

Development of Physical Education Teacher Education in Hong Kong- A Problem Setting Analysis 香港體育師資培訓的發展及探索

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Abstract

Ever since Physical Education (PE) became one of electives in the Teacher Education (TE) programme in 1947, it has gradually developed from a practical and professional oriented subject to a theoretical and academic based discipline in the tertiary institutes in Hong Kong. This paper described the 'selected' historical incidents of the development of PETE in Hong Kong. PETE becomes hegemonic towards scientific bias, health-dominated, technocratic and utilitarian-oriented nowadays. It creates tensions of dichotomised issues between PE and sports science; PE and medical science; theoretical and pedagogical orientation; research and practical basis; scholarly and professional discipline; and technocratic and inquiry focus etc. Its development illustrates the differences in directions, status, functions and practices. It intends to identify problems of the present practices and to initiate discussion on alternative directions of the PETE in the coming future.

摘要

香港的體育師資培訓隨著時代的轉變而發展出不同的配套。本文就其歷史、發展、本質及任務帶引出討論及分析，內容包括體育與運動科學、體育理論與教學、體育研究及專業地位等等；藉此提出理想方向的探索。

Before 1960s – Practical-Oriented Physical Education Teacher Education

It was not until the thirties that the Government started her investment on teacher education (Burney, 1935) since Hong Kong became a colony in 1841. Through an enactment of educational ordinances and established the Northcote Teacher Training College (1939) for training local teachers historically. The measures aimed at limiting the political activities in schools and counteracting all incoming political influence of the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang through their inflowing teachers that posed possible threats to the legitimacy and political stability of the Colonial government (Morris & Sweeting, 1991).

In 1947, PE was first regarded as one of the electives in the one-, two and later three-year teacher education programmes. (Northcote College of Education, 1989) Training of PE teachers in Hong Kong was available mainly in the three Colleges of Education namely Northcote, Grantham (1951), and Sir Robert Black (1960). It was estimated that over 90% of PE teachers

in schools received their training in the above Colleges and therefore their PETE programmes had direct impact on the quality of PE.

The PETE programme at that time was 'practical oriented'. It mainly focused on the elements of craft, technique, and artistry of the teachers with the primacy of experience as the source of knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). Student PE teachers had relatively less theoretical content which included the 'goals', 'scope' and 'syllabus' of PE in schools and the 'general movement principles'. Thus the 'practical knowledge' formed the major component, which emphasised on the ability of performing the skills, analysing movement and prescribing appropriate corrections. (Livingston, 1996) Physical skill-oriented activities in form of 'drills' and a high degree of practical teaching unique to the task requirement in schools as laid down in the official syllabi (Board of Education, 1933; Education Department, 1964) dominated the PETE curriculum.

Student PE teachers were treated as 'technicist practitioners' (Ingham, 1997) in their learn-to-teach process and their abilities

to teach was a measure of the effectiveness of the PETE programme. They adhered strictly to the prescriptions of the official syllabi and the ethos of the teacher educators. This type of 'worthwhile knowledge' was disseminated to schools unproblematically. Most student teachers' reflectivity especially on the 'critique of domination, of institutions, and of repressive forms of authority' as advocated by Van Mannen (1977, p.227) was less likely to be seen.

Between 1970s – 1990s

The 'Education through Physical' Shift and the Rise of Sports

In May 1967, an anti-colonial riots fuelled by the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China broke out. (Scott, 1990) The consequence of the social unrest brought about the issue of using 'recreation and sports programmes' to commit and educate the youths. It was the policy of the Colonial Government to solve the social problems. As the results, the 'Recreation and Sport Services Unit' under the Education Department and later the Council for Recreation and Sports for promoting sports programmes to the people in every district of Hong Kong was founded in 1973.

Accordingly, the concepts of 'elite sports', 'sports build character', 'worthy use of leisure through sports' and 'life-time sports' gained an important place in the PETE curriculum. Such selective characteristic and orientation towards sportive status quo was broadly recognised by most of the people. The 'conformist socialisation through sports' model was being adopted and competitive sports became the main component of the PETE and the official PE syllabi for secondary schools (CDC, 1975, 1980, 1988).

However, there was a shift of emphasis of the subject (PE) from articulating its contribution from purely the physical one to an all-rounded development of the children in the Western society. (CDC, 1975) The name of 'Physical Training' was changed to Physical Education that embedded the idealism of the subject to include a wider scope of educational intentions. The humanistic slogan- 'education through physical' included in the Syllabi of PE for Hong Kong schools (1975; 1980) issued by the Curriculum Development Committee, Hong Kong illustrated that:

The ultimate aim of PE is the optimal development of the physically, mentally and socially integrated and adjusted individual through guided instruction and participation in selected total body sports and rhythmic and gymnastic activities conducted according to social and hygienic standards. (p. 1)

The shift was influenced by the developmental psychology and progressive pedagogical models in the Western world, which

stressed on the use of physical activities as means of achieving developmental goals. Its history could be dated back to the rise of progressive education movement in the US in the early twentieth century. (Seidentop, 1994) The 'multi-activity' model dominated the PETE curriculum. Objectives in the CDC Syllabi (1975, 1980) were formulated in abstract terms, such as general physical betterment, personal development, character building, and social and aesthetic education etc.

Thus, PETE was pulled between the 'humanistic' and 'conformist' intentions at that period. Organised sports such as Olympic gymnastics; athletics, team and racket sports became the core contents. Besides, educational gymnastics and modern dance, which were thought to be more capable of cultivating pupils' creativity and personal meanings, were incorporated. However, they had never been implemented fully.

As the main supplier of teachers, the Colleges of Education which were under the Education Department of the Hong Kong Government, run according to the two overriding but problematic principles:

- (i) the quantity of teachers was much concerned because the balance of demand and supply of teachers in schools was the prime importance;
- (ii) the accountability of training of teachers was based on cost effectiveness.

Teacher educators were civil servants who were in law primarily responsible through the Governor of Hong Kong to the UK Government. There were standardised governmental procedures and regulations governing the management of their departments and their job performance. It was commonly believed by most civil servants that 'the less one initiated, the fewer mistakes one would commit'. Under such 'apolitical' nature, teacher education was mainly implemented as the 'reproduction' of knowledge (Morris, 1997).

Student PE teachers at that time still stuck to the traditional 'technicist' role (Ingham, 1997) for their PETE content emphasised mainly on 'how' or 'where' rather than 'why to do it' (Sparkes, 1993). They were expected to accept the taken-for-granted knowledge of teaching and legitimated their teacher status upon graduation automatically. It resulted in their inclination to be more conservative and preservative as they were the privileged group benefited within the system. Learning to teach was viewed as a 'transmission' process and the knowledge of teaching was transferred to potential teachers apolitically. Accordingly, the development of the culture and the reconstruction of the society became the least concerns for all (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Since 1990s - An Academic Shift

Under the influence of Henry's (1964) declaration of PE as an academic discipline, the 'big ten body of knowledge' adapted from other cognate disciplines was accepted as knowledge domains for the PETE. It included exercise physiology, biomechanics, motor learning and control, sport psychology, sport sociology, philosophy, adapted PE, sports history, sports activity, and curriculum. They subsequently became the core content of most degree programmes in tertiary institutes of the Western World (Thomas, 1990). The development gave rise to these sub-disciplines and their gradual departure from the PETE for illustrating their distinct difference of being academic disciplines rather than professional preparation. (see Talbot (1998) for situation of the UK; Bain (1990) for the U.S.; Brooker & Macdonald (1995) for Australia; Whitson & Macintosh (1990) for Canada) In many cases, PETE was renamed as 'sports science'; 'kinesiology'; 'recreation management' and 'movement arts and sciences' etc. These programmes extended graduates to other careers such as sports coaches, recreation manager, and sports scientists etc.

PETE in Hong Kong experienced similar changes in the late eighties and started to include these sub-disciplines as the core content. Intellectual development and the teaching from the perspectives of an academic discipline, specialisation and research findings have dominated most degree programmes in various tertiary institutions. Accordingly, an inter-disciplinary approach with sub-disciplines formed the knowledge based PETE.

As PETE programme and research enterprise oriented more towards the parent disciplines, there was a tendency of their departure from their relevance of providing service to schools. (Lawson, 1998). Relatively less time was allotted to the pedagogical aspects and the theory/practice division within the profession was resulted. Moreover, the place of physical activity within the PETE curriculum was marginalized. (Saunders, 1994) Gradually, teaching has become less important in the tertiary institutes when compared with other academic and research activities. Less emphasis has been placed on broader personal development, practical experiences, and social and moral responsibilities of the teachers (Teather, 1994).

It resulted in the disciplinary debate upon issues of disciplinary versus professional orientation or sometimes the theoretical / research versus practical / applied dichotomy of the subject. (Freeman, 1997; Park, 1980) Practitioners towards disciplinary orientation tended to involve in theoretical and scholarly pursuits. Others inclined more towards the professional and pedagogical efforts. It reflected considerable disagreement on the fundamental question of what discipline the PETE should be.

Domination of Sport Science in the PETE

Within the sub-disciplines, 'sports science' including exercise physiology, sports medicine, sports biomechanics and sports psychology etc. gained the strongest foothold and became dominant in the knowledge of PETE. It was due to the return of many local physical educators who graduated from their medico-scientific post-graduate programmes abroad. They gradually took up the leadership positions in the tertiary institutions and produced scientific knowledge through research. They generated knowledge scientifically and grounded it in terms of human and society needs, i.e. improving sports performance and promoting optimal health and body maintenance. They successfully created a 'professionalised sports science system' and became 'sports scientist experts' in Hong Kong.

