



## Physical Educations New Zealand's Response to

### "Passing NCEA with Just PE"

Dominion Post 10 March 2016

It is fair to say Chris Hipkins' (Labour Spokesperson for Education) comments in an article "Passing NCEA with Just PE", in the Dominion Post on the 10th March, have enraged the Physical Education community. There were 13,491 hits on Physical Education New Zealand's (PENZ) Facebook page in four days!

This seemingly uninformed remark, during a debate around the recently released Tertiary Education Report of 2014, has undermined the Physical Education (PE) community and its extensive effort to ensure PE is seen as a credible academic subject, with worthwhile career pathways.

The selection of 'just PE' as the example of what is wrong with NCEA literacy is disappointing and indicative of a lack of understanding of contemporary education. PE has moved dramatically from a previous era when it solely concentrated on the physical dimensions. Mr Hipkin's lack of understanding of the academic requirements and the level of literacy necessary for NCEA PE, further undermines the efforts of many teachers and academics. Why target PE? The same could be said about Science, Geography, and many other subjects.

The literacy and numeracy requirement, selected by NZQA, for NCEA Level 1 has been in place since 2002, then introduced in 2013 and 2014 for NCEA Level 2 and 3. The main aim of this introduction was that literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills are vital to ensure students are well equipped to access curriculum content and achieve in all learning areas.

It is interesting to note in the *Education Review* series: (*NZ Teacher, Volume 7, Issue 1 2016*) that Chris Hipkins states, "Our education system needs to prepare our young people for a workplace we can't imagine. They will be resilient, creative, adaptable, have great communication and interpersonal skills and prepared to work collaboratively as well as independently...". All these things that Mr Hipkins refers to are inherent in the Health and Physical Education learning area, the curriculum, and our teaching and learning programmes.

PE should not be justified on the sole basis of developing literacy, however good levels of literacy are needed in order to successfully complete NCEA levels 1 to 3 and Scholarship. Although PE teachers are generally not English teachers, they have to have high levels of literacy and collaborate with their colleagues in order for their students to be successful.

As long ago as 1963, Sam Lewis from Canterbury University, advocated for a more academic approach and examinations in senior PE. PENZ has an award, an academic essay competition that recognises the innovative approach of Sam Lewis. Sixth Form Certificate Physical Education was introduced in 1978 followed by the introduction of Bursary PE in 1990. Between 2002 and 2004, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) – Physical Education was recognised as an academic subject at Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Scholarship.

Physical Education is part of the Health and Physical Education learning area, one of the eight learning areas in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), and each Board of Trustees, through the principal and staff, is required to provide all students in years 1-10 with effectively taught programmes of learning (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 44). As the curriculum so clearly points out, it is in health and physical education that “..students learn about their own well-being, and that of others and society, in health-related and movement contexts” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 17). Teaching programmes for students’ year 11-13 should be based, in the first instance, on the national curriculum statement.

Mr Hipkins conceded via Twitter that his comments had conveyed a message he didn’t intend, his mistake. Margot Bowes, President of PENZ, appreciated the reply and highlighted once again that quality Physical Education has so much to offer students. It is such a shame that we have to continually defend the richness and potential of our learning area.

Resources have been sent to both Mr Hipkins and Minister Parata highlighting the level of academia required. These include the PENZ journal (2014) with the Winner of the AS Lewis essay, samples of Scholarship 2014, Level 1-3 papers that can gain literacy credits, and the latest copies of Health and Physical Education – highlighting use of current research across all areas.

**Physical Education New Zealand**

(National Office) PO Box 10203, Bayfair, Mount Maunganui 3152

Ph: +64 7 542 3151 | Fax: +64 7 542 4373 | Mb: +64 21-475137

[www.penz.org.nz](http://www.penz.org.nz)