

To What Extent Can Physical Education Be Justified in the School Curriculum

體育科在學校課程中的重要性

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Abstract

Physical education is a subject through physical activities to teach the young people recognize their significance as important features of our culture, and develop a richer appreciation of culture and contribution. The deliberation and articulation about the role of purposeful physical activities in enhancing the quality of life, in order to illuminate peoples' understanding of what to do with their lives and how they choose to spend their spare time. Such understanding requires the engagement in purposeful physical activities so that person is able to make an informed choice. Physical education can make students know more about the other people and the society, so that their social knowledge and moral value would be enhanced. Aesthetic value is educated through physical education and students will learn how to appreciate aesthetic movements. Physical education can help students to develop a healthy life-style and promote the qualities of desirable moral behaviours, co-operation in communal life. Thus, the education of young people would be incomplete, if physical education is neglected and not recognized for the unique contribution.

摘要

體育科是一個以身體活動來教育人們的學科，使人們認識到除了知識外，還有很多作為人的應有特質。通過有目的、有計劃的體育活動，能使人們知道如何選擇適當的運動來鍛鍊身體、認識與人相處的技巧、確立道德標準、培養美感、建立健康的生活模式、善用餘暇等高尚的情操。體育科的獨特性若未能發揮，則理想中的學校課程會被視為不完整，而全人教育的目標也不可能達到的。

Introduction

The history of 'Physical Education' (PE) can be traced back to 1870 when 'physical education' has developed from simple military drill to a variegated and bewildering pattern of 'activities' (Kirk, 1992). PE has progressed a long way from the days of 'drill', when nothing more than movement of the human frame, usually in the time with a number of other bodies, was required. It has however, another big step to take in order to assume its proper place in the mobile mosaic known as education. That is trying to take this step is shown by the attempt, often somewhat incoherent, to throw off the very name physical education. People seem to saying, 'there is more to this activity than the purely physical, and it is therefore an embarrassment to be saddled with a term which implies that we are concerned with the physical education of children and more' (Kirk, 1992). It is not easy,

however to replace this term and the attempts, which have already been made, have met with either opposition or ridicule. 'Movement' on its own is too generic a term. If 'physical' is understood as a noun and part of a dual worded title, one needs the subject as a form of education in its own right, where 'physical' is the distinctive keynote. If one sees 'physical' is an adjective describing a special type of education, 'education' become the keynote and the 'physical' is simply the medium through which education is carried out. It is not until recently that PE is defined as 'physical activity with education aims' (CDI, 1999).

The Tasks of the School Curriculum

In Hong Kong, the place of physical education in school curriculum was affirmed by Education Department in 1980 that the average time allocation to PE in both primary and secondary

school should be at least two periods per week. In 1980, the Education Department set the curriculum straight by announcing that PE has to be a compulsory subject and in 1991, PE became an examinable subject in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (CDI, 1999). Moreover, it is stipulated in the Education Department that PE lessons should be taught by teachers with professional training in this subject (CDC, 1995). All these incidences stimulated the PE professionals to reconsider the importance of PE in the school curriculum. In Hong Kong, the emphasis of PE is on physical growth and mental health of children but the traditional Chinese art and Chinese cultural heritage is ignored. It has been argued that one of the tasks of school is to promote access to, and engagement in cultural forms and practices in order that young people can come to understand and recognize their significance (Chow, 1996; Fu & Yang, 1996; Kirk, 1992; Melograno, 1996; Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997). Thus, the curriculum became the mean by which children can encounter and become acquainted with important and significant aspect of cultural life. This means that young people can learn to participate in sports, dance, and adventure activities which contain practices and rich traditions that exemplify human endeavour and are regarded as being valuable and worthwhile. Hence, it is important to recognize and acknowledge their significance within a culture because any form of education enterprise concerned with such traditions would be incomplete without their inclusion. Thus, the transmission of the cultural values and beliefs can be handed down from generation to generation through the subject of PE (Chow, 1996; Fu & Yang, 1996; Kirk, 1992; Melograno, 1996; Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997).

There is a need to go beyond the simple transmission of cultural forms and examine the transformative power of understanding derived from studying and engagement in sports, dance and adventure activities. It is important to recognize that over time some traditional activities lost their appeal as interests change, and as developments occur in technology they provide scope for the opening up of new adventure or wildness challenges. Schools need to recognize their roles in stimulating new interest and widening perspectives about the richness and potential of the vast range of pursuit possible. Coming to understand this scope and recognizing its significance and impact within our culture and tradition is an important aspect of school life. Following from this argument that tradition into cultural forms and tradition should involve a study of sports, dance, and adventure activities, it is important to recognize their contribution to the enhancement of an individual's quality of life (Melograno, 1996; Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997). Such pursuits have been invented by people because they have the power to enrich life, become an absorbing interest which rewards and fulfils, provide avenues for the pursuit of human excellence and the development of human capacities and qualities, and enable people to explore their own potentialities.

The Importance of Physical Education

Physical education is part of the whole business of education. It should get along with English, Mathematics, Integrated Sciences, Chinese History, Music, Geography and all the other school subjects and play a part in the turning out of an educated individual. It is an activity, which happens far off in the gymnasium, on the playing field, or in the hall, with very significant relation to the rest of the schoolwork. Physical education should be a significant part of education and this belief lies no denigration of the subject, but an elevation of it to equal worth and esteem with other subjects. Through PE, students will learn desirable social attitudes and patterns of behaviour, they will understand the essentials of co-operation with others in communal life with their sense of responsibilities and belonging being fostered. PE can also cultivate students' powers of observation, analysis, judgement and creativity in the process of participation in activities. Encouraging students to develop a lifelong interest in maintaining own physical and mental health is the ultimate goal of physical education (CDC, 1995).

A state of enhanced functioning and homeostasis. 'Feeling good' is the result of enhanced functioning brought about by a more active life style that incorporates regular exercise. In understanding oneself as a physical organism, and how one's well-being can be promoted, a person would need to learn a great deal of practical knowledge concerning the growing body and its needs, the relationship of exercise with the health and welfare of an individual and how it can be protected and enhanced. A person would need to know how to exercise safely and correctly, how to make decisions about the role of physical activities within a life-style and how it can be incorporated into the routine pattern of daily life (Chow, 1996; Fu & Yang, 1996; Kirk, 1992; Melograno, 1996; Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997). Here, it is not simple a matter of acquiring knowledge about human behaviour, but coming to understand something of the complex inter-relationships of a person as a living whole, and acting on this understanding, to promote the 'well-being' of a person. In making sense of such understanding engagement in purposeful physical activity and the acquisition of a practical knowledge base about the enhancement of a person's well-being can play an important part in the education of young people.

Physical education contain many kinds of activities, like sports dance and adventure activities which are human practices of great significance that affect people in a very pervasive manner and have become a fundamental part of human life. Such activities take up a great deal of media space in newspaper, occupy many hours of radio and television, and throughout the world million of people find them in absorbing interest and devote a lot of time to participate in them, and they cause much more political

and social debate. They have inspired people in the art world like musicians, artists, poets, writers and film producers to create works that have contributed to a deeper understanding of these cultural forms (Chow, 1996; Fu & Yang, 1996; Kirk, 1992; Melograno, 1996; Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997).

Adventure in the outdoors, the natural environment and wilderness represent both a source for satisfying curiosity and a challenge for the expression of human endeavour. Dance and performing arts are a constant source of inspiration and delight to both spectator and performer. Thus, within the field of human endeavour, sports, dance, and adventure pursuits represent an important and significant aspect of culture of human life. Physical education in schools provides the mean by which people can learn how to participate and become involved in sporting activities, dance and adventure activities (i.e. purposeful physical activities). So that they are able to make choices and select activities which can contribute to the quality of their lives. At this point, it is important to recognize that purposeful physical activities represent only one curriculum source for enriching the quality of people's lives. Even though physical education in schools has the capacity to transform and enrich lives, it is important that pupils go beyond this, so that their engagement, appreciation and subsequent reflections contribute to an understanding of their world and illuminate their perspective within the world (Chow, 1996; Fu & Yang, 1996; Kirk, 1992; Melograno, 1996; Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997). As a consequence, this engagement, appreciation and reflection will enable them to make informed decisions about what to do with their lives, and the way they choose to spend their leisure time.

Purposeful physical activities can be important both in and for enhancement of body through engagement in physical activities. It is the person who benefits not simply the body. The body's organs and system need activities in order to develop them. This inbuilt necessity for activities in order to promote the appropriate use of body's organs and systems is an important feature of our human nature. As a consequence of being strengthened by activity, a state of enhanced functioning provide energy to enrich life and generate feelings of well-being which promote the 'good' of a person, enabling human nature to flourish (Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997). Physical education can be seen as some form of emotional catharsis, a release of pent up energy or relief from the boredom of academic study. This point recognized by many students when interviewed about why they like physical education (Wuest & Lombardo, 1994). It could also be used as some kind of socializing process or as a way of promoting the communal life of a school. Exercise could be seen as a means of making young people fitter, or simply as therapy for these pupils with some form of psychological dysfunction. In the same way, physical education could be used, in narrow

sense, to teach young people about the problems of cardiac risk factors and how exercise can play some part in the alleviation of such diseases. According to Wuest and Lombardo (1994), exercise can increase the ability of the circulatory and respiratory systems to supply fuel and eliminate waste products. The effects of exercise manifest themselves as adaptive responses by the body to the stress placed on various tissue and biological functions by the increased demands of exercise. Also, exercise can reduce the cholesterol, which is inside the blood vessels, and especially for coronary vessels, exercise can lower the incidence of coronary heart disease (Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997).

In the chivalrous code of sportsmanship, there is also much that is of education value. In Webster's dictionary, sportsmanship is defined as 'conduct' becoming to a sportsman, involving honest rivalry and graceful acceptance of results. In fiercely competitive world, it is of social significance to have standards that call upon a sense of fairness and a consideration for the other man. Its intrinsic co-operativeness brings a fellowship to its exponent's affairs without a loss of identity. Another contribution of physical education is that it is active and creative. As we have noted it gathers experience at first hand and by so doing gives opportunity for spontaneity and self-expression which can sometimes be accompanied by a heightened perception and awareness of one's 'self'. In some form of dance, for example, where room is left for extemporization and fluidity of movement, such opportunities will come naturally and through them an acquired aggregation of self-knowledge will develop. This is all part of the individualizing process with which education is partially concerned. By a variety of unique and varied experience the danger of uniformity can, to some extent, be avoided. Lest it should be thought, however, that the state of self realization is incompatible with sociability, it must be remembered the self-realization, as Stillwell and Willgoose (1997) and Wuest and Lombardo (1994) pointed out, is a fulfillment of the total personality of which the society as a whole is furthered through attention to self, or individual education.

Physical education is also an aesthetic education. The fact that these elements exist in the curriculum does not constitute aesthetic education. Indeed, 'doing' a bit of 'aesthetic awareness' in one or two designated activities may present a barrier to pupils' understanding of their responses to much broader range of activities major team sports, for example. By aesthetic education, we refer to the process whereby pupils are taught to appraise human movement for its aesthetic impact: to explore and possibly articulate aesthetic responses. Thus, students are introduced to the notions of colour, harmony, rhythm, style fluency, pattern, economy of action, balance, beauty, build-up and release of tension possibly even aggression and its outward manifestation, and many more elements which are present in all sports to varying degrees and which evoke responses in both participants and spectators

(Melograno, 1996; Stillwell & Willgoose, 1997). Through physical education, pupils could have chance to get along with other people for as Wuest and Lombardo, (1994) says, 'the young child or the adolescent "find himself" in a group. It is in the group that one realizes oneself as a personality.' There are attendant dangers though on accepting the group's standard, attitudes and opinions without question for, from the ethical standpoint, they can be either good or bad. Social development then, especially if it involves a passive conformity to group moves, is not necessarily in accord with the values for which education in our society should stand. Character, is a term which help bridge the gap between what often 'does occur' as opposed to what 'ought to occur'. It is to do with the culture's values and yet the same time allow for will and independence of thought.

Conclusion

Physical education is a subject through physical activities to teach the young people recognize their significance as important features of our culture, and develop a richer appreciation of culture and contribution. The deliberation and articulation about the role of purposeful physical activities in enhancing the quality of life, in order to illuminate peoples' understanding of what to do with their lives and how they choose to spend their spare time. Such understanding requires the engagement in purposeful physical activities so that person is able to make an informed choice. Also, as mentioned before, physical education can provide a wide range of contribution in our daily lives. It makes us have a good physique to face our daily work. It can prevent coronary heart disease, obesity, osteoporosis and many other diseases. It could make students know more about the other people and the society, so that their social knowledge and moral value would be enhanced. To know more deeply about physical activities, one can recognize that not only participate in the activities would get fun or sense of satisfaction, but also to be a spectator. This is because the aesthetic value was educated through physical education. As a conclusion, the author would strongly supported the tentative position statement made by Curriculum Development Institute that

PE is part of the school curriculum aiming to help students to develop an active life-style and acquire good health, physical fitness and bodily co-ordination by means of teaching them various sports skills and knowledge. It further helps to promote the qualities of desirable moral behaviours, co-operation in communal life, the ability of making decision, and the appreciation of aesthetic movements. (CDI, 1999, p. 8)

Thus, the education of young people would be incomplete if physical education was neglected and not recognized for the unique contribution.

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