The old-fashion departmental title in terms of PE was no longer able to communicate sub-disciplinary intentions and devoid of prestige vis-à-vis other disciplinary colleagues. Initiation of including the term 'Sports Science' in the departments of PE happened in the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1989, the University of Hong Kong in 1993, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 1998. Sports science secures its importance in the PETE while the humanities and soft social sciences are either marginalized or eliminated gradually (Ingham, 1997, p. 161).

What demonstrated here is not simply aspirant professionals articulating an enhanced role for themselves, it signifies the constitution of a social institution of sports science. It governs itself with pre-definite way of enquiry, prescribed knowledge content and norms of human performance, and the predetermined ways to achieve them. Its formation and rectification of 'presupposed system goals', which are taken for granted and no longer subject to serious re-examination is problematic. To challenge its hegemony especially from outsiders becomes increasingly difficult (Whitson & Macintosh, 1990).

PETE has shifted from what was essentially teacher training to a highly biological scientific and professionalised discipline (Macintosh & Witson, 1990; McKay, 1991; Lawson, 1993). Under such system, it is common to see that 'sports for the elites' are articulated at the expense of 'sports for all'. Health-related activities are focused while other modes of physical activities are ignored. Sports science is emphasised and the social and philosophical discourses diminish. The increasing 'scientised' PETE hinders the awareness of curriculum, pedagogy and the humanities. This relates to the fundamental question of what the most appropriate knowledge structures for PETE and the profession should be (Lawson, 1985).

Domination of the Technocratic Rationality

The field of PE is characterised by the intimate relationship among the research, expertise, policymaking and legitimate practices. There is a power issue within them. PE researchers are considered as experts in the field because of their production of research-based knowledge which in turns, inform policy and practices. The researchers distinguished from those 'technists' who are to be informed by such knowledge.

As the popularity of the positivism in the research field in the past decades, the behaviourist and social behavioural research have dominated the PE research agendas and related its training programmes as part of the PETE. Another reason is the domination of the sports science which are with natural-science origin. It also reflects the physical practitioners' satisfaction with their role as 'technists' unambiguously. They take the research knowledge unproblematically.

PE researchers adopt the behavioural science approach like, foreground on 'utility'. Their fundamental belief is that 'PE teaching is an applied science'. By using 'scientific logic' including the 'observable data', 'empirical methods', 'objectivity' and 'causality', factual knowledge is produced and generalised as 'grand theory' which can be isolated, practised, and applied in a systematic manner in the forms of a discrete series of skills in teaching PE. Its emphasis is on the development of specific and observable skills of teaching PE which are assumed to be related to pupils of learning.

Therefore, there is always a common framework of experience and universal goals for all student teachers. They are the teaching strategies, class management, curriculum and programme planning etc. Numbers of models and instruments (Metzger, 1989) of quantifying the behaviours of the teachers, the pupils and the teacher-pupil interaction (Flander's interaction Analysis; Cheffers' Adaptation of Flander's interaction Analysis; Academic Learning Time...) were developed for studying PE teaching. The two classic textbooks of this type namely 'Developing Teaching skills' by Seidentop (1994a), and 'Teaching PE for learning' by Rink (1998) were the most popular and commonly adopted as core references for PE graduates in Hong Kong. Student PE teachers are regarded them as the 'laws and principles' teaching PE. Certainly, a prescriptive PETE curriculum rather than problematic one is the central focus.

The scientific knowledge generated by the behavioural researchers seems to be helpful for student PE teachers in developing respective teaching skills and knowledge. It may sometimes provide means for student PE teachers to solve their practical problems in the playground. However, it also results in shaping the 'technical-rationality' within which three basic problematic conceptions in

PETE arise: Firstly, the law-like generalisation of the knowledge is recognised by the teacher educators, and then it passes to the PE teachers who regard it as the sole owners of truth and inculcate 'commonly accepted' knowledge to pupils in schools. Secondly, it poses a more serious impact on the development of the pre-service PE teachers that knowledge can be taught unproblematically and this belief which becomes neutral, static, and universal. Thirdly, teaching can be reduced to behaviour modification strategies and perceived as conditioning and manipulating students (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). Gradually, it is misconceived that the future PE teaching as a profession rests only on improvements of scientific knowledge (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997).

It is common to see that many PE practitioners in the Western World (Bain, 1990; Brooker & Macdonald, 1995; Talbot, 1998; Whitson & Macintosh, 1990) have criticised the domination of the sports science and the hegemonic technological knowledge bases of teaching. PETE is technically and utilitarian bias and dominated by ethos of technicisation, corporatisation, fragmentation, specialisation and sexism', which in turns limit the possibilities of PE teachers to value equitable, intrinsically satisfying, and creative PE programmes (Macdonald & Tinning, 1995). More important, the present practices in PETE in Hong Kong are less capable of cultivating student PE teachers' reflexivity and critical dimensions.

Possible Shift: Inquiry-Oriented PETE

Institutions of 'sports science' and 'technocratic teaching' from the behavioural research dominate the PETE programmes by setting pre-defined patterns of viewing the purposes, content and processes of PE teaching. They dictate the one direction against the many other directions which is theoretical be possible. They are barriers of recognising and experiencing alternative structures for the student teachers are very often lose sight on the fact that the existing reality is only one of the many possible alternatives that exist.

Zeichner (1983) and Liston and Zeichner (1991) suggest that the situation can be improved by adopting the 'inquiry-oriented teacher education' and the development of 'critical inquiring PE teachers' should become the primary goal of PETE programmes (Graham, 1991; Kirk, 1986; O'Sullivan, 1996). Under this model, student PE teachers are educated as active agents with all types of 'critical enquiry' in their learning-to-teach process. (Liston & Zeichner, 1991) An 'academic enquiry' equips them with the reflection and promotion of understanding the subjective matter and translates it into pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). 'The social efficiency enquiry' promotes them with intelligent use of teaching strategies suggested by research. 'The development enquiry' directs them towards the understanding of the development

and learning of the pupils. 'The social reconstructional enquiry' acquaints them with capability to tackle the social conditions of schooling and issues of equity and justice.

This theoretical framework requires student PE teachers to master the content knowledge with the 'habit of critical inquiry' especially on moral and ethical issue of domination and authority. It not only cultivates their reflectivity on 'an utilitarian mechanism' of teaching skills, but also commits them with the 'consideration of all aspects of the education process as problematic and demands the reconstruction of experience in the light of political, institutional, social and moral constraints'. (Williams, 1993, p. 137) It is similar to Schon's (1983, p. 68) metaphor of reflection-in-action, i.e. reflecting on practice. Schon considers that someone is engaged in reflection-in-action 'becomes a researcher in the practice context'. It can be both 'rigorous and relevant' and is in this way that breaks free of 'the dichotomies of technical rationality'. It directs towards a social reconstruction model towards the PETE.

Conclusion: Critical PE Educators /Agents of Change

The above discussion of the development of the PETE in Hong Kong is appealing to those competing missions, goals and objectives, together with their respective constituencies. One can imagine the warfare being waged among the policy makers, institute, teacher educators, students, PE teachers, coaches and school administrators. Study in terms of problem setting may not resolve the conflicts, but through the process of framing and naming, they can clarify the attendant issues and foundation assumptions.

The development of the PETE in Hong Kong has been shaped by a variety of forces such as the government intents, the development of the subject itself, the rules of the games in the tertiary institutes, the domination of the sub-disciplines and the sports science hegemony etc. The development, which based on experience, started with the foundational, practical-pedagogical and humanistic ones. It later developed as theoretical, technocratic, sub-disciplinary and medico-scientific ones, which primarily were research based. The roles of the student PE teachers shaped by the development of the PETE shifted from being primarily practical-technicists to conformists, humanists and 'technocratic intelligentsias' (Ingham, 1997).

Through the developmental process, PETE is categorised by a number of tensions and sometimes contradictions: PE vs sports science; inter-discipline vs sub-discipline; theoretical vs pedagogical; research based vs practical based; scholarly vs professional; and technocratic vs inquiry based, etc. Sage (1991) suggested that student teachers should be prepared with 'sufficient

common understandings and technical proficiencies. With a learning core that integrates various types of knowledge and ways of knowing, it signifies the need for a broad understanding in the social sciences and humanities as well as the natural sciences.

Perhaps, what we demand our future PE teachers from the PETE in Hong Kong is simply as what Evans (1995) has articulated. They should be highly skilled professionals and able to deliver the 'reconstructionist curriculum' suggested by Professor Dennis Lawton (1989). Such a curriculum aims at putting stress on the context of PE upon physical development as well as the social values. Experiences of sports, physical leisure and health activities are geared for developing citizenship and social co-operation. It should be a curriculum that knowledge is not ignored, but questioned. It should be justified not only in terms of custom, tradition and cultural heritage but also social needs. Furthermore, as implied by Lawton, in a democratic society, values contain certain kinds of freedom, and a version of social reconstruction is the most appropriate planning model. On the other hand, a shared common vision of the PE practitioners is decisive before any construction and reconstruction of the PETE in Hong Kong made.

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