is studied or learned, with teaching instruction/pedagogy being the “how” (2014, p. 35). However, they argue that this is not that simple, because “how does one truly disconnect choices about what to teach from how to teach?” (p. 35).

Historically, there has been a plethora of curriculum models for PE teachers to choose from, but today these are the predominant models taught in PE teacher training: the multi-activity model, teaching games for understanding (TGfU), the personal and social responsibility model, sport education, fitness for life, and emerging design based on competencies. The 2015 Ontario HPE curriculum states that “Teaching Games for Understanding” (TGfU) is a useful curriculum model to give students an opportunity to learn and apply skills within the context of a modified game or activity. Teachers teach this model through the four TGfU categories: target, net/wall, striking/fielding, and invasion/territory (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).
However, TGfU has had a storied history as well. Stalz and Pill (2014) explain the history of TGfU in their article on TGfU’s relevance in PE today. TGfU was created in 1982 as counter to the perceived shortcomings for student learning inherent in the highly structured sport-as-technique traditional PE method in secondary PE at the time (Stalz & Pill, 2014). This approach challenged the curriculum and pedagogical practice of PE, because it provided an alternative for students. TGfU allowed students to learn to play modified versions of games (the logic and tactical structure of play) ahead of mastering the mature skills in sports (pp. 38-39). As cited in Griffin and Butler’s (2005) book entitled “Teaching Games for Understanding: Theory, Research and Practice,” Turner (2005) discusses how TGfU is used in secondary school classrooms effectively. Turner states that students who previously have a mastery of simple tactics and skills, and then undergo participation in many modified games focused on specific concepts (communication, moving into open space, etc.), will be better at applying these tactics and skills in a variety of similar game situations. Rather than having students engage in repetitive drills before participating in a game like situation, students are encouraged to use what they already know and use these transferable skills immediately in fun and simple games. In doing so they realize the need for those specific skills and chose from an array of previously learnt tactical strategies, in order to be successful (Turner, 2005).

In 2006, Hastie and Curtner-Smith decided to test how effective the TGfU instructional model was in a sixth-grade PE class in Australia. The purpose of this study was to provide descriptive, and detailed information about the researcher’s experiences, as well as the 29 students’ reactions to a TGfU unit: “with skills and tactics taught using problem solving and guided discovery approaches rather than a more command style” (Hastie and Curtner-Smith, 2006, p. 1). Data was collected from reflective worksheets, tactic quizzes, and group interviews.
The results of the study suggested that the students made significant gains during the TGfU unit: they became more competent, they demonstrated improved literacy, and they became increasingly enthusiastic as the unit continued.

TGfU is a student-centered, experiential and inquiry-based approach to teaching HPE and is recommended for use in classrooms throughout Ontario, and although there is a wealth of information, instructional tips, and curriculum support documents/resources available in elementary and secondary schools for this approach, it is rarely taken up in high school education. According to Sheppard and Gleddie (2014), the multi-activity model is historically the most used PE curriculum in North America, defined as the middle or high school curriculum. Students learn motor skills while maintaining interest in a variety of sports and movement activities like games, dance, gymnastics and inclusions of fitness development. However, this model seems to still be predominately game/sport dominated, having the length of a unit vary between four to ten lessons, therefore introducing students to basic skill levels found within each specific physical activity (Sheppard & Gleddie, 2014).

Additionally, Sheppard and Gleddie (2014) disclose that the “no-organization approach” to the multi-activity curriculum model exposes many limitations and flaws. While this approach takes very little time to set up, it is based on three factors: educator preferences, equipment availability, and facility availability. This approach can limit student capabilities to advance their knowledge past the basic skills of the physical activities and may lead to boredom (Sheppard & Gleddie, 2014). Therefore, there is teacher resistance to change from a multi-activity approach to a TGfU approach due to many factors. Firstly, multi-activity approaches are mostly used at schools with a lack of facility space and lack of equipment. Secondly, Sheppard and Gleddie state that change in HPE approaches needs to come from the department head or administration.
Schools are comfortable with traditional curriculum structures, and most have had a simple facility rotation in place for years, to ensure all PE classes get sufficient time using all the facilities provided by the school. Lastly, there is a common misconception that TGfU is “just playing games” (p. 37). Even though we no longer insist that students act like soldiers (responding in masses to shouted commands) or professional athletes (practicing drills and improving skills to be successful in competitive games), educators continue to stay true to their traditional teaching strategies, acting on ways in which they were taught “gym” class back in their day.

2.3 Barriers and Supports: Creating “Real” Curriculum Change

In order for real curriculum change to occur, teachers must truly accept the changes in curriculum on a personal level, through their beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogy. Showing a willingness to be life-long learners, shows that teachers are prepared to dedicate their time to improve student learning and to change the lives of their students in an ever-changing adapting world. In this section I will discuss how teachers can implement ‘real’ curriculum change, through their change in beliefs, and their interpretations of the new curriculum, moving through the stages of change successfully.

In 1999, Curtner-Smith attempted to discover how curriculum change in PE can be most effectively accomplished by identifying which methods or models led to real curriculum change and teacher practice. He analyzed how 23 teacher participants working in eight secondary schools across Southern England interpreted the modified National Curriculum Physical Education (NCPE) policy texts. Data was collected via passive participant observation, formal and informal interviews, and document analysis. The data was analyzed using constant comparison and analytic induction, and hypotheses were developed to try to understand how and
why this sample of teachers interpreted NCPE as they did. The NCPE and the 2015 Ontario HPE curriculum, are both classic examples of what Jewett, Bain and Ennis call “top-down curriculum change” (as cited in Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. X). Instead of being modified and adapted by a small group of teachers in reaction to local problems and opportunities in the area (“bottom-up curriculum change”), the NCPE and the 2015 Ontario HPE curriculum was created by government departments, sponsored by health-related organizations and designed by multiple stakeholders. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2015) involved parents, students, teachers, faculties of education, universities, colleges and numerous stakeholder groups in this process, including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, The Ontario Public Health Association and the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition. More than 70 health-related organizations submitted reports for consideration and thousands of people provided feedback. (para. 4)

As discussed in Curtner-Smith’s (1999) study, there are many scholars who have criticized the effectiveness of top-down curriculum change. Locke (1992) as well as some other scholars, (Darling- Hammond, 1990; Evans, 1997; Kirk, 1988; Richardson, 1990; Ruddock, 1986 as cited in Curtner-Smith, 1999) believe that the top-down approach to curriculum change alienated teachers because of their lack of involvement in the initial change process’, resulting in no teaching/learning changes. Fullan (2007) and Sparkes (1987), however, found that the only reason why teachers changed their teaching style, was because they were receiving outside pressure to do so, not because they changed their beliefs and values (as cited in Curtner-Smith, 1999). The overall evidence in Curtner-Smith’s (1999) study suggest that top-down curriculum change is ineffective in trying to implement HPE curriculum change. Instead, bottom-up curriculum change is much more likely to succeed because the teachers are actively involved in
and central to the change process itself. If teachers are part of the change process, they will feel competent and motivated to make the changes in their own teaching practice for their future students.

2.3.1 Teachers’ beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogy

In Butler’s (2014) qualitative study, she discusses the importance of implementing new approaches like TGfU, and the constant struggle to create change. There is a constant gap in education (between theory and practice) that has led to the continued, and disappointing, dominance of the traditional approach in HPE in Canada and around the world. Thirty years ago when Rod Thorpe, David Bunker and Len Almond founded the ‘Teaching Games for Understanding’ approach, TGfU made excellent sense (and still does). The TGfU approach was developed by educators for educators, rather than a top-down approach, that was broad, theoretical and grounded in research (Butler, 2014). However, regardless of how relatable, and relevant new terminology, new assessment practices and new instructional approaches may be, implementation relies on individual teachers’ beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogy (Butler, 2014). In 2014, Butler used semi-structured interviews and a follow up questionnaire in an attempt to bridge the ‘theory to practice gap’. Rod Thorpe, David Bunker and Len Almond were the participants for Butler’s research and she was able to drill into the original beliefs, intentions and actions of the founders in order to reconstruct the passionate vision that they had decades ago.

Butler (2014) found that teachers’ ideas and beliefs are fundamental to the way they teach, arguing that each teacher has their own worldview that they operate from, using their own framework of ideas and beliefs. Teachers depend on their perceived worldview, and constantly draw upon it to evaluate and act quickly to different situations everyday (Butler, 2014). As stated
by Butler, a teacher’s beliefs are the base of all their teaching behaviours and intentions; a teacher’s intentions relate to their commitment to students, as well as their professional growth and development; and a teacher’s pedagogy is the routine and techniques used to engage students in the content (Butler, 2014).

Teachers may also feel pressure to superficially change their teaching pedagogy because of the overall occupational culture of the PE department at their schools. As discussed in Sparkes’ (1987) research, findings from his observations, informal discussions and formal interviews with members of the PE department in a large English school, suggested that several contrasting perspectives operated in relation to the proposed curriculum change. At Brandstown High a newly appointed Department Head attempted to implement new standards of teaching PE: moving away from the school’s strong ‘traditional’ approach (which emphasized team games and successful school teams) to a more “egalitarian” and “child-centered” approach (p. 38). This change in administration lead to an even bigger ‘theory to practice gap’, where teachers in the PE department simply changed what they said to appease the new Head, but not what they actually did in the classroom. These veteran teachers resisted change because they believed that it would not benefit the students who have already been in that environment for years, and they believed that the new system was incapable of meeting professional and personal goals (Sparkes, 1987).

As discussed in Curtner-Smith’s (1999) study, real change occurs when teachers change their beliefs, perspectives, and values. Therefore, Sparkes argued that even if changes in teaching practice exist, teachers may not begin to change the ideologies and beliefs that inform their own educational practice in the classroom and in their relationships with students (as cited in Curtner-Smith, 1999). Consequently, Curtner-Smith (1999) suggested that “superficial changes” like using the new curriculum materials in lessons, is the first step towards real curriculum change.
Through my interview process I will be able to determine if superficial change is occurring in classrooms in Toronto, and if veteran teacher’s beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogy is beginning to evolve.

2.3.2 Teachers’ interpretations of the new curriculum

Although there are many approaches, models and styles that PE teachers are free to use in their teaching, teachers tend to use the most effective approach, which is also embedded in their own set of beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogies. Curtner-Smith (1999) and Green (2000) indicated that the teaching adopted by PE teachers is influenced by their perceptions of what they think PE ought to be. Similarly to Curtner-Smith’s study mentioned above, Green used semi-structures interviews with 35 PE teachers in secondary schools in the north-west of England. The purpose of Green’s study was to examine teachers’ everyday ‘philosophies’ of PE, in an attempt to identify the existence of these ideological themes. Green found that “sport, health, academic value, education for leisure and ‘sport for all’ were recurring themes” when analyzing the data (2000, p. 1). Green found that his study identified and examined what teachers themselves, rather than academics or teacher trainers, think PE is all about. The PE teachers featured in Green’s research communicated deeply-rooted attachments and associations with sports-centered approaches. Therefore, “their practice or, more precisely, the constraints circumscribing their practice was shaped by their past experiences with sport, and physical activity” (2000, p. 127).

The 23 participants in Curtner-Smith’s (1999) study did reacted similarly to those in Green’s study. It became apparent that the teachers were “adapting, recreating and modifying the NCPE to fit with their own perspectives on and beliefs about PE teaching” (Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. 82). In congruence with Butler’s (2014) study discussed above, there is a gap in PE theory and practice. Some groups of teachers in Curtner-Smith’s research were reading, receiving and
implementing the NCPE policy texts differently than other groups. Curtner-Smith described these different interpretations of the NCPE curriculum as either (a) conservative, (b) innovative or (c) eclectic in nature (1999, pp. 82). Ten of the teachers interpreted NCPE conservatively, seven interpreted NCPE innovatively and six interpreted NCPE eclectically.

The conservative group was described as having what Sparkes called a “sport perspective” (as cited in Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. 83). They were focused on improving student performance in traditional British games (rugby, soccer, cricket, netball, and hockey) and creating successful school teams. They used direct styles of teaching during class time and focused solely on teaching skills and strategies necessary to be successful in traditional games. They also stated that they thought the introduction of NCPE had made “little difference” to the content they taught, because a majority of them claimed that they had been teaching most of the elements of the new curriculum prior to its release (Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. 83). A select few explained how they did not believe in the practicality of the new content and didn’t see it as beneficial for their students. Therefore, several conservative teachers explained that they employed strategic rhetoric to appear as though they were delivering the curriculum more progressively than they actually were (Curtner-Smith, 1999).

The innovative group of teachers held what Sparkes called an “idealist perspective” on PE (Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. 83). These teachers were focused on the learning process: teaching child-centered and progressive lessons, and concerning themselves with the personal and social development of their students. They encouraged students to goal set, and make fitness plans plan for themselves, while also favouring a more expansive range of teaching styles to benefit all learning styles. Innovative teachers believed in teaching broadly: incorporating traditional and non-traditional activities so that students would have the opportunity to develop a leisurely
interest in physical activity. They displayed enthusiasm about the introduction of NCPE and indicated that the new curriculum had changed their thinking to some extent.

The group of eclectic teachers worked from a perspective of PE which incorporated elements of both conservative and innovative positions (Curtner-Smith, 1999). Like the innovative group, they believed that teaching a wide range of activities provides ample opportunities for students to develop an interest in the subject. Like the conservative group, they taught using direct teaching styles, and focused more on improving students’ performance of these activities. The eclectic group remained neutral about the introduction of NCPE, stating that it had not promoted them to make changes to their teaching methods, but they were quick to point out that NCPE had led to the expansion of their curricula and noted that change was a change for the better (Curtner-Smith, 1999).

2.3.3 Stages of curriculum change

The codependent relationship between barriers and supports are present in any new program, revision or curriculum transition. In terms of barriers, it has been proven that teachers who are instructed to implement new curriculum that they are not familiar with, struggle with the challenge of what the new curriculum looks like in the real world (Donetta, 2001). Having never seen, or experienced the content or context in which to teach it, is very difficult for teachers to handle regardless of their experience level (Donetta, 2001). A change in curriculum, also means that teachers need to think differently about their programs, and implement new behaviours in their students, which Donetta (2001) states, some teachers felt like it was a waste of time.

It was found that the new program is not only a learning curve for the teachers, but also for the students who already have prior knowledge and experience with the traditional teaching style of HPE classes that stereotypically accompanied the prior curriculum (Donetta, 2001). Students
that previously excelled in the physical health and fitness unit of the HPE curriculum, may not want to ‘pump the breaks’ from physical activity and learn about the aspects of overall health wellness. Some students may reject these new ideas, even though it has been hypothesized that it will cater to a majority of the youth population, therefore increasing enjoyment, enrolment and long-term participation in physical and health wellness. This barrier is one that teachers must anticipate and be mindful of. However, when teachers are experiencing difficulty in the implementation phase, what typically occurs is the temptation to return to the former, more familiar program.

It is unrealistic to believe that the change in curriculum documentation will lead to a drastic change in implementation within the first year of the new program. Many teachers in new program transitioning phases report an “evolving, adaptational approach to their change” (Donetta, 2001, p. 76). This world is ever-changing, and within a couple of years drastic changes in the way youth live, or the realities of their physical, emotion and social world may change. It is up to the teachers to modify the curriculum to make it relevant and refine the information for their students to relate to.

Donetta (2001) believes that the final stage of the change process is “continuation.” In the first few years of implementation, a majority of the change efforts will not make it to this stage, based of the many barriers discussed above. There are many stages to the change process where failed attempts could occur. Donetta (2001) describes the stages as initiation, relevance, readiness, resources, implementation, difficulties, adaptation and finally, continuation. Failed change can occur as early as the initiation phase, due to a lack of resources and teachers’ perception on the relevance of the new program. Perhaps the change was able to be initiated, but failed or faded away after the initial attempt during implementation (Donetta, 2001).
2.3.4 Successful curriculum change

Fullan (2007) suggested that educational change is as simple and complex as, what teachers do and think. The six participants in Donetta’s (2001), study were able to make some progress through the change process, but only a few were able to make it to the continuation phase after a three year period. Those who were successful in making change, used three techniques as supports for their transitions: reflection, student power and outside resources. These teachers reflected on the program and the impact it had on their students each year. Donetta (2001) also stated that this was due to the teachers’ own personal dissatisfaction with the current program and searched for a better solution for their students. The second support that these teachers had was their students willingness for change. When students cooperate and find relevance in the new curriculum, their enthusiasm works as a catalyst for change. This aspect seemed to be very beneficial for teacher’s implementation, but there is little research done on student perspectives on curricula change. In order to understand educational change and how to promote it, educational research needs to look further into the students’ experiences. The last support was the teacher’s continued enthusiasm to share materials, and experiences with other teachers. These teachers went outside of their immediate school system, in order to collaborating with other teachers from the board, allowing them to facilitate in-service meetings with colleagues and supervisor support.

Even though Donetta’s study looked at the successful curricula changes in 2001, it does not explicitly explain what kind of change occurred, whether it be real change or superficial change. Curtner-Smith’s (1999) study found that teachers implementing the National Curriculum Physical Education (NCPE) program in England, did not transform their own values and beliefs that would guide their teaching practice. Therefore, no real curriculum change occurred. The
teachers in Curtner-Smith’s (1999) study reacted and adapted to the new curriculum, so that it was congruent with their existing perspectives and ideologies on the subject. Another finding was that the teachers pedagogical beliefs and values, hence their interpretations of the NCPE policy texts, were influenced by their schools lack of supports/training, informal occupational norms, and peer-group values and relationships (Curtner-Smith, 1999).

Curtner-Smith (1990), Butler (2014), Sparkes (1987), Green (2000), and Donetta (2001) all contribute to the conversation of teachers’ journey to implement real curriculum change. Educators are life-long learners, ones that must stay up to date, relatable and relevant. Teachers who are able to create real curriculum change are those who are innovative, and belief in the changes on a more personal level. They embody these new ideas, and create new ways in which students can interact with these new concepts, attitudes and aptitudes. Real curriculum change may take years in order to fully be implemented, but as Donetta’s (2001) study displayed, it is possible.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed research on the state and status of PE programs worldwide, the Ontario Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum changes, and barriers and supports for curricula implementation. This review elucidates the extent of attention that has been paid to curriculum changes globally (Marshall & Hardman, 2000; UNESCO, 2014), especially in the UK (Curtner-Smith, 1999; Green, 2000), and in Australia (Hastie and Curtner-Smith, 2006). Worldwide, PE programs were in desperate need of revisions since the beginning of the 21st century. The research also raises questions about the implementation of ‘real’ curriculum change, pointing to research in the areas of top-down versus bottom-up change, individual teacher’s beliefs, values and pedagogy, as well as teacher’s interpretations of new curricula
documentation: (a) conservative, (b) innovative and (c) eclectic perspectives. The research also outlined that stages of curriculum change, highlighting successful strategies to do so. In light of this, the purpose of my research is to explore how veteran teachers have perceived their transition from the 1999 curriculum to the 2015 HPE curriculum, in order to discover whether or not real change is occurring throughout the implementation process. My research will contribute to the conversation of improved quality HPE programs in Ontario, Canada. It will inform the development of benchmark indicators on quality HPE implementation in Canada, and explore whether policy rhetoric is being implemented in practice.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the research methodology. I begin by reviewing the general approach, procedures and data collection instruments used: semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. Then, I elaborate more specifically on participant sampling through purposive and convenience sampling, while also outlining a variety of recruitment options. I explain data analysis procedures, as well as discuss the ethical review procedures pertinent to my study. Relatedly I identify a range of methodological limitations, while also speaking to the strengths of the methodology. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of key methodological decisions and my rational for these decisions given the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This research study will be conducted using a qualitative research approach. It will include references to relevant literature related to my research purpose and questions, as well as the process of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with two teachers. Over the years, the qualitative-quantitative debate has been discussed, disputed and argued over, as though one or the other should eventually emerge as superior. Newman and Benz (1998) reject the dichotomy assumed by this debate, and identify qualitative and quantitative research as having philosophical roots in the naturalistic and the positivistic philosophical traditions, respectively. The main differences between these approaches to research is the difference in research assumptions being made about what reality is and whether or not it is measurable (Newman & Benz, 1998). According to Abawi (2008), quantitative research is a process of inquiry that is used to determine whether the predictive generalization of a theory can hold true, and is based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analyzed using statistical techniques. In
contrast, qualitative research is a process of building a complex and holistic view of the phenomenon of interest, conducted in a natural setting.

A qualitative research approach is more suitable for my research purpose and questions, because “qualitative research today involves closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, the participants, and the readers of a study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). The research process consists of researchers collecting data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, as well as data analysis that includes inductive reasoning to establish patterns or themes (Creswell, 2007). The final report ultimately concludes the research process. The information gained from this report will include the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and the complex description and interpretation of the problem as it further extends the literature or signals a call for action (Creswell, 2007). Through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews I hope to add to the conversation of educational research and qualitative research studies.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

“Qualitative data is gathered primarily in the form of spoken or written language rather than in the form of numbers” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 137). Different qualitative data sources can be categorized by “four basic types of information: observations (ranging from nonparticipant to participant), interviews (ranging from close-ended to open-ended), documents (ranging from private to public) and audiovisual materials (including materials such as photographs, compact disks and videotapes)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 131). The particular strategies used to collect data are determined by the purpose of the study, and by determining which sources will work best to obtain relevant information from the research questions. However, interviews deserve special attention because they are frequently used in many different approaches to qualitative research
According to Kvale (2006) qualitative interviews allow researchers to investigate varieties of human experience. They attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view and to unfold the meaning of their lived world (Kvale, 2006). Interviews give voice to common people, allowing them to freely present their life situations in their own words, and open for a more personal interaction between researchers and their subjects (Kvale, 2006). Considering that my research topic is on veteran teachers’ experiences on the transition for the 1999 to 2015 HPE curriculum, I would conclude that interviews are the most beneficial data collection strategy for my field of study.

Interviews can be completed in many different ways; telephone interviews, focus group interviews, or a face-to-face interviews, and are either either structured, unstructured or semi-structured. For the purposes of my study, I will be conducting semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in order to net the most useful information to answer my research questions. Fylan (2005) describes semi-structured interviews as a conversation in which the researcher knows what they want to find out and has a set of questions to ask the interviewee. However, the conversation is free to vary, allowing for additional questions to emerge through dialogue, and is likely going to change tremendously between participants (Fylan, 2005). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews makes them so well suited to produce more meaningful data that coincides directly with the participant’s knowledge and experience (Fylan, 2005). Semi-structured interviews are great for finding out “why” rather than “how many” or “how much,” and interviewing my participant’s face-to-face will allow me to reach a more personal level (Fylan, 2005). Within my research I want to identify more than just how teachers are transitioning from the 1999 to 2015 HPE curriculum, but understand the underlying factors as to why they are/are
not making the change.

My interview protocol will be organized into five sections and located in Appendix B. It will begin with the participants background information, followed by questions about their encounters with the 2015 curriculum, their experience and belief related to the new curriculum, and concluding with questions related to supports, challenges, and next steps for teachers.

Example of questions include:

- Can you describe your thoughts when you first learned about the changes made to the curriculum?
- Can you describe some of the challenges you faced with the implementation of the new curriculum?
- From your experience, do you believe that the revisions made to the curriculum cater to student’s needs in an ever-changing world? In comparison to the old curriculum, does the new curriculum put a greater emphasis on long-term healthy and active living goals?

3.3 Participants

In this section, I review the sampling criteria I established for participant sampling and I review a range of possible avenues for teacher recruitment. I also include a section where I will introduce each of the participants once I know who they are.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

The following criteria will be applied to teacher participants:

1. Teachers will have at least ten years’ experience teaching Health and Physical Education courses at the high school level.

2. Teachers will be working in the Greater Toronto Area.

“Because the focus of qualitative research differs from the focus of statistical research, it
requires a set of principles for the selection of data sources” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). Participants for a qualitative study are selected because they can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation (Polkinghorne, 2005). In order to inform my study and respond to my research question, the participants that I will interview will have at least ten years of experience teaching Health and Physical Education courses at the high school level. This is because I am studying veteran teachers’ experiences transitioning from the 1999 to the 2015 curriculum. This is of particular interest to me because I want to determine how teachers who have extensive experience and comfort teaching this subject area have made the transition, what supports or challenges they face in implementing it and if their personal beliefs coincide with the new curriculum demands. Additionally, I will be interviewing veteran teachers who are from the Greater Toronto Area in order to maintain a geographical focus.

3.3.2 Participant Recruitment

“Qualitative studies have used various strategies for locating and recruiting participants who purposively fulfill the data needs of a study, whether these sources are initial or iterative sources” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). Qualitative findings are not directed to determining the most likely or mean experience with a group but describing the aspects that make up an experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Therefore, a selection of participants is needed rather than a random selection, because they are chosen for what they can contribute to the clarification of the topic being examined (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Polkinghorne (2005) describes three sampling procedures: theoretical sampling, convenience sampling and purposive sampling. Theoretical sampling is defined as “sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven theoretical relevance to an evolving theory”
(Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). Convenience sampling is defined as “the use of people who happen to be available to the researcher as participants” (p. 141). Lastly, purposive sampling is defined as “choosing people from which the researchers can substantially learn about an experience” (p. 140).

Due to the limited scope and timeline of this research project, and the strict ethical review protocol of both OISE and the school boards, the research that conducted is limited in many ways, primarily affecting my methodological section. Due to these restrictions, I used both purposive sampling and convenience sampling strategies. My sampling was purposive as the teachers I interviewed followed the set of principles described above in “3.3.1. Sampling Criteria”. Polkinghorne (2005) identifies purposive selection as the richest qualitative study information gathering technique. He also states that using more than one participant will make my findings even “richer,” as it provides accounts from different perspectives about an experience, giving the researcher the ability to compare and contrast these perspectives in order to triangulate the core meaning of the purpose of study (Polkinghorne, 2005). Even though Polkinghorne expressed his discontent with convenience sampling, I will used this sampling procedure as well. I was born and raised in the Greater Toronto Area, have completed both my primary and secondary education in Etobicoke and have now completed a Masters of Teaching degree in downtown Toronto. Therefore, I used my past and present connections, and network with colleagues, instructors, peers, school-based networks, and organizational partners I’ve worked/volunteered with to conveniently sample teachers who embody all three of my sampling principles.

In order to recruit more participants I will use a “snowballing strategy” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 141). Once I have purposively and conveniently selected a participant, I will ask them if
they are aware of others who might be informed participants for my study (Polkinghorne, 2005). If this initial strategy does not work, I will attend relevant conferences, arrange meetings with relevant scholars at OISE to talk about my research, search the internet for contacts in relevant positions at school boards, Faculties of Education, governmental or other types of community/education organizations, and professional associations, and access teacher blogs and use their social media platforms to get information about my study, while also searching for participants.

3.3.3 Participant Biographies

I interviewed two veteran HPE teachers with over thirty years of experience. Here, I describe each one in turn, and I used pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

At the time of the research, Anna was working as a Health and Physical Education teacher at a school in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). She plans on retiring at the end of this school year, having worked for over thirty years as an educator. Anna completed her BA in Physical and Health Education and teachers’ college in the province.

Megan is a Physical and Health Education Department Head, as well as the SHSM Program Leader at the school she is currently working in at the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). Both roles require her to be up to date with curriculum documentation, ensuring that teachers in HPE are provided with all the necessary information they need to implement the new curriculum. She is also in charge of inventory: equipment, budgeting, and fair distribution of facility time, and resources amongst the teachers in her department. Megan started her teaching career at this school, teaching for thirty years before she “finally” got her headship in 2016. She had been planning to retire in a few years, but because of her headship, she is unsure when she will end her career as an educator. Megan was a varsity scholarship
athlete in university and has coached varsity sport as well. In addition to her undergraduate
degree, Megan holds a Master’s in Education.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of “preparing and organizing data for
analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the
codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables or a discussion” (Creswell, 2007, p.
148). There are many different ways in which to strategically analyze data. The analysis of data
described in Burnard’s (1991) article, assumes that semi-structured, open-ended interviews have
already been carried out and that those interviews have been recorded in full, and transcribed.
The aim of Burnard’s data analysis, is to “produce a detailed and systematic recording of the
themes and issues addressed in the interviews and to link the themes and interviews together
under a reasonably exhaustive category system” (1991, p. 461-462). I will follow the same stages
of analysis discussed by Burnard, through coding my transcripts and identifying data categories.

During the analysis process, I will first read through my notes from each interview as well
as the transcripts to become fully “immersed in the data” (Burnard, 1991, p. 462). Once I
understand my participant’s frame of reference, I will begin to freely generate themes and sub-
headings. This stage consists of analyzing consistent themes and common patterns throughout
the written text, therefore identifying a category of data that relates to my research purpose and
questions. Once I have “collapsed” some of the categories that are similar into broader
categories, I will re-read and “code” (associating transcript context with a category of data and
marking it will a code/colour) my transcripts (Burnard, 1991, pp. 462-464). Not only will I
identify and categorize frequent themes and discrepancies in my findings, but I will also
recognize null data in the research and discuss the significance of that as it specifically relates to
my research purpose and questions.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

The kind of data that I will be required to study is that of lived teaching experiences from the personal lives of my participants. As a researcher I must persistently acknowledge that the data presents the perspectives of my participants and assume the responsibility that the trustworthiness of the data depends on my level of integrity and honesty (Polkinghorne, 2005). Regardless of the approach to qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2007) believes that “a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports” (p. 141). The issues that may present themselves in my study are related to confidentiality and consent, right to withdraw, risks of participation, member checks and data storage.

Polkinghorne (2005) identifies the welfare of the participants as being a researcher’s primary concern in the production of qualitative data. Therefore, many steps must be followed to ensure that the ethical review procedure is completed properly. A researcher protects the anonymity of their participants, for example, by assigning numbers or aliases to individuals (Creswell, 2007). To ensure this is possible, any identifying markers related to their schools or students will be excluded. In addition to maintaining the confidentiality of participants, researchers need to proceed with sensitivity and concern for their needs and desires (Polkinghorne, 2005). However, there are no known risks to participation in my study. Regardless of this, participants will be notified, prior to their interview, of their right to withdraw from participation in the study at any stage of the research study if they wish to.

Precautions will be made by the researcher to ensure that participants identities, the data collected and the findings of the study remain confidential. Participants will have the opportunity
to review the transcripts and to clarify or retract any statements before I conduct my data analysis. All data (audio-recordings) will be stored on my password protected laptop/phone and will be destroyed after five years. Participants will also be asked to sign a consent letter (Appendix A) giving their consent to be interviewed as well as audio-recorded. This consent letter provides an overview of the study, addressed ethical implications, and specifies expectations of participation (one approximately 60 minute semi-structured, face-to-face interview).

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

As stated in the MTRP Guidelines, the research that I can conduct is limited in many ways. I’m restricted to informally interviewing two to three educators. The educator can include in-service and/or retired teachers, educational assistants, educational resources staff, administration (Principals or Vice-Principals), educational officers or director of educational programming at non-governmental organizations and/or Provincial Ministries of Education and school boards, adult educators, organizational leaders in the field of education etc. I’m also limited to a single research method: semi-structured interview. I am not allowed to formally observe classrooms, conduct surveys or focus groups, or administer questionnaires to educators. My primary and sole method of data collection is from the semi-structured interviews.

Having said that, these limitations can pose challenges to my research process or strengthen my research findings as well. Creswell (2007) states that face-to-face interviews can be challenging for a researcher. Researchers may have to monitor individuals who may dominate the conversation, as well as encourage others to talk. Interviewees who are less articulate and shy may present the researcher with challenges obtaining adequate data collection (Creswell, 2007). Another challenge pertains to the validity of the study. If qualitative research offers a glimpse
into another personal’s perceptual world, then the researcher’s own perception of the participants’ experiences is heavily reflected in the completion of their work. Therefore, the researcher should attempt to offset their own bias and subjectivity that may creep into an attempt at making sense of the interview data (Burnard, 1991). On the other hand, the strength of my limitations directly relates back to the in-depth, personal knowledge I will gain from these face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Considering that my research topic is on veteran teachers’ experiences on the transition for the 1999 to 2015 HPE curriculum, I would conclude that interviews are the most beneficial data collection strategy for my field of study. Semi-structured interviews are great for finding out “why” rather than “how many” or “how much,” and interviewing my participant’s face-to-face will allow me to reach a more personal level (Fylan, 2005).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described my research methodology. I have briefly explained my general approach, procedures and data collection instruments used in my study. I also provided more specific details on participant sampling strategies, and recruitment techniques. Then I explained my data analysis procedures, as well as the ethical review procedures relevant to my study. Finally, I identify a range of methodological restrictions, while also elaborating on the strengths of the methodology. Overall, I provided a summary of key methodological decisions and my rationale for these decisions given my research purpose and questions. Next, in Chapter 4 I will report my qualitative research findings.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

This research project is organized into five chapters. In Chapter 1, I discussed the history of Health and Physical Education (HPE) in Canada, the Ontario HPE curriculum changes, as well as my research purpose, research questions and my motive for exploring this topic. In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature in the areas of the state and status of physical education (PE) worldwide, the Ontario HPE curriculum changes, and barriers and supports for curricula implementation. In Chapter 3, I elaborated on the research design by describing the research methodology, participant information, data collection and limitations to my study. This chapter presents and discusses the findings that emerged through the analysis of data from the research interviews. Throughout the analysis, I was constantly mindful of my research question: how are veteran Ontario high school Health and Physical Education teachers experiencing and reportedly teaching the new 2015 curriculum? In the discussion that follows, connections are drawn between the participants’ experiences and perceptions and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Findings are organized into three main themes:

- Teachers’ interpretations of the new curriculum
- Teachers’ understanding of the new curriculum
- Reported challenges with implementing the new curriculum

The themes also have sub-themes that provide a more in depth look at teachers’ experiences. For each theme, I will describe its significance by providing data from my interviews and connecting it to the context of the existing literature. Finally, I summarize my findings and transition to Chapter 5 where I will make recommendations for next steps.

4.1 Teachers’ Interpretations of the New Curriculum
In Chapter 2, I explored Curtner-Smith’s (1999) study that attempted to discover how curriculum change in PE can be most effectively accomplished. By identifying which methods or models led to real curriculum change and teacher practice, he quickly found that his participants showed very different interpretations of the new NCPE curriculum. Ten of the teachers interpreted NCPE conservatively, seven interpreted NCPE innovatively and six interpreted NCPE eclectically. The conservative group was described as having what Sparkes called a “sport perspective” (as cited in Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. 83). They used direct styles of teaching, focused on improving skills necessary for students to be successful in traditional British games (rugby, soccer, cricket, netball, and hockey) and creating successful school teams. The innovative group of teachers held what Sparkes called an “idealist perspective” on PE (Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. 83). These teachers were focused on the learning process: teaching child-centered and progressive lessons, encouraging students to goal set and plan, as well as teaching more broadly (traditional and non-traditional activities). The group of eclectic teachers worked from a perspective of PE which incorporated elements of both conservative and innovative positions (Curtner-Smith, 1999). They believed that teaching a wide range of activities provides ample opportunities for students to develop an interest in the subject, but they taught using direct teaching styles, and focused more on improving students’ performance of these activities.

In this section, I will use Curtner-Smith’s categories for teacher’s interpretations to identify Anna and Megan, to set the scene for the rest of the chapter. Anna is identified as an eclectic teacher, and Megan as an innovative teacher.

4.1.1 Eclectic interpretation: Anna

When asked to describe her approach to teaching Health and Physical Education, Anna stated that she would teach HPE in thirds: “fitness”, “sports/activities” and “health.” Anna’s
conservative approach to teaching HPE reflects the old 1999 curriculum’s structure and organization. However, when expanding on her explanation of the “sports/activities” unit, Anna discussed the importance of introducing her students to a variety of activities (“especially in grade nine and ten”) so that her students are “well rounded” and know “what’s out there” for “longevity [purposes]”. This belief in teaching a wide range of activities is one that is shared with those who take an innovative and less conservative perspective on teaching. Therefore, Anna is an eclectic teacher, because she incorporates both conservative and innovative positions into her teaching.

According to Curtner-Smith’s (1999) findings, conservative teachers often state that the revisions to the curriculum made ‘little difference’ to the content they taught. Most of them also claimed that they had been teaching most of the elements of the new curriculum before it was introduced. Anna shares the same ideas and described her initially reaction to the changes in the curriculum as follows: “well initially I felt that there wasn’t that much change because I was teaching a lot of that anyways? I guess the resources that I had over the years was inclusive of certain topics [homosexuality/sexuality].”

Anna is a very passionate teacher, who has remained relevant and relatable throughout her teaching career. This quote further emphasizes how regardless of the old curriculum standard, as society was becoming more inclusive of diversity, she too was reportedly teaching those same principles to her students. She did not wait for the new curriculum to come out in order to do so.

In congruence with the innovative group, Curtner-Smith (1999) found that eclectic teachers were quick to indicate how the new curriculum had changed for the better. Anna similarly described how the new curriculum provides a variety of opportunities for students to try new things and how it has moved away from athleticism as the main identifiable success measure:
“athleticism is important but I think that just being involved and participating is the most important part of activity.” In regards to her enthusiasm towards the new curriculum’s inclusive component, she stated that, “I think it’s a good idea. I think it’s great that people are at least somewhat forced to listen and to become more open-minded and accepting of differences.” She understands and believes in the new curriculum on a more personal level and you can see it in her evolution as a HPE teacher.

In Curtner-Smith’s (1999) research, he also found that some conservative teachers did not think some of the elements of the revised curriculum were practical or beneficial for their students. Numerous times throughout the interview, Anna expressed her opinion about “getting back to the basics” of teaching rules and skills in sport. When asked at the end of the interview if she had any final thoughts, Anna took the time to discuss this point even further, explaining that “the most frustrating part” of the new curriculum was the pressure to move away from teaching students the basics:

We are moving away from teaching the students skills. What’s wrong with them learning, the steps to a dance routine? Why do we always have to focus on just basic movement? All we are expected to do is play fun games, but where are the skills? I believe we are lowering our standards...just simplifying the material and that lowers our expectations...Over the years, this change to less skill based learning to more fun games and play, it hasn’t changed how often [students] participate. Participation level have been the same. They either want to [participate] of they don’t. It’s just sad that we are lowering our expectations so much.

For the most part, Anna displayed a progressive attitude to her teaching, exposing her students to a plethora of activities (creating well rounded individuals) and embracing the diversity in her classroom through reportedly safe and open discussions about difference. However, some of her
ideas about physical fitness remain the same as the old 1999 HPE curriculum standards. Anna still believes in a multi-activity curriculum model (one that practices rules and drills, and is more sport-centered), instead of embodying a TGfU model (one that teaches strategies and skills in small games scenarios, and is more inquiry-based). Based on these two conflicting ideas, she has an eclectic interpretation of the new curriculum.

4.1.2 Innovative interpretation: Megan

When asked to describe her approach to teaching Health and Physical Education, Megan replied, “lifestyle, personal fitness, physical literacy and mental health. That is the balance in life. It’s all, the spiritual healing, the mind and the body. It’s all together. I can’t even separate those three and that’s how I teach.” Megan went even further by discussing why she would leave sport out of the equation altogether: “because [sports are] just basically hobbies. You know, if an athlete goes further, that’s their wonderful accomplishment, but my Joe Average kids, they are looking for a life skill.” Based on Megan’s innovative stance on teaching HPE, Sparkes would identify her as embodying an “idealist perspective” (as cited in Curtner-Smith, 1999, p. 83).

This innovative perspective is child-centered, progressive, and concerned with the students’ personal and social development via self-paced activities (Curtner-Smith, 1999). Innovative teachers are very positive about curriculum change from the very beginning, indicating numerous ways in which the material has changed their thinking to some extent. Megan described her initial reaction to the changes made to the HPE curriculum by saying that it was:

[a]wesome! I had no issues. Absolutely no issues, in fact, [the changes] were so great for the secondary sector...The secondary sector I was so happy because for the first time, you have four same subject areas [drugs and alcohol, human growth, sexuality and personal
safety] from grade 9 through 12. How easy is that? So from grade 9 to 12, we’re teaching the same subject area, but it’s transitional... Wonderful!

Traditionally, teachers taught in blocks using a multi-activity curriculum model. However, this model is disorganized and leaves room for repetition (Sheppard & Gleddie, 2014). However, Megan displays how happy she is that the new 2015 curriculum is starting to take a more transitional perspective, where progressively, material (especially in the health unit) will be more complex. In addition, innovative teachers discuss very enthusiastically how these curricular changes create positive change in their teaching styles as a result of implementation. Megan spoke very positively about this:

I’m going to tell you, [before] people just taught whatever because it really wasn’t substantial. [The curriculum] didn’t really tell us what you should be teaching. I know some people crossed over, and some kids got repetition...but this way, [new way] what I do is I have a file in my cabinet. I have resources from grade 9 to 12, and when [the teachers] teach, they just put their own information in each file, and then you pull and take and swap information from everybody [so everyone’s on the same page]

This quote shows Megan’s willingness to embody the new curriculum structure. Having a filing cabinet and collaborating with her colleagues shows her commitment to the new structure and her eagerness to encourage her colleagues to do the same.

In sum, since its release in 2015, Anna and Megan have adopted the new curriculum and began implementing its changes into their classrooms. However, their individual beliefs, intentions and pedagogies (Butler, 2014) of course affected how they interpret the new curriculum. From their interviews, I infer that Anna’s teaching style is eclectic and Megan’s teaching style is innovative. Regardless of their differences, both teachers were able to clearly
identify how the new curriculum would change the way HPE is taught for the better. In the next section, I will make connections between Anna and Megan’s personal stories and their perceived understanding of the new curriculum changes.

4.2 Teachers’ Understandings of the New Curriculum

Throughout the interview process, it became increasingly evident that both participants shared different opinions on the new terminology, new assessment procedures and new instructional models from the new curriculum, which I infer to be a result of their differing positions as a HPE teacher, and a HPE Department Head. First I explore my participants’ understandings of important terminology like ‘health and physical literacy.’ Then I will identify how each participant is reportedly assessing students’ physical fitness component. Lastly, I will deconstruct the reasons behind my participants’ use of a multi-activity curriculum model, instead of the new instructional model to Teach Games for Understanding (TGfU).

4.2.1 Teachers’ understandings of new terminology: “Health and physical literacy”

The 2015 HPE curriculum abandoned the traditional practices and ideas about physical education and adopted two terms that are crucial to the success of the program: health and physical literacy. Individuals who are physically literate “move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person.” Health literacy on the other hand, involves “the ability to access, understand, evaluate and communicate information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a variety of settings across the life-course” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7).

When asked to describe what ‘health and physical literacy’ means, Anna immediately replied with the question: “health and physical literacy?” Although she was seemingly unfamiliar
with the term, being an experienced teacher Anna was able to provide an answer, explaining how concepts like “nutrition” and “knowing different fitness components” would be “tied into health and physical [literacy].” She also expanded on how being literate in that area would mean “understanding how to stay well, stay healthy, eat well, be fit and just understand and know how to go about doing that and maintaining it.” In doing so, she was able to identify what health literacy means including factors like, “knowing and understanding how to stay healthy and eat well” but she was unable to provide a complete definition for physical literacy, providing details like, “moving with competence and confidence in a variety of environments” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Having no involvement with curriculum documentation and no administrative duties, Anna’s understanding of these terms is likely based solely on her own knowledge of the subject area.

Alternatively, Megan’s relationship with curriculum documentation is more extensive. In order to be the HPE Department Head, and the SHSM Program Leader, Megan has a set of responsibilities. She is in charge of providing her department with information and curriculum, she organizes and distributes the unit structures among her colleagues, and she keeps inventory of all equipment and resources in her school. Even before I asked her to define health and physical literacy, she was using the terms to help answer previous questions, showing that they are a part of her professional vocabulary. She spoke confidently and efficiently, rarely pausing, stating that:

Health and physical literacy. Do you understand what you are doing to yourself, to basically improve your health, improve your physical health? What do you do to improve on that? So, look at your daily intake of food. Look at your Canada’s Food Guide. Look at your Canada’s Food Guide. Look at your lifestyle choices. Look at how fit you are. Take a physical test from your doctor as
well as a fitness test and actually see the numbers in front of you. Do you understand? Do you understand that you are the bottom percentile, or you’re the top percentile, [in order to] do something about it.

Megan could provide many examples of how her students would be able to identify their understanding, evaluation and assessment of their own health and physical literacy. She did not need any prompts to assist her, speaking about all realms of wellbeing, and how she can help her students achieve the curriculum standards of being literate in both health and physical literacy.

As discussed in Chapter 2, health and physical literacy are two terms that are crucial to the success of any HPE program in the 2015 curriculum. Based on these participants’ definitions, they were better able to correctly define the term ‘health literacy’, as they communicated the “understanding and use of information to make good decisions for health” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7). Anna did not touch upon ‘physical literacy’ at all, while Megan just mentioned the term in passing.

**4.2.2 Teachers’ understandings of new assessment practices: “Self-assessment in fitness testing”**

According to Colley et al. (2010), fitness testing (e.g., the beep test, 12 minute run and the step test) has been used as a form of assessment for approximately fifty years in North America. Traditionally, these tests would be completed twice a year, at the beginning and at the end of the semester/year, and students received a mark based on their physical improvement scores (OASPHE, 2015). A study conducted by the OASPHE found that fitness assessment helps students identify physical abilities and areas of physical fitness that need improvement. Baseline scores are also useful in setting individual goals and monitoring individual progress. However, physical fitness should be an educational process not a comparison to provincial standards.
Therefore, fitness appraisals results/scores should not be directly used as a grade (2015, pp. 2-4).

Therefore, Colley et al. (2010) suggest a new standard and evaluation tool: assessing student’s physical literacy. Colley et al. (2010) proposes that physical literacy has four components: “physical fitness, motor behaviour, physical activity behaviours and psycho-social/cognitive factors” (p. 179). Based on this, the historical practice of testing fitness in isolation is problematic, because it is only one component to a more complex individual. Mounting evidence supports this holistic approach to teaching students to be physically literate. By motivating students to be lifelong learners, to self-assess and self-monitor fitness achievement goals, students will achieve an overall healthy wellbeing, which is the primary goal of the 2015 HPE curriculum.

Anna and Megan both discussed their enthusiasm to promote student “improvement” throughout the year. Consequently, there seems to be a disconnect between what Anna says about fitness assessment and how she reportedly assesses her students’ physical fitness. Firstly, Anna identified fitness, sport and health as her overall approach to teaching HPE. Therefore, two thirds of her overall approach (fitness and sport) are predominantly physical in nature, putting a heavy emphasis on students’ physical ability and physical performance. Secondly, Anna stated how she carries out fitness testing, “in December and again in May” and how students’ fitness scores go towards their “summative mark at the end [of the year] where [teachers] look at their improvement.” She did not expand on this further, which leads me to assume that Anna only assesses physical fitness through standardized tests twice a year, which is what the OASPHE (2015) would call a “traditional” way to assess fitness testing.

There are many reasons why this form of physical fitness assessment is problematic, but Lloyd, et al. (2010) provide one of the most fundamental arguments against it. There are many
genetic factors that cannot be modified by physical education classes: “physical growth, biological maturation and behavioural development are complex and interacting contributors to physical fitness in children and youth” (p. 177). Megan agrees with this new and innovative way to assess physical fitness. As Megan says in her interview, “[can] you fail [a student] because they failed the beep test or 12 minute run? Well, of course not!”

Megan stated that she has “taught [her] whole career on [student] improvement” because she has never “believed in standardized testing.” She would assess fitness three times a year, and “never look at baseline scores after that.” Even though Megan indicated that she would never look at their baseline scores after that (in terms of grading their progress), she expressed the importance of showing students their scores so they can improve for next time. Megan then expressed her knowledge of the new curriculum explaining how she uses self-assessment questions to evaluate her students’ learning:

I give them a mark on how [they] assessed [themselves]. ‘Why did you fail the beep test?’ And if they don’t give me the information, well then you’re not going to pass based on what you gave me. [Talking to students] Just give me your factors. [Student’s responses] ‘I’m not in shape,’ or ‘I don’t work out,’ ‘I don’t run and I should be involved in more.’ They can actually in their own mind say, yeah I should be picking up more physical activity and I know I would improve. And then [they get great marks].

Positively, Megan discussed how her department designed their own score sheets last year for their September, midterm and final assessments. These score sheets included all three scores, (baseline, midterm and end of semester scores), but most importantly, these sheets had space for students to document fitness plans and goals for maintaining or improving their scores for next time. The HPE teachers would then mark these sheets, giving students an overall mark for their
fitness plans, and goal setting. This form of physical fitness assessment is compatible with new curriculum standards, as “students will be involved in assessing their own health-related fitness levels, setting goals, and developing personal fitness plans to achieve their goals” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 30).

4.2.3 Teachers’ understandings of new the instructional approach (TGfU)

When asked which HPE unit was the most important, both participants showed uncertainty in differentiating between the health units and the activity-based units. While Megan discussed the importance of sitting in the classroom for health units, “to learn theory to put the connection [between fitness and health] together,” Anna explained the increased importance of fitness during health units. “Fitness is important too because when [the students] are in health, they are lacking [fitness] for a couple of weeks, and it’s hard to get back into it.” Through this question, I was able to further inquire about each participant’s current instructional model.

Anna and Megan both agreed that their HPE courses are organized into “blocks,” which therefore embody a “multi-activity curriculum model.” Sheppard and Gleddie (2014) introduce this historical curriculum model as the most popularly used HPE curriculum in North America. It is predominantly game/sport dominated and easy to set up from an administrative perspective. However, the “no-organization approach” to the multi-activity curriculum model exposes many limitations and flaws. While this approach takes very little time to set up, it is based on three factors: educator preferences, equipment availability, and facility availability. It has been found that this approach can limit student capabilities to advance their knowledge past the basic skills of the physical activities and may lead to boredom (Sheppard & Gleddie, 2014).

The 2015 Ontario HPE curriculum states that “Teaching Games for Understanding” (TGfU) is a useful curriculum model to give students an opportunity to learn and apply skills
within the context of a modified game or activity. TGfU is a student-centered, experiential and inquiry-based approach to teaching HPE and is recommended for use in classrooms through Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). However, Sheppard and Gleddie (2014) found that there is teacher resistance in North America to change from a multi-activity approach to a TGfU approach due to many factors. Firstly, multi-activity approaches are mostly used at schools with a lack of facility space and lack of equipment. Both Anna and Megan stated that classroom sizes are too big and that daily challenges include ensuring ample equipment and gym space. Secondly, change in HPE approaches needs to come from the department head or administration. Schools are comfortable with their old traditional curriculum structure, where “block” rotations are the norm (Sheppard & Gleddie, 2014). Anna’s opinions further support this statement by stating, “it’s the way I’ve always done it so, you know, I’m just comfortable doing it this way. But everybody at our school is doing it that way. We’re all following the rotation, right?” Lastly, there is a common misconception that TGfU is “just playing games” (p. 37).

Evidently, the participants possess varying levels of understanding of the new curriculum changes. However, they still have to contend with the practical challenges of implementing this approach in their respective schools.

4.3 Reported Challenges with Implementing the New Curriculum: Lack of Resources and Lack of Supports for Sensitive Topics

For decades, professionals in the physical and health education field have known about the perilous state PE programs were in across the globe. In Marshall and Hardman’s (2000) study, they found that there was a “credibility gap” between law/policy and actual implementation of compulsory PE programs. Only 43% of compulsory PE programs in Canadian schools were actually up to provincial standards/requirements. The UNESCO study in 2013 followed the same
methodological procedure as Marshall and Hardman’s study and found that even after years of work to improve PE programs worldwide, this credibility gap still existed. Despite an official commitment to PE through legislation; implementation and delivery of quality physical education (QPE) programs is far from assured. Concerns about the quality of PE teacher training, teaching and teaching resources, inadequate supervision of practice, lack of professionalism and appropriate ethics and impacts on the quality of school pupil experience are globally evident (UNESCO, 2013). My findings concur with those of Marshall and Hardman’s study and the UNESCO study.

However, I must be mindful that the implementation of the new curriculum has only been in action for one year (2015-2016 school year). It is unrealistic to believe that change in curriculum documentation will lead to drastic change in implementation with the first year of a new program. According to Donetta (2001), there are many stages to the change process where failed attempts could occur: initiation, relevance, readiness, resources, implementation, difficulties, adaptation and continuation. In the first few years of implementation, a majority of change efforts will not make it to the final stage (continuation), based on the many challenges and barriers I will be discussing in this section. I will first discuss the lack of materials provided, and end with the lack of supports for sensitive topics.

When asked what supports and resources were made available to them for the implementation of the new curriculum, Anna and Megan stated that the Ministry guidelines booklet was the only material given to them by the board. As discussed in 4.1, both Anna and Megan claimed that they had been teaching most of the elements of the new curriculum before it was even introduced. However, once the curriculum documentation was provided to teachers, Anna and Megan agreed that it wasn’t enough. “We had the Ministry document that would give
us sample questions...It’s a prompt, it’s a cue and that’s it. But where are our materials?” (Anna).

Anna and Megan then continued to talk about how they had to “scrounge” for materials. Anna did not seem to have as much information provided to her as Megan had, claiming that she had a lack of support from her own Department Head. She described the time-consuming and stressful journey to gain more information and additional resources on new topics that she was not as familiar with. Anna reached out to a police officer who collaborated with her to teach a lesson on “social media safety” and a librarian who provided her with resources on the same subject. She was aware of the OPHEA website and how helpful it had been in the past but explained how she had not had the time to research any further.

When I asked Megan however, she confidently listed off many examples of heaping amounts of sources and materials. Even so, her comments complimented Anna’s in stating that regardless of how much material there was, HPE teachers had to go searching for it because the government, the Ministry and the board was not yet ready to help teachers with this curriculum change:

[They had] workshops, conferences, heads meetings, materials, examples. Oh yeah, tons and tons! We had so much information. I’m not worried about that. But, we had to search it. OPHEA had nothing ready for us. Nothing. We had to find it. I went and researched it and I found it for my colleagues. We didn’t have anything until September of this year. We didn’t have anything! So you could see how hard that was. It started coming in in September, and October, right? We had some stuff coming in, but it wasn’t validated. It wasn’t yet on the website at OPHEA. I think it was even in June. [Someone] at the board was really good, she gave us a lot of information, but we had to find a lot of stuff ourselves.
Megan describes how hard it was for her to plan units, organize her department and the amount of stress she underwent to provide resources for her department. Teachers across Ontario were required to implement this new curriculum, but they were provided with teacher prompts and cues to teach full, insightful, and educational lessons. Trainings, workshops, and conferences were hard to find, and any of the previously successful resource documents that these veterans have been using for years (OPHEA) were not adapted to the transition.

Having a lack of resources provided to HPE departments before the launch of the new program was the first fault in what Marshall and Hardman (2000) call the “credibility gap” or what Butler (2014) calls the “theory to practice” gap. The Ministry mandated new curriculum, with no additional resources, trainings or supports available to practicing teachers, therefore, forcing teachers to individually “scrounge” for materials by seeking outside resources. However, teachers felt uncomfortable doing engaging in this when it came to teaching sensitive topics in HPE.

The 2015 HPE curriculum states that some topics within the “Healthy Living” strand of the curriculum need to be approached with “additional sensitivity, care, and awareness because of their personal nature and their connection to family values, religious beliefs, or other social or cultural norms” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 39). It is also important to mention that the curriculum discusses the importance of both teachers and learners having a comfort level with these topics so that information can be discussed openly, honestly and in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Anna and Megan both discussed sensitive topics in their interviews. I will first discuss Anna’s challenge to teach topics related to sexuality because of the large population of Muslim students at her school. Then I will discuss Megan’s experience with teaching teen suicide.
When asked what components of the new curriculum required a higher level of sensitivity, Anna replied, “Well one for sure: sexuality.” She continued to describe how lessons on anatomy, birth control, or STD’s are a “big challenge” at her school purportedly because of the large population of Muslim students. Anna perceives that these students have parents who do not want them to be taught the sexual unit that the school provides, but Anna said, “they have no choice, if they are sitting in my class they are learning it, unless the parents are going to teach it themselves, which they don’t feel comfortable doing.” I wanted Anna to elaborate on the topic and prompted her by asking if this reaction has gotten worse since the implementation of the new curriculum. She stated that her school had an increasing amount of Muslim students enroll at her school in the past few years, and that with the implementation of the new curriculum, the protests and the media, may have initiated more parents to come forward and voice their concerns about the sexuality unit. Anna elaborated further, describing how as a result of this, her principal has developed a “backbone” to deal with this issue. With the assistance of a lawyer on the board, the principal knew how to say, “no, you need to learn this material…[they] can’t sit out, or opt out of [the unit]…other people have to do it, so you need to do it…it’s a part of the curriculum.”

When answering the question, “Can you describe some of the challenges you faced when implementing the new curriculum?”, sexuality resurfaced in the conversation, but in a new light. This time Anna was describing her uncertainty when using “safe” sources. She described an early time in her career when teachers weren’t allowed to use certain resources, only being able to use the public library, the school of the board library for sources. Now she questioned, “Can we go on google? How much can we trust it? What are my limitations? What is safe to transfer onto kids?” Anna believes that this information should be “stipulated” and that “strict guidelines” should be placed on what is considered to be appropriate sources in the classroom.
Anna expressed her positivity and explained the importance of the new curriculum when she was asked if she had any other thoughts or questions about the new 2015 curriculum:

"I think it’s great that people are at least [somewhat] forced to listen and to become more open-minded and accepting of differences…if we touch upon very sensitive issues…that should be handled in a very sensitive manner and we as professionals need to be trained how to handle it.

Being properly trained on how to talk about these sensitive topics, especially in a school community where students may not be able to go home and discuss the extent of the health lessons they learned in class is essential. Anna thinks it is a “great thing, as far as the sexuality you know, they need to learn about their bodies to become more aware and comfortable and uh, comfortable with other people’s differences.”

Providing teachers with ample resources, and helping HPE educators find “safe” sources to gain information on these topics is the first step towards real curriculum change. The Ministry should enable these teachers to feel more comfortable teaching these subjects in a diverse class where “family values, religious beliefs, or other social or cultural norms” may cause barriers to what the curriculum deems proper education. However, when it comes to teen suicide, being provided with additional resources may not be enough.

When asked what components of the new curriculum required a higher level of sensitivity, Megan immediately answered, “teen suicide.” She explained how she is certified in “safe talk” which is an introduction to suicide prevention and how she took the course because of her insecurities when being forced to teach this topic. With the increased need to educate students on mental health, HPE educators have a huge responsibility to their students and their parents. Megan stated that parents come to them for assistance, but they basically direct them to
psychologists, the guidance department, and youth workers because they are trained in this area.

The rest of Megan’s department is very weary. It’s not in their comfort zone because they all need more training. Knowing that this topic needs to be approached with additional caution, teachers are afraid of triggers, afraid that a student with depression may actually kill themselves. The 2015 HPE curriculum states that “learning about suicide is best approached through structured, adult-led instruction. It is important to conclude discussions with stories of hope, and information about seeking help. Among students who are vulnerable, thoughts of suicide can be triggered by offhand comments or even by general information shared in a large-group setting.” (p. X). This is why Megan’s department actually has a system put in place. Megan has a psychologist ready when one or more of her colleagues is teaching suicide. Before starting any lesson that has sensitive content in it, the teacher preps the class, letting them know that if the material makes them feel uncomfortable, they can go for a walk and leave the classroom. If a student during the lesson leaves the classroom, the teacher texts Megan and Megan escorts the student to guidance. Even though Megan took safe talk, she explains how the strategy of suicide prevention is different today than it was a couple of years ago:

The hardest thing for an educator to say is, “are you thinking of killing yourself?” The hardest words ever for an educator to say...Before it was all silent and now they’re telling us you don’t remain silent. You can actually save a life by actually saying, “do you want to kill yourself?”

Having these hard conversations in class, saying the actual words out loud to students is “uncomfortable” Megan states. However, regardless of how uncomfortable, Megan is dedicated to her students and student learning and if it will save a life, she will do it. Megan isn’t alone in this process either. Megan also addressed the supports at her school, being only the
administration and her department’s system discuss above. She believes that schools need more support from the government in order to properly feel safe teaching these hard topics.

I think the government needs to hire more people to come in and help. Professionals, that are in that area and trained. No one comes into my classroom. If we ask them, for one psychologist to come in to our class...we only have one for the whole school. We have two youth workers. How are they going to come in every time we have a suicide prevention talk?

Schools have a lack of resources, finances and supports. With constant cut backs in school budgets, departments have very little wiggle room to accomplish real curriculum change. Teachers have so much pressure put on them to teach these sensitive topics, but they are not properly trained in the area. Discussing mental health in HPE classes is of great importance in today’s society, but teachers can only do so much. Having mental health counsellors, psychologists, youth workers and guidance counsellors who have additional training on the subject should be a requirement and necessity in schools across the country.

As discussed in Chapter 2, real curriculum change only occurs when teachers beliefs, intentions and teaching pedagogies match with their interpretation of the new curriculum. I have found that having a lack of resources has caused barriers to the implementation process. Both Anna and Megan explained situations where having a lack of resources or a lack of support for sensitive issues, causes them to “scrounge” for materials in a desperate attempt to teach the required curriculum. Anna and Megan described the importance of the curriculum changes. However, with topics that they are not familiar with, if they were unable to find valid and safe materials, Anna asks, “what would (her department) have been teaching? I probably would have been doing something completely different than my colleagues. Whether or not they would even
touch upon it. Right? Just avoid it and then the kids miss out.” This final quote perfectly depicts who is suffering in the long run. When teachers are not properly trained, or given adequate resources and supports to implement new material, the students are the one that suffer. Throughout all my findings, I was able to come to two conclusions: (1) the Ministry mandated new curriculum, with no additional resources, trainings or supports, and (2) due to lack of supports, HPE teachers experienced teaching anxiety when attempting to meet quality standards of practice.

4.4 Conclusion

Through the data analysis process, three main themes emerged. Firstly, Anna and Megan’s individual beliefs, intentions and pedagogies evidently effected how they interpreted the new curriculum: Anna’s teaching style is eclectic and Megan’s teaching style is innovative. Regardless of their differences, both teachers believe in the new curriculum’s ability to change the way HPE is taught for the better.

Next, I made connections between Anna and Megan’s personal stories and their perceived understanding of the new curriculum changes. Throughout the interview process, it became evident that both participants’ understanding of their profession differed from each other’s, and sometimes from the curriculum expectations. I was able to explore my participants’ understanding of important terminology like health and physical literacy. Then I identified how each participant was reportedly assessing the fitness component, and lastly, I deconstructed the reasons behind my participants use a multi-activity curriculum model, instead of the new instructional model to Teach Games for Understanding (TGfU).

Finally, I found that regardless of these teachers’ interpretation of the new curriculum or their understanding of the curriculum changes, they face many challenges towards implementing
the new curriculum into their classroom. I discussed the lack of materials provided to teachers, the lack of assistance from superiors, and the lack of supports for sensitive topics. In doing so, I was able to come to two concrete conclusions. (1) The Ministry mandated new curriculum, with no additional resources, trainings or supports, and (2) due to lack of supports, HPE teachers experienced teaching anxiety when attempting to meet quality standards of practice.

Due to the recent implementation of the 2015 HPE curriculum in Ontario, there is little research from a Canadian perspective. Therefore, I have drawn upon studies of PE curriculum change in countries with similar education systems as Canada: the UK and Australia. Throughout the analysis of Megan and Anna’s interviews, I was constantly mindful of my research question: how are veteran Ontario high school Health and Physical Education teachers experiencing and reportedly teaching the new 2015 curriculum? My findings directly relate to Marshall and Hardman’s (2000) study and UNESCO’s (2013) study on the state and status of quality physical education programs around the world. My research has contributed to the conversation on quality HPE programs in Canada and it will hopefully inform the development of benchmark indicators on quality HPE implementation in Canada, by exploring whether policy rhetoric is being implemented in practice.

Next in Chapter 5, I will discuss how real and large-scale HPE curriculum change might be accomplished in the future. I make recommendations for veteran and novice HPE teachers; administrators and the Ministry of Education; and the educational research community based on my findings. Finally, I will suggest future areas of research.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the final conclusions of this study. I begin by reviewing the key findings of my research and their significance in relation to current literature. I then explain the implications of this study for the broader educational research community and for my own professional identity and practice. Next, I make recommendations for veteran and novice HPE teachers, administrators and the Ministry of Education and the educational research community based on my findings. Finally, I will suggest future areas of research. This chapter will conclude with a summary of my research and its significance in the concluding comments.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

My research findings first discussed how Anna and Megan’s individual beliefs, intentions and pedagogies effected how they interpreted the new curriculum. I identified Anna’s teaching style as eclectic and Megan’s teaching style as innovative. Anna discussed how she taught HPE in three sections: fitness, sports/activities and health, but shared her belief in exposing her students to a variety of activities that will help her students live long and healthy lifestyles following their high school education. In discussing HPE approaches with Megan, she described child-centered and progressive approaches to her teaching that’s unique to students’ personal and social development. She also discussed her goal to help create overall healthy students, in all realms of wellness: mind, body and soul. However, regardless of my participants’ differences, both stated that they were already making these changes, ensuring that their teaching was relevant, engaging and inclusive to all. This finding is significant because it shows an acceptance of the new curriculum on a personal level, through their beliefs, intentions and teachings. My
participants showed a willingness to be life-long learners, dedicate their time to improving student learning and to change the lives of their students in an ever-changing adapting world.

My findings then looked at connecting my participants’ personal experiences with their perceived understanding of the new curriculum changes. I began by first exploring the new terminology health and physical literacy. Anna and Megan both identified core values of health and physical literacy when asked to provide a definition. However, I found that Megan’s extensive background with curriculum documentation through her role as HPE Department Head and SHSM Program Leader, gave her an advantage over Anna, as she provided a more detailed definition confidently. Then I identified how each participant was assessing the fitness component. Both participants expressed their continual belief in student improvement over the school year. However, it was only Megan who discussed the importance of using student’s self-assessment to evaluate their fitness testing. Megan discussed how evaluating students on their physical abilities three times a year and giving them a mark based on their improvement scores is simply not acceptable. Allowing students to assess themselves, question how they can improve their own physical fitness, create a fitness/nutrition plan and follow through with it for the remainder of the semester is the way in which Megan evaluates her students, which directly coincides with the new curriculum documentations recommendations on fitness testing. Lastly, I identified the reasons behind my participants use of a multi-activity curriculum model, instead of the recommended new instructional model to Teach Games for Understanding (TGfU). I found that there is a resistance to change on an institutional level throughout their schools. Even though both participants discussed their willingness to change; their school environment, their colleagues, the equipment available, the facility availability and the old HPE instructional structure is still in place. This finding is significant because it does not show a lack of
understanding, but an understanding of the new curriculum that is not completely in line with the curriculum standards.

Lastly, my research findings spoke to the reported challenges with implementing the new curriculum in their respective schools. I found that regardless of these teachers’ interpretation of the new curriculum or their understanding of the curriculum changes, challenges like a lack of materials provided, and a lack of supports for sensitive topics were consistently reported by both participants. Anna and Megan discussed how Ministry documentation was not enough, providing only cues and prompts for teachers. They stated how they had to ‘scrounge’ for materials. Most importantly, both teachers found that they had an extreme lack in materials for teaching sensitive topics like teen suicide and sexuality. HPE is full of sensitive topics, ones that should be taught in a certain way and that has changed over time. However, these teachers are not getting the support they need from the government, the Ministry or from their respective boards. They are lacking exemplar unit plans, information booklets, training, conferences, certifications etcetera, that they need to feel comfortable teaching these sensitive topics that are required. This finding is significant because it begins to tackle the external factors that are effecting teachers in their struggle to create real curriculum change. It is hard to implement real curriculum change when teachers feel alone in this process. In doing so, I came to two concrete conclusions. (1) The Ministry mandated new curriculum, with no additional resources, trainings or supports, and (2) Due to lack of supports, HPE teachers experienced teaching anxiety when attempting to meet quality standards of practice.

5.2 Implications
In this section, I state what the implications of my research are. First, I explore how my research influences the broader educational community. I then look at how my own professional identity and practice have been shaped by this research.

5.2.1. Broad: The educational community

The broad implications for this study can be significant for a variety of stakeholders: veteran and novice HPE teachers, administrators and the Ministry of Education. As discussed in Chapter 1, there is a desperate need for our youth to be more active and health conscious because of our increasing obesity epidemic. HPE teachers have been waiting for a curriculum change, and as seen in my study, both Anna and Megan have been making relevant changes throughout their career. Teachers who share a love for their profession are dedicated to being life-long learners, ensuring that their material is relevant, keeping their students engaged and interested in living healthy and active lifestyles. Even though these teachers are accepting the new curriculum changes and trying to implement them, more needs to be done. Implications of my study can help influence veteran and novice teachers alike to come together and collaborate. Teachers should not work in solidarity to implement a new curriculum, but seek, find and share materials with each other. As discussed in my findings, my participants discussed how they needed more time to meet with the whole department instead of just discussing any issues just ‘in passing’.

Implications at the administrative level could mean that schools work towards implementing a new HPE instructional model (TGfU). However, a multi-activity approach is traditionally used in most schools, restricting further development and the ongoing potential of the new curriculum. Administrators should therefore collaborate with the HPE department in order to create this instructional change in their schools. Implementing a TGfU structure will be a lot of work, and require more funding (for proper equipment and facility availability), but it’s
effects on the students will be profoundly different, creating students that enjoy living healthy active lives outside of the educational community. If the school adopts a whole new way to teach and learn HPE, the impacts could be endless. An active school could influence other schools, the board, the province, etcetera. Creating this change from a multi-activity approach to a TGfU approach is manageable, applicable and the benefits are positive and continuous.

Per my research, teachers are rejoicing the new changes to the HPE curriculum, and are trying to find ways to implement it into their classroom whenever applicable. Implications for the Ministry of Education could be making resources and supports more accessible to all teachers. My participants have expressed their frustrations with finding proper resources/ ‘safe’ resources to use in their classrooms, especially for sensitive topics in HPE. My participants discussed scenarios when colleagues did not know how to properly teach a sensitive topic, or could not find appropriate or ‘safe’ resources, they would just skip the topic all together. This directly impedes their students’ learning, as they are missing out on valid and important issues that may only be safe to discuss in the classroom setting when facilitated by an inclusive teacher. The Ministry could create an online database of resources or more importantly, create professional development opportunities for teachers.

Implications at a professional development level could mean that we use the Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) model (a student-centered, experiential and inquiry-based approach to teaching HPE), or facilitate workshops to educate teachers of all experience levels on how to properly implement the new curriculum changes into their classrooms. Educating teachers could have a positive impact on the new generation of students. As educators, professional development is important to remain relevant and to be able to keep pedagogical methods engaging. Sensitive topics, like teen suicide, can easily be taught in professional
development workshops, because the focus is on creating a safer school community, allowing students to feel comfortable with their own mental health, and motivating students to talk about these difficult topics with a trusted teacher. Teaching TGfU strategies to teachers can be a little more challenging, because of the stigma towards TGfU as all play. However, educating teachers about the benefits of TGfU is necessary, and showing teachers and administrators how to implement this new system into their school is essential to its success.

Finding time for more professional development days is essential in the success of the new curriculum. Finding ways to work together to make real curriculum change: active cooperation from all colleagues, having time to discuss the issues at hand, and not just ‘in passing’ is essential to the success of the new curriculum. Continuing education for teachers, to improve their own learning and the learning of others in the profession should be the goal for the Ministry of Education in the transition to implement the new 2015 HPE curriculum. Showing that teachers have their support throughout this process, through additional professional development sessions, external and detailed documentation as well as an increase in funding for HPE departments in the boards is paramount to recreating and redefining Health and Physical Education as a core subject area for youth with educational and lifelong purpose.

