

Recreation and Sports Development in Hong Kong- 25 Years (1974 – 1999) 由 1974 至 1999 的香港康體發展

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Abstract

There has been tremendous progress made in the provision of recreation and sports facilities and programmes for the public in Hong Kong in the last 25 years, since the establishment of the former Recreation and Sports Service by the government in 1974 to organize recreation and sports activities for the public in the districts. This paper attempts to review the development of recreation and sports in Hong Kong in the last 25 years from 1974 to 1999 and make suggestions to improve the leisure delivery system in order to provide a better service for the people of Hong Kong.

摘要

自從康樂體育事務處於一九七四年在本港地區推行康樂體育活動計劃後，香港的康體發展一日千里，獲得美滿成績。本文將探討由一九七四年至一九九九年過往二十五年來的康體發展，並建議如何改善現有推行康體事務機構的政策，從而為香港市民提供一個更有效的服務。

Introduction

It has been 25 years since the establishment of the former Recreation and Sports Service. In 1974, a recreation and sports scheme was set up by the government to organize and stimulate recreational and sporting activities on a district basis. This was the beginning of organized recreation in Hong Kong. There have been many changes in the recreation and sports field in all these 25 years. The awareness of the general public in recreation has grown and the demand for recreational opportunities is still overwhelming. The number of public recreation programmes had increased from 900 events participated by 130,000 people in 1974-75 to 17,961 programmes organized by the Provisional Urban and Regional Councils for 1,177,276 people in 1998-99. Provision of recreation and sports facilities has also increased to meet the leisure needs of the people in Hong Kong.

The year 1999 is also a very important year for recreation and sports. The SAR Government has announced that the two municipal councils will be dissolved and replaced by a new organization. The restructuring of the two municipal departments will have great impact on the professional staff working in the

recreation and sports field, including the Recreation and Sport Officer grade and Amenities Officer grade. On the sports side, the governing sports bodies are still reaping benefits from the excellent results obtained in the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games. This proves that there are sporting talent in the region and it will be up to the government and the sports bodies to keep up the momentum in the next millenium to further develop and nurture such talents.

This paper attempts to review the development of recreation and sports in Hong Kong in the last 25 years from 1974 to 1999.

Recreation and Sports Service

In October 1973 the former Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, announced the setting up of a Council for Recreation Sport (CRS) to give impetus to the provision of more and better recreational facilities for the people of Hong Kong. The CRS was set up on 17 October 1973 under the chairmanship of the Secretary for Home Affairs and consisted of appointed members from the business sector and representatives of governing sports bodies.

The Council advised the government on the provision and usage of facilities, expenditure on government funds, supervision of voluntary and government agencies in the promotion of recreation and sports and recommendations on special services and facilities required to meet the leisure needs of young people of Hong Kong. When the Council was first set up in 1973, it was provided with a budget of \$0.3 million in support of the activities organized by the governing sports bodies. This was increased to \$4.6 million in 1983/84 and \$8.9 million in 1986/87. Apart from providing financial support to the governing sports bodies, the CRS recommended the setting up of a Recreation and Sports Service (RSS) in 1974. The promotion of physical recreation and sports in Hong Kong had therefore taken on fresh dimensions through the activities promoted by the district officers of the RSS, which catered for all ages and abilities, with particular emphasis on young people.

The RSS started its operation in October 1974 in six district offices, and was operated by the Education Department as a pilot scheme from part of the funds donated by an anonymous person in early 1970. Officers from the Physical Education Inspectorate were seconded to the new set-up. Betty Mair was appointed to head the RSS, with Dicken Yung acting as her deputy. The first six District Officers were Chan Yeung Wing (Central and Western), Wong Woon Cheung (Eastern), Raymond Chan (Shamshuipo), David Mak (Wong Tai Sin), David Chiu (Kwun Tong) and Wong Kin Fai (Yuen Long). These people pioneered and set the foundation for the development of recreation and sports in Hong Kong.

