Comparison of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum Standards Between Mainland China and Hong Kong

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With the continuous attention of the physical education curriculum, the mainland of China and Hong Kong, China is making continuous progress in the exploration of physical education curriculum standards. Through the comparison of the framework, content, and evaluation of curriculum standards, the two curriculum standards have their own similarities and characteristics. This paper compares the primary school physical education curriculum standards between Mainland China and Hong Kong to provide a reference for the further improvement of primary school physical education and health curriculum standards in mainland China.

Keywords: Mainland China, Hong Kong, primary school physical education, comparison

Introduction

More and more regions, organizations, and countries attach importance to sports with its rich and flexible forms and positive influence. In 2015, the United Nations educational, scientific, and cultural organization proposed that “sports is the entry point for students to participate in sports activities for life,” affirming the importance of sports. Because of this, in order to better construct the physical education curriculum, mainland China and Hong Kong have continuously updated the curriculum standards of the physical education curriculum and guided the healthy development of the physical education curriculum. Due to the differences in history, culture, and other aspects, the curriculum standards of the two places have their own advantages and differences.

Summary of Physical Education Curriculum Standards in Mainland China and Hong Kong in the 21st Century

Curriculum Standards of Physical Education and Health of Compulsory Education in Mainland China

Since the end of the 20th century, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council passed the “Decision on Deepening Education Reform and Comprehensively Promoting Quality Education,” which clearly pointed out that school education should establish the guiding ideology of health first. Subsequently, the course of physical education in China was also named “sports and health.” With the continuous promotion of such education concept and reform, the Ministry of Education promulgated the “Physical Education and Health Syllabus” in 2000, which takes “strengthening students’ physique” as the guiding ideology. In 2001, the outline of basic education curriculum reform (Trial implementation) pointed out that we should change the current situation of curriculum content which is “complicated, difficult, partial, and
old” and lay emphasis on book knowledge, strengthen the connection between the course content and students’
life, modern society, and the development of science and technology, pay attention to students’ learning interest
and learning experience, and select the basic knowledge and basic skills necessary for lifelong learning (Zhong,
Cui, & Zhang, 2001). In 2001, “Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standard (Experimental Draft)”
came into people’s view. Compared with the previous “Physical Education and Health Syllabus,” the “Physical
Education and Health Curriculum Standard (Experimental Draft)” emphasizes that “health first” is the guiding
ideology, and it is more specific and operable in terms of curriculum objectives. It also changes the previous
competitive teaching system which divides learning areas based on sports events. The design ideas and
presentation methods of which have been obtained by most teachers and students’ identification. According to
the requirements of the Ministry of Education, the curriculum standard revision group started the revision of
“The Compulsory Education Physical Education (and Health) Curriculum Standard (Experimental Draft)” in
April 2007, and finally promulgated “The Curriculum Standard of Physical Education and Health in
Compulsory Education (2011 Edition)” (hereinafter referred to as the “curriculum standard”) in 2011, which
has become the current compulsory education stage of physical education and health curriculum in China
Guidance document.

According to the guiding ideology of “health first,” “the curriculum standard” emphasizes the practical
characteristics of the course and the students’ dominant position in learning. The teaching contents pay more
attention to the basis and selectivity, and the teaching methods are more diversified and effective. Based on
training students’ sports and health knowledge, basic skills, and methods, it can enhance physical fitness,
cultivate firm character, cooperation, and communication ability, and lay a solid foundation for lifelong
participation in physical exercise and comprehensive development.

Curriculum Guidelines for Sports Learning in Hong Kong, China

In September 1999, the Education Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region proposed
the integration of disciplines and the cultivation of knowledge, ability, and values. Therefore, in 2002, the
Curriculum Development Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region compiled “The
Curriculum Guidelines in the Field of Physical Education Learning.” Hong Kong’s compulsory education is
divided into six categories: sports skills, health, and physical fitness, sports-related values and attitudes, safety
knowledge, and practice, activity knowledge and aesthetic ability (Hong Kong Curriculum Development
Council, 2002). In 2015, the Education Department of Hong Kong, through a series of questionnaires and other
means, aims to maintain Hong Kong’s competitive advantage in the deepening development of Hong Kong’s
school curriculum and the increasingly fierce globalization. Therefore, in 2017, on the basis of deepening the
“learning to learn” course, we updated the “Curriculum Guidance in the Field of Physical Education Learning
(Primary One to Secondary Six) 2017” (hereinafter referred to as the “guidance”) which includes eight learning
areas, in which sports, as one of the eight learning areas, replaced the “Curriculum Guidance in the Field of
Physical Education” compiled in 2002.

The interpretation of sports in the “guidelines” is “education through physical activities,” and the ultimate
goal of education in Hong Kong is to achieve the whole person’s education. As one of the seven learning
purposes of primary and secondary school students, the physical education learning field is an important way to
form a healthy lifestyle for students and enhance their interest in sports and art activities. “Guidelines” clearly
states that physical education curriculum is not only the construction guidance for high-quality sports activities,
but also lays a solid foundation for the cultivation of students’ attention to the safety of activities, the construction of positive attitude and values, and the cultivation of students to be lifelong learning, responsible citizens, and able to contribute to society.