5.2.2 Narrow: My own professional identity and practice

As a teacher candidate with a background in Physical and Health Education and Social Sciences, I have a very deep interest in exploring multiple views on sport, physical activity and health in society. From childhood through adulthood, I have lived an active lifestyle, playing on multiple sports teams (in and outside of school) and participating in physical activity whenever I could. My involvement in sport has been integral to my development as a person and I have grown up knowing the importance of staying active and having a healthy lifestyle. In University,
I expanded my knowledge of sport and its importance through courses at Queen’s. Exploring the relationship between ideas about fitness, exercise and sport, and the social differences in inequality like race, class, ability, sexuality, age and gender, has resonated with me. As a teacher candidate, I want to be able to inspire my future students to live a healthy lifestyle throughout high school and beyond. I’m concerned with the student’s whose only experience with health, physical activity and sport is in a school setting where physical participation is graded and student’s physical abilities are evaluated. It is essential for me to change students’ stigma about Health and Physical Education courses from the traditional view of a “gym class” that is primarily sports-centered, and rebrand it as a multi-dimensional “healthy living” course that encourages students to develop physical and literacy skills that are essential for overall wellbeing.

I believe that my professional identity and practice has been shaped by my research in many ways. Even if I am unable to keep students enrolled in HPE classes after grade nine, I want to positively impact them through the new strategies introduced in the 2015 curriculum. I believe that integrating a TGfU instructional model into my classroom, using student-assessment in fitness testing and working towards a HPE that is student-centered and progressive, is the key to creating students with exceptional physical and health literacy skills. I want to continue to work with colleagues and professionals in this field to positively influence the health and physical lifestyles of youth holistically, and the findings of this study compliment my teaching practices.

5.3 Recommendations

I initially approached this research paper with the cynical idea that all veteran HPE teachers would not implement the new curriculum because it was too much work to do so. What I found however, is that regardless of teachers’ interpretations of the curriculum or their
understanding of the curriculum changes, they had to face many challenges when attempting to implement the new curriculum into their classroom. I must be mindful of that fact that change like this will not occur in one year but I am optimistic that real curriculum change is in the near future. Going forward, I make the following recommendations for the educational community based on my findings and the implications of this research.

In order for real change to occur, teachers must be accountable to make curriculum changes a prerequisite for their own change in beliefs and values. Therefore, there needs to be opportunities for veteran teachers to learn proper terminology that is repeated heavily in the new curriculum: “health and physical literacy.” There also needs to be a push for teachers to collaborate as a HPE department in schools to ensure that real curriculum change is occurring consistently in all HPE classrooms. I applaud all teachers who have spent countless hours researching and seeking external resources, but that information should be shared amongst colleagues as well. Weekly department meetings should allow for HPE teachers to collaborate. Perhaps, in-service training sessions should be provided for veteran HPE teachers and novice teachers to be mentored in each school to improve every teacher’s perspective on the new curriculum. In terms of assessment, every teacher must use students’ self-assessment when evaluating their physical fitness component of the HPE program. Moving away from the ‘traditional’ way to test for improvement in fitness testing scores is the first step towards encouraging lifelong healthy and active learners.

At the Ministry and government level, there needs to be a collective agreement by the board, administration, and teachers to implement the TGfU instructional approach into the HPE department in all schools across Ontario. In addition to that, the Ministry needs to provide more resources (exemplar unit plans, information booklets, training, conference, certifications, etc.) to
teachers to create more confident and competent teaching in areas that require higher levels of sensitivity. Lastly, the Ministry needs to make professional development days more accessible to all teachers to ensure that more education and teacher training around the true structure and development of this curriculum can be implemented into their schools.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

My research findings have supported previous literature, but have also raised more questions to be answered. The benefits of physical activity are a widely researched topic that has led to the initial reconstruction of the 1999 HPE curriculum. However, research on the effectiveness of the new curriculum is slim. My findings speak to the need for further research on my topic. The research that I found on teachers transition from old to new curriculum was found in European countries: the UK and Ireland, specifically. There remains a lack of research on my central research question: how are veteran Ontario high school Health and Physical Education teachers experiencing and teaching the new 2015 curriculum?

Educational research scholars should direct their attention to my research topic in Canada, more specifically in Ontario. They should take time to explore this topic of research further to build a case for the Ministry of Education to dedicate more time, effort and funding into building the HPE program as a valuable life course. The Ministry has worked hard on reconstruction the curriculum, but it is now up to the teachers, the Ministry and the boards to change students’ perceptions of HPE. I wonder if they have conducted any research in the elementary school boards to try to tackle my research question. I believe that revamping the HPE image to a more inclusive course should be done at the grassroots of students’ education. Fostering a love for HPE holistically and ensuring that students know the importance of HPE.
should begin at the elementary school level, so students can begin their healthy and active lives at a time when habits, hobbies and individual identities are still being explored.

5.5 Concluding Comments

My research findings explored how educators describe and perceive the transition from the 1999 to 2015 Physical and Health Education curricula. Teachers have only been exposed to this new curriculum for a year now, making this topic quite new to educational research. This study has provided insight into the success and downfall of the new curriculum from the perspective of veteran HPE teachers, based on their perceived outcomes of student enjoyment, interest, and lifelong healthy and active living. The main contributor to this change of focus is the integration of two innovating terms, “physical and healthy literacy”. Being literate in both subjects means that students will be competent in both physical and health ideas, terms and concepts, and will be able to use their knowledge in order to make good decisions about their physical and health development throughout their life time. In today’s ever-changing society, it is more important than ever that teachers instill these attitudes and aptitudes in children and adolescents to address the health crisis in Canada.

The Ministry of Education has implemented a curriculum that is better suited for the needs of all students and has put an emphasis on long-term health and active living goals. I’m concerned with the student’s whose only experience with health, physical activity and sport is in a school setting where physical participation is graded and student’s physical abilities are evaluated. As a teacher candidate, I want to be able to inspire my future students to live a healthy lifestyle throughout high school and beyond. I hope that through my research, teachers, administrators and the Ministry can continue to work towards real curriculum change and that one day students will not call HPE “gym” class, but instead think of HPE as a multi-dimensional
“healthy living” course that encourages students to develop physical and health literacy skills that are essential for overall wellbeing.
References


Curtner-Smith, M. D. (1999). The more things change the more they stay the same: Factors influencing teachers' interpretations and delivery of national curriculum physical education. *Sport, Education and Society, 4*(1), 75-97. doi:10.1080/1357332990040106


Appendix A: Letter of Signed Consent

Date:

Dear ________________,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. As a future HPE teacher, I am interested in exploring how veteran Ontario high school Health and Physical Education teachers are experiencing and teaching the new 2015 HPE curriculum. Findings obtained from this study may be informative for not only current and preservice HPE teachers, but school board leaders, and curriculum review boards. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one approximately 60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The interview data will be stored on my password protected laptop and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the audio-recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to you for assisting in the project.

Please sign the attached consent form if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Sara Prodanos

Phone number: (647) 295-9219
E-mail: sara.prodanos@mail.utoronto.ca

MT Program Contact:
Lee Airton
lee.airton@utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Sara Prodanos and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name (printed): __________________________________

Date: ______________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol/Questions

START OF THE INTERVIEW: (10 minutes)
- Introduce yourself
- Present and discuss consent form (have 2 copies: one for our files and one for the participant to keep)
- Read the Introductory Script below and answer any questions about the project/interview
- Test audio-recorder; extra batteries
- Begin Recording
- State date and time of interview
- Start the interview

Introductory Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. This research study aims to learn how a sample of veteran Health and Physical Education teachers is experiencing and teaching the new HPE 2015 curriculum. This interview should take approximately 60 minutes, and is comprised of approximately 26 questions. The interview protocol has been divided into 5 sections. It will begin with your background information, followed by questions about your encounters with the 2015 HPE curriculum, your perspectives and beliefs related to the new curriculum, and concluding with questions about teacher practices, teacher supports and challenges, and next steps. I want to remind you that you can choose not to answer any question, and can remove yourself from participation at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section A - Background Information & School Context

1. Can you start by describing your current job title and responsibilities in your current position? (Official title and responsibilities)
2. Can you tell me a bit about your formal training: where you studied, when you got your degree and how long ago you completed your schooling?
3. What motivated you to choose education as your profession?
* I would like to get a feel for the current school that you are working in. Please answer the following questions as if I was a teacher who might be teaching there next year...
4. Is there anything about this school that you feel makes it different from other schools or...
places you’ve worked?

5. Could you list some of the core values of this school community?

6. What do you enjoy about working at this school?

7. What are some challenges about working at this school?

Section B - Teacher Perspectives/Beliefs

8. Can you describe your reaction when you first learned about the changes made to the HPE curriculum?

a) Why do you think you reacted this way?

b) How do you think your reaction compared with that of your colleagues?

9. What is your opinion of the new curriculum?

10. Are there any components of the new curriculum that you believe require a higher level of sensitivity?

a) (if yes) Can you say why?

Section C - Teacher Practices

*Before I ask you about your experiences with the new curriculum, I’d like to get a sense of your teaching.

11. What do you think your students expect of your HPE classes? Are they going to break a sweat?

12. How would you describe your approach to teaching Health and Physical Education?

Possible Prompts:

Heavy emphasis on...
i) Sports?

ii) Personal fitness?

iii) Lifestyles?

iv) Health & physical literacy?

v) Mental health?

13. Do you always teach your lessons in the gymnasium?

14. How would you describe your approach to and goals when teaching team sport?

15. Can you describe the strategies you use to engage your students?

16. What parts of HPE do you notice students are more interested in?
   a) Why do you think this is the case?
   b) Do you think these are the most important units? Why/not?

17. What are some strategies you use to make students feel comfortable discussing or participating in a particular activity?

   Prompts:
   a) Group work
   b) Activities
   c) Focus Group Discussion

18. Can you describe what health and physical literacy means to you?

Section D - Supports and Challenges

19. To what extent would you say the new curriculum is compatible with your own approach to
teaching HPE?

20. Can you describe some of the challenges you faced with the implementation of the new curriculum?

Possible prompts: What about …

i) Personal challenges,

ii) Student engagement,

iii) Communication with family/parents,

i) Administration

ii) How did you manage these challenges?

21. What supports and resources were made available to you for the implementation of the new curriculum?

Possible prompts: What about...

i) Meetings with department head

ii) Principal

iii) Board in service

iv) Workshops

v) Training

22. How would you describe the effectiveness of these supports and resources?
23. Were there any supports and resources that you would have liked to have had but were missing?

Section E - Next Steps

24. What advice would you give a HPE teacher colleague who is struggling in their transition to implement the new 2015 curriculum into their classroom?

25. What other thoughts or questions do you have about the new 2015 curriculum?

26. Do you have any final thoughts?

*The interview has now come to an end. Thank you sincerely for your time and responses.

END OF THE INTERVIEW: (10 minutes)

- Turn off recorder
- Review consent
- Thank participant