The RSS worked closely with government departments, voluntary agencies, sports associations and youth groups and helped the community to make full use of the sports facilities in the district. In its initial year, the RSS had made great impact with a wide range of programmes including sports competitions, sports training courses, excursions, camping, keep-fit programmes, and special activities for the handicapped and aged. Some 130,000 people had taken part in 900 events promoted by the Service in the first year, with the majority of participants in the age range from 12 to 24 years.

Following the success of the pilot scheme, the government decided that the scheme should be expanded to cover all 17 districts. The number of full-time officers rose from six to 68 in its second year of operation. Recruitment of full-time officers with the right qualification and experience was a problem because of a lack of trained personnel in the recreation and sports field. There were no universities offering degree programmes in the administration of recreation and sports at that time. A large proportion of the new staff was recruited from teachers in the Education Department who were found redundant due

to a over-supply of school places in the education system. They were appointed as Recreation Assistants and were given training to assist with the organization of recreation and sports activities in the districts.

When the RSS expanded its services throughout the territory, it had confronted many problems. First, there was an overwhelming response from the public for places in its recreation programmes; secondly, there was a shortage of available facilities for recreation, and thirdly, there was a lack of trained leaders in the recreation and sports field. The urban sports facilities were all managed by the Urban Council who had ruled at that time that only a small quota would be allocated to the RSS for its programmes. As a result, the RSS had to use its ingenuity in finding venues and facilities that could be used for its events. Programmes were organized in school playgrounds, under fly-over, unused godowns, rooftops and even car parks.

In May 1976, the vacant army camp at Sai Kung was handed over to the RSS and was re-developed into an outdoor recreation centre, providing both residential and day camping programmes for the public. This was the start of public organized camping programme in Hong Kong. People can now escape from the busy city life and relax in excellent outdoor environment, taking part in various physical recreation activities offered by the centre at reasonable costs.

In order to alleviate the shortage of indoor facilities, the top three floors of the unused Hung Hom Car Park were converted into a sports centre by the RSS in 1978. Facilities included a fitness room with modern exercise equipment, an indoor archery range, a lawn bowls strip, a boxing ring and a multi-purpose hall for badminton, dancing and martial arts activities. The project had been very successful. Thousands of people made use of the temporary facilities as venues for their leisure activities. The centre ceased operation in 1982 because of an increased demand of car parking spaces in the vicinity. Based on the experience of the Hung Hom Car Park project, new weekend family sports centres were introduced with the aim of bridging the generation gap and fostering harmony in family life.

The other major outdoor facilities developed by the RSS in 1980 were the Lady MacLehose Holiday Village at Tsak Yue Wu, Sai Kung and the Tai Mei Tuk Water Sports Centre in Tai Po. The Lady MacLehose Holiday Village was converted from the quarters of engineers who constructed the High Island Reservoir. It has the capacity to accommodate 250 campers in bungalows. The outdoor programmes offered were different from those of the Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre, with more emphasis on relaxation than on strenuous activities. The Tai Mei Tuk Water Sports Centre is the first permanent water sports centre opened to the public for boating activities.

An indoor fitness centre was developed in the Hong Kong Football Club Stadium in Happy Valley with the financial assistance from the Lions' Club in March 1981. The centre was modeled on the prototype at the Hung Hom Car Park. A third fitness centre was opened in Tuen Mun in September 1981 in an unused depot of the Fire Services Department.

The RSS eventually found a home with the newly formed Recreation and Culture Department in 1982. The breakaway with the Education Department provided the RSS with its new status. The service's 19 district offices continued its good work in providing recreation and sports programmes for all ages and ability groups at the district level. The regional and district offices also contributed to the new district administration scheme initiated by the government and helped identify the needs for recreation and sports activities. Lack of facilities to organize programmes was still the major headache of the District Recreation and Sport Officers because the Urban Council maintained their policy in not allowing the RSS to have sufficient use of its facilities.

The Recreation and Sport Officer grade was also established in 1982. The staff working in the RSS finally had their professional ranks instead of the Education Department titles. This change had stimulated the morale of the staff of the service. In May 1983, the former Governor, Sir Edward Youde, opened the Chong Hing Water Sports Centre at the west dam of High Island Reservoir in Sai Kung. The project was sponsored by the Chong Hing Bank and provided facilities for water sports lovers at the most scenic area of the New Territories.

Setting up of the Regional Council

With the establishment of the Regional Council in 1985, a reorganization of the government structure took place in April 1985. The Recreation and Culture Department was disbanded and the district offices and recreation and sports facilities of the Recreation and Sport Service were transferred to the Urban Council in the urban area and to the Regional Council in the New Territories. However, certain sections of the RSS remained with the government, as the Recreation and Sport Service Division of the newly formed Municipal Services Branch (which was later re-structured as Recreation and Culture Branch) of the Government Secretariat. The work of these sections continued to include liaising with other government departments and assisting national sports associations and outside organizations to promote interest in recreation and sports activities generally, and improve standards at the higher levels of competitive sport. In the same year, the Secretariat of the CRS was also housed in the Recreation and Sport Service Division.

The Regional Services Department, which was the executive arm of the Regional Council, was formed on 1 April 1985 by merging the former New Territories Services Department and the component units of Recreation and Culture Department and Cultural Services Department operating in the New Territories. On the recreation and sports side, attempts were made to merge the work of the Recreation and Sport Officer grade and Amenities Officer grade by appointing District Leisure Managers to look after both the management of amenities and sports facilities and organization of sports programmes in the New Territories districts. Among the nine districts, six Senior Recreation and Sport Officers and three Chief Amenities Officers were chosen to head the district's operation in leisure services. There were some teething problems when the scheme was first started, but the senior officers had put aside their own feelings and contributed to the success in merging the work of the two grades. The merged structure is still in use in the New Territories districts, demonstrating that this is a more efficient way of redeploying resources to provide a better service for the public.

Work of the Municipal Councils

The transfer of the work of RSS to the Urban and Regional Councils appeared to be a good political move to ease off the tension between the Urban Council and the government. Both the RSS officers and Amenities Officers (who were responsible for facilities management) were put under one roof, working towards the same goal in providing wholesome leisure activities for the public. This also provided the municipal councillors opportunities in assessing the needs of their residents and providing them with adequate recreation and sports facilities and programmes in the districts. In the last 13 years, there has been a vast expansion of the recreation and sports services at the district level under the direction of the Urban and Regional Councils. The number of programmes has grown, and more sports facilities are provided. At the same time, more professional staff were employed in the district offices to organize various types of programmes for the public.

The two councils continue to provide Sport-For-All programmes at the district level, including activities such as skill learning and training in various types of racquet sports, team games, aquatic activities, outdoor pursuits, fitness and dance activities. Training courses are organized at the elementary and intermediate levels to teach the participants the basic skills with a view to assisting them to develop a lifetime sport. Competitions at novice level are also provided for those who wish to polish their skills and seek challenges. Besides training programmes, a comprehensive range of recreational activities such as family camps, excursions, children's potted sports and fun games is also available to service

the interests of all ages. New innovative programmes were also organized in recent years, such as Challenge Day, Masters Games (for middle-aged people), Corporate Games (for the working population), Chess Carnival, Lion Dance Festival, Shuttlecock Spectacular, Gold Card Fitness Scheme, Senior Citizen Fortnight, Inter-district Sports Competitions, School Sports Promotion Programmes and Promotion Scheme for the Disabled (Woo, 1996).

In April 1996, the Regional Council organized a 10th Anniversary Programme with the theme "Striving for the Best", which was a yearlong programme conducted throughout the nine districts in the New Territories. Apart from district sports and cultural events, top international and local sports and athletic stars and performing groups were invited to join the festivities and to perform for the people of Hong Kong (Tsin, 1997).

The two municipal councils have made incredible progress since they took over the responsibility of providing public recreation programmes in 1986. The Urban Council organized 4228 programmes for 195,607 people in 1986-87. The number of recreation and sports programmes increased to 9956 in 1998-99 with 656,700 participants. The Regional Council also provided 3799 programmes for 223,181 people in 1986-87 and achieved to increase the number of programmes to 8005 for 520,576 participants in 1998-99. Tables 1 and 2 show the number of projects organized by the Urban Council and Regional Council respectively, together with the number of participants and the amount of funds allocated to the recreation and sports activities from 1986 to 1999.