**Comparison of Primary School Physical Education Curriculum Standards between Mainland China and Hong Kong**

**Comparison of Curriculum Standard Framework**

The “curriculum standard” in mainland China consists of four parts: preface, curriculum objectives, curriculum contents, and implementation suggestions. In the preface, the nature of physical education and health curriculum, the basic concept of curriculum, and the thinking of curriculum design are three parts. The curriculum objectives are explained from four aspects of sports participation, sports skills, physical health, and social adaptation. The content of the curriculum is based on the four levels of compulsory education stages. Each curriculum objective is subdivided into learning objectives, evaluation points, and evaluation methods. Among them, the primary school stage includes the first three levels: Level 1 (Grade 1-2), Level 2 (Grade 3-4), and Level 3 (Grade 5-6); the implementation suggestions part provides multi-angle suggestions on teaching, evaluation, textbook compilation, and curriculum resource development and utilization.

The “guidelines” include eight parts: introduction, summary, introduction, curriculum structure, curriculum planning, learning and teaching, assessment, learning, and teaching resources. The introduction gives a brief description of the significance of the “guidelines” and the changes compared with the 2002 edition. In the summary part, it expounds on the field of physical education learning, including the development direction, the purpose, the central curriculum (open and flexible curriculum framework), the relationship between the central curriculum and school curriculum, learning and teaching, evaluation, learning and teaching resources. The introduction part includes the updated “guidance” based on the content of “Curriculum Guidance in the Field of Physical Education Learning (Primary One to Secondary Three) (2002),” which aims to provide the development direction of physical education curriculum to schools, and provides relevant teaching resources and curriculum documents as a reference. It also discusses the learning field, orientation, basic concept, development direction, and development strategy of physical education curriculum. Clear definition, curriculum structure includes three major aspects: curriculum purpose, structure, and organization; curriculum planning mainly describes the principles that teachers should follow in the formulation and development of school physical education curriculum, that is, the guiding principle. In the relationship between the central curriculum and school curriculum, the open and flexible curriculum framework is taken as the blueprint to develop school physical education flexibly. Besides, it also discusses in detail the planning of school physical education curriculum, the allocation of class hours, the effective connection between different stages and interdisciplinary fields; the learning and teaching part emphasizes the guiding principles and directions in the process of learning and teaching, as well as diversified education policies for special education students and gifted students; the evaluation part mainly includes the principle and mode of evaluation, and the use plan of progressive evaluation and summative evaluation, school evaluation, and public audit. Finally, in the part of learning and teaching resources, it puts forward the strategies of high-quality resource support and resource management, to provide a guarantee for the development of the physical education curriculum.
The primary school physical education curriculum standards in inland China and Hong Kong are relatively clear. It can be seen from Figure 1 that both of them have the same requirements on curriculum objectives, curriculum content, and planning, curriculum teaching suggestions, suggestions on curriculum resources, and curriculum evaluation. The differences in the system mainly include the following two points: First, from the overall framework, the “curriculum standards” are more rational, and the “guidelines” cover more extensive issues about the physical education curriculum. Starting from the basic elements of curriculum organization, “curriculum standards” clearly and clearly describes all aspects, while the “guidelines” are implied in one or more parts. For example, in terms of implementation suggestions, “curriculum standards” is divided into four aspects, while “guidelines” are scattered in learning and teaching, evaluation, learning, and teaching resources; second, from the preface (Different from the introduction of nature, basic concepts, and design ideas of the curriculum in the “curriculum standards,” the “guidelines” are more inclined to introduce the background and process of the development of the “curriculum standards”), which may be the reason why the Hong Kong curriculum standards are formulated through the Curriculum Development Council. Thirdly, on the expression of curriculum objectives, the curriculum standard divides the curriculum into four learning aspects: sports participation, sports skills, physical health, mental health, and social adaptation through three-dimensional objectives, namely knowledge and skills, process, and method, emotional attitude, and values. While the guidance is based on subject knowledge and skills, common ability (including cooperation ability, communication ability, and so on). Creativity, discernible thinking ability, general information technology ability, mathematics ability, problem-solving ability, self-learning ability, and self-management ability and positive values and positive attitude (including seven aspects of perseverance, respect for others, sense of responsibility, national identity, commitment spirit, integrity, and care) are related to each other and physical fitness, sports-related values and attitudes, safety knowledge, and practice, activity knowledge, and aesthetic ability.

**Comparison of Course Contents**

In the division of curriculum content, the “curriculum standard” divides the curriculum into four learning aspects: sports participation, sports skills, physical health, mental health, and social adaptation through
three-dimensional objectives, namely, knowledge, skills, process, method, emotional attitude, and values. In the stage of compulsory education, the physical education and health curriculum divides students into four levels and sets corresponding learning objectives in four aspects: sports participation, sports skills, physical health, mental health, and social adaptation (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2001). It can be clearly seen from Table 1 that the primary school stage in China is divided into three levels, of which Level 1 and Level 2 are consistent in the classification of learning. Through the text study of the “curriculum standards,” we can find that level two is the further development and deepening on the basis of achieving the learning objectives of level one. According to the physiological and psychological characteristics of the students in the higher learning stage of primary school, the learning objectives have been increased or decreased, which reflects the curriculