

The implementation of the *Smart Moves* daily physical activity program in Queensland state primary schools



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Introduction

In 2006, the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) introduced a mandatory daily physical activity program for implementation in Queensland state schools following recommendations from a Ministerial Review of Sport and Physical Activity. The daily physical activity program is called *Smart Moves*.

Research Questions

Is the *Smart Moves* program implemented as per the mandated requirements?

Are there enablers and/or barriers in the implementation of the *Smart Moves* program?

Are there adequate professional development opportunities and physical resources available for the implementation of the *Smart Moves* program?



The key components specific to Queensland state primary schools are as follows:

- **30 minutes per day** of at least **moderate intensity physical activity** allocated in the curriculum of all primary schools.
- Schools to **increase community access** to their sport and recreation facilities to benefit the broader community.
- Principals and health and physical education teachers to take a leadership role in **promoting and enhancing physical activity in schools**, and coordinating the implementation of the PAAP.
- All teachers to undertake **professional development in the delivery of physical activity across the curriculum** with primary school generalist teachers a priority group.
- Physical activity **should not be confined** to health and physical education lessons.
- Schools are to work closely with community and sporting organisations to **foster and strengthen opportunities for children and young people to participate in physical activity**
- Schools to **report annually** on the allocation of physical activity as part of the curriculum within the School Improvement and Accountability Framework (DETE, 2012c).

Methodology

A mixed methodology embracing a pragmatic epistemology was utilised (Creswell, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Sequential explanatory design served the purpose of using “qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a quantitative study” (Creswell, 2009, p. 215).

The quantitative and qualitative methods maintained a parity of importance (Greene et al., as cited in Somekh & Lewin, pg 261) in the research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 219) with an intentional effort to connect the methods, as well as the data and results. This was done in the analytical phase of the inquiry (Greene et al., 2011, as cited in Somekh & Lewin, 2011). Triangulation (Greene et al., 2011, as cited in Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 260), was used to corroborate results from the quantitative study through the execution of the qualitative study (Greene et al., 2011, as cited in Somekh & Lewin, 2011).

Survey Questionnaires were completed by participants after all permissions and ethical approval were secured. Semi structured interviews were recorded. Limitations, issues of validity and reliability and researcher bias were addressed.

Raw data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and binary allocations (0 or 1) were given to the ‘yes/no’ answers. A rudimentary Likert Scale was used to show responses from a negative to a positive number with 0 being the neutral response. Data was then sorted to gain a clear indication of the range of responses given by the survey participants .

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine if the *Smart Moves* daily physical activity was being implemented as per the mandated requirements, and what elements enabled, or presented a barrier to the implementation of the program.

Discrepancies were found between the data collected and the findings of the DETE evaluation of the implementation of *Smart Moves* in which 85.1% of principals indicated that 74% or more of students in their school are engaged in the required time for physical activity (DETE, 2012f).

Further research, on a broader scale, needs to be undertaken to address the notable discrepancies between the data collected for this research and the information provided to DETE.



Conclusion

The *Smart Moves* program is not being implemented in Queensland state primary schools as per the mandated requirements.

Teachers site a number of reasons for this failure with lack of time available to provide opportunities for the students to engage in daily physical activity the most significant barrier to implementation.

Generally, teachers are aware of the benefits of daily physical activity, and acknowledge the elements that enable them to include physical activity in their program.

Teachers who are confident in their capacity to deliver physical activity, and value its inclusion, will implement daily physical activity programs.

The key school program responsible for encouraging students to lead healthy lifestyles is delivered inadequately” (Morgan & Hansen, 2008).

This research suggests that the parameters of the daily physical activity requirements need to be reviewed and further investigation into barriers to implementation of *Smart Moves* needs to be undertaken.



Enablers for implementing *Smart Moves*

Physical Activity Facilitators (PAFs) were employed to assist in increasing the range and quality of physical activity opportunities

PAFs key responsibilities—

- assist schools to develop and evaluate own *Smart Moves* program
- enable teachers to develop a greater understanding of the *Smart Moves* program
- provide ideas for timetabling and planning
- provide ideas for implementing the program including integration of *Smart Moves* into all Key Learning Areas.
- suggest how school facilities and equipment could be used for the *Smart Moves* program (Abbott et al., 2011).

Health and Physical Education teachers were seen as a key resource to utilise and to provide a collection of fun and easy activities for teachers to facilitate” (DETE, 2012g).

The Building the Education Revolution (BER) program designed to provide new and refurbished infrastructure to eligible Australian schools, enhanced the capacity of schools to deliver *Smart Moves* . The program included three elements: *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* which provided **new and refurbished halls**, libraries and classrooms, *National School Pride* which provided **new and refurbished covered outdoor learning areas, sporting facilities and shade structures**, and, *Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Schools*.

According to the Australian Education Union (2010), 61% of Queensland schools used money raised in fundraising activities to purchase sporting and play equipment indicating that schools and their immediate community (including the Parents and Citizens Association) value the provision of equipment for sporting and play situations.

Morgan and Bourke (2008) suggest that despite a lack of confidence in delivering the program, classroom teachers do recognise the positive contribution physical activity has in the development of the overall health and wellbeing of children.

Barriers to implementing *Smart Moves*

Quality of teacher training, experience, confidence, personal values pertaining to the importance of physical activity and availability of time to plan, and implement, a daily physical activity program.

Many preservice teachers complete their teacher training without having taught physical activity in any capacity (Morgan & Bourke, 2008). With recent research in the United Kingdom indicating that “training in physical education may consist of as little as nine hours in some teacher training courses” (Callcott, Miller & Wilson-Gahan, 2012, p. 37).

A link has been established between the personal backgrounds and experiences of teachers and how these perceptions of prior experiences affect teaching ideologies (Morgan and Bourke, 2008; Callcott et al., 2012). An overwhelming number of primary school generalist teachers report having negative school-based physical education experiences, with most negative experiences traced back to poor teaching practices or poor content development (Hastie & Martin, 2006; Callcott et al., 2012).

Morgan (2008) cites Brumbaugh, 1987; Downey, 1979; Faucette & Hillidge, 1989, who assert that non-specialist teachers do not consider daily physical education to be of any value for children. Despite these contentions, it is widely noted that classroom teachers would prefer to teach other subjects and are reluctant to include physical activity in their daily program (Morgan, 2008; Morgan & Bourke, 2008; Crawford, 2009; Curry, 2011).

Cowley, Hamlin and Grimley (2011) cited a list of major issues for teachers when planning for physical activity. These included equipment, funding, presence of suitable teaching spaces, timetabling, teachers’ understanding of the requirements of physical activity programs and their competence to implement the programs (Cowley et al., 2011).

Morgan and Bourke (2008) suggest the need for further preservice teacher education, and professional development in this area of the curriculum with a focus on addressing the perceptions of negativity towards physical education and activity (Callcott et al., 2012).

My School Website has seen a “heavy emphasis” (Curry, 2011, n.p.) on improving numeracy and literacy and NAPLAN results which creates pressure to perform for teachers and students.

The crowded curriculum and the introduction of C2C documents to teach the Australian Curriculum are considered major barriers and time consuming.