Hong Kong Sports Institute

The aim of the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI), formerly known as the Jubilee Sports Centre (JSC), is to provide an environment in which athletic talent is identified, nurtured and developed. The Jubilee Sports Centre was built upon the advice of the Council for Recreation and Sport because of a lack of facilities and expertise for high-level training and coaching. The JSC was built at Shatin on land reclaimed by the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club (RHKJC), now renamed as Hong Kong Jockey Club, at a cost of \$25 million. This expenditure was being matched by the government with a further \$25 million going towards the construction costs. Additional funds had come from the proceeds of the Queen's Silver Jubilee Fund, which the RHKJC was matching on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The RHKJC was also responsible for meeting the recurrent expenditure of the sports centre.

The JSC was opened in October 1982 after three years' of construction and at a cost of over \$150 million. The main

purpose of the JSC at that time was to provide training and coaching facilities. Coaches of international standing were recruited to train both the promising sportsmen and sportswomen and local coaches. The 16-hectare modern sports complex soon became the focal point for sports development at the elite level and had also been used as a popular venue for international sports exchanges.

In 1987, the JSC became autonomous with an endowment of \$350 million from the RHKJC.

The JSC became the Hong Kong Sports Institute on 1 April 1991. The objectives of the HKSI were sixfold, namely, athlete development and management; coach education and development; sports science, sports medicine and research; resource information; international exchanges; and co-operation with other bodies. The HKSI offered a sports scholarship scheme for local high-performance athletes. The scheme provided coaching, facilities, accommodation, dietary advice, sports science, sports medicine, fitness training, overseas training and support for education and employment. Over 180 local high-performance athletes in 17 sports were supported in 1991.

The HKSI encouraged public participation in sports by forming sports clubs for members of the public to join and use its facilities in 1992. These included tennis, squash, swimming and badminton clubs. It also organized sports courses at different levels for the general public.

In the past years, the scholarship athletes had attained excellent results in international competitions. Lee Lai San got her gold medal in the 1996 Olympic Games; Wong Kam Po came first in cycling in the All China Games in 1997; and Lee Lai San, Wong Kam Po, Ng Siu Ching (wushu) and the Snooker team (Chan Kwok Ming, Chan Wai Tat and Fu Ka Chun) got their gold medals in their respective sports in the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games.

Sports Development Board

The Sports Development Board (SDB), a statutory body responsible for promotion and development of sports and physical recreation in Hong Kong, was set up in 1990 based on the recommendations of a consultancy report written by Mr E B Jones, a sports administrator from Britain, (Jones, 1988). A Provisional Sports Development Board was established on 1 November 1989 to take over the work of the Council for Recreation and Sport. The SDB came into being on 1 April 1990 with a subvention of \$46 million. The SDB introduced a new block grant scheme to provide financial support to the national sports

associations. Target sports were identified and were given additional financial resources in terms of programme expenses and support staff. A Coach Accreditation Scheme was also initiated jointly with the Amateur Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong (which has been renamed as Hong Kong Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China in 1999) and the Hong Kong Sports Institute to provide a more systematic training programme for coaches.

The Hong Kong Sports Institute was amalgamated with the SDB on 1 April 1994. As a result, the SDB has become the statutory body with overall responsibility for the promotion and development of sports in Hong Kong and for resource allocation. Table 3 shows the amount of government subvention granted to SDB from 1990-1999.

Future Trends and Challenge

Recreation and sports in Hong Kong have made tremendous progress in the last 25 years. This may be due to the increasing demand for leisure activities, as a result of improved standard of living, shorter working hours, and rapid development of modern facilities and urbanization. People in Hong Kong have been able to pursue a considerable assortment of recreation and sports activities in their leisure time. Practically every sporting activity has its fair share of devotees with better opportunities for participation. While large numbers take part in or watch the many sporting events, others spend their time going to the countryside or beaches at weekends or holidays. The demand for recreation facilities and programmes will continue to grow in the coming years.

The leisure delivery system will change in the twenty-first century. The SAR government has announced that the Provisional Urban and Regional Councils would be dissolved on 1 January 2000. As a result, Mr Albert Lam, a former Director of Urban Services, was commissioned as a Consultant to review the institutional framework for the provision and management of Culture, the Arts, Recreation and Sports Services in Hong Kong after the dissolution of the municipal councils.

Mr Lam had recommended that, among other things, a new government department called Department of Culture and Leisure Services should be formed on 1 January 2000 to take over the work of the municipal councils in the organization of recreation and sports programmes and management of sports facilities and amenities. At the same time, the Recreation and Sport Officer grade and the Amenities Officer grade will be merged to form a new "Leisure Services Manager" grade.

The transfer of responsibilities from the municipal authorities

to a government department is, in fact, a reversion of the organizational structure adopted in 1982, when the Recreation and Culture Department (RCD) was formed to take over the roles of promoting recreation and sports programmes in the districts. It is interesting to note that the RCD was disbanded in 1985 and the responsibility of organizing recreation programmes was transferred to the two municipal councils.

The change may have effect on the future provision of recreation facilities and programmes to the public. The provision of recreation and sports programmes by the Urban and Regional Councils has been more than doubled in the last 13 years. It is doubtful whether the new organization will be able to maintain the same level of services for the public as from January 2000 because a government organization may not have the same flexibility and resources as those currently enjoyed by the two municipal councils. The challenge of the government will be how to provide a better, quicker, and more effective service than the municipal councils. The general public will be expecting improvements and will settle for nothing less (Lam, 1999).

Areas for Further Consideration

Based on recent developments and the recommendations made by the Consultant (Lam, 1999) there are some areas that warrant further consideration by the new department, in particular, the staff of the new Leisure Services Manager grade.

Recreation and Sports Programmes

With the merging of the Recreation and Sport Officer grade and Amenities grade to form a new grade of Leisure Services Manager, consideration should be given to relocate professional staff from the combined grade to the recreation centres and major venues to take charge of both facilities management and promotion of programmes. This will enable frontline staff to be stationed closer to the public and users of facilities. The roles and functions of the district offices should be reviewed.

The focus of current recreation and sports programmes is on elementary sports training courses. This trend has been going on since 1974. At that time, there was a genuine need to provide taster programmes and learn-to-play sports training courses to stimulate the interests of the public in leisure pursuits. The needs of today may be different because thousands of people had gone through the basic training programmes. With more modern facilities and better education background, the public should be encouraged to build up a lifetime sport and pursue the sport on their own rather than relying on the government to provide them with organized programmes. Encouraging more

community sports clubs to be formed based at the sports venues may be one of the solutions. This will not only promote the use of the facilities, but will also help develop a sporting culture in Hong Kong.

Merger of the Recreation and Sport Officer Grade and Amenities Officer Grade

The proposal to merge the Recreation and Sport Officer grade and the Amenities Officer grade as from 1 January 2000 is a most plausible move in bringing together two groups of professional people who have a common goal in providing recreational opportunities to the public. The amalgamation will achieve more effectiveness in delivering public leisure services.

The number of staff in the combined grade will consist of more than 500 officers with different backgrounds. In-service training will be required initially to provide the skills and knowledge to carry out the tasks. The new grade must not let itself be developed into a bureaucratic structure with excessive rules, closed control, limited decision-making, and red tape that inhibit the rapid action often required by the industry. With a combined force, the new body should be able to make further advances in the recreation and sports field with greater vision and creativeness. It must aim at promoting the formation of community relationships and the adoption of individual lifelong well-being behaviours (Carter, 1997). Edington (1997) envisaged that the twenty-first century would bring a number of challenges to the leisure service organizations. These changes are also applicable to Hong Kong. Firstly, there is a need to develop *market and customer driven high-yield leisure services*. With diminishing resources and the challenge of doing more with less, managers will need to invest in resources that produce targeted results, whether the outcomes be social benefits or economic ones. The challenge of operating in a cost-effective manner will continue to be a primary goal of leisure service organizations. Secondly, *outsourcing* will serve as a major way for organizations to remain flexible, while at the same time provide high quality and high impact services through cost effective measures. This is in line with the recommendation made by the Consultant that consideration should be given to contract out some of the leisure facilities for private sector management (Lam, 1999). Finally, leisure services managers will be required to engage greater *visioning and valuing* within their organizations and communities. A key to encouraging a more open structure within the organization is the promotion of *networking and collaboration* – a dynamic that promotes teaming, greater organizational communications and dialogue, and the increased capacity to generate *new ideas* and solve problems by linking individuals with relevant interest and expertise.

New Sports Facilities

When planning new sports facilities, it will be useful to provide other social facilities such as sitting out areas, meeting rooms, pro shop and coffee corner. The purpose is to provide an attractive social environment for the people apart from enjoying their sporting activities. These facilities are essential if sports clubs are to be encouraged.

Singapore has developed a series of Regional Sports and Fitness Centres that offer a full range of sporting facilities including a stadium with a running track and sports field, a swimming complex, a multi-purpose indoor sports hall, a gymnasium and fitness centre, outdoor fitness stations, an aerobics studio and areas for social activities. These centres serve as community "headquarters" for all sports and fitness activities and extend the service to the communities that they serve. Attempts should be made to re-group existing sports facilities and form regional sports centres to be manned by professional staff from the new grade, providing services to the public direct from the centres.

Sports Promotion

The performance at the international level has improved significantly in recent years as a result of more resources, better training and dedication of the athletes. Hong Kong has increased its medal haul at the Asian Games from one in 1982 to five in 1986, seven in 1990, 13 in 1994 (Whitby, 1998), and 16 in 1998, with five gold, five silver and six bronze medals. However, there is still a lack of a structured feeder system into the national squads. Absence of such a structure affects seriously the performance of the coaches at the Hong Kong Sports Institute (Whitby, 1997). It is hoped that the new department will look into this area and develop policies in talent identification and referral of athletes so that there will be a constant supply of new blood for the national teams. This is an area that had been neglected in the past because of the political conflict between the municipal councils and SDB. The Consultant pointed out in his report (Lam, 1999) that these are areas that require streamlining and coordination by the new department, including availability of sporting venues in the districts for use by the national sports associations for elite training. It was further recommended in the report that the government should take the lead in formulating a new co-ordinated Strategic Sports Development Plan, involving the SDB, SF&OC and the new department in charge of leisure services. The proposals in the report are steps in the right direction in addressing the problems related to the development of sports in Hong Kong. It is hoped that the stakeholders would iron out their differences and formulate a more co-ordinated strategic plan for recreation and sports in Hong Kong.

Table 1. District Recreation and Sports Projects Organized by the Urban Council From 1986-1999

Year	No of Projects	No of Participants	Allocation (\$m)
1986-87	4,228	195,607	4.9
1987-88	5,442	220,195	6.4
1988-89	6,703	240,399	7.2
1989-90	7,371	253,014	9.1
1990-91	7,935	254,784	10.2
1991-92	8,218	287,456	14.3
1992-93	6,970	328,738	12.9
1993-94	7,487	366,430	18.1
1994-95	7,821	410,712	23.3
1995-96	8,356	500,821	26.5
1996-97	8,811	532,860	31.6
1997-98	9,360	646,293	41.8
1998-99	9,956	656,700	48.8

Table 2. District Recreation and Sports Projects Organized by the Regional Council From 1986-1999

Year	No of Projects	No of Participants	Allocation (\$m)
1986-87	3,799	223,181	4.9
1987-88	4,164	211,318	5.1
1988-89	4,701	211,802	5.6
1989-90	4,939	210,561	7.1
1990-91	4,956	283,309	10.3
1991-92	5,065	211,152	10.0
1992-93	5,255	534,903	13.0
1993-94	5,455	297,810	13.2
1994-95	6,280	476,823	19.3
1995-96	7,183	404,856	21.3
1996-97	7,415	709,929	25.5
1997-98	7,883	457,549	30.6
1998-99	8,005	520,576	35.2

Table 3. Funds allocated to Sports Development Board From 1990 – 1999

Year	Allocation (\$ million)
1990-91	46.0
1991-92	50.0
1992-93	55.0
1993-94	60.9
1994-95	73.3
1995-96	72.4
1996-97	78.4
1997-98	105.4
1998-99	192.78*

* This includes the subvention for the Hong Kong Sports Institute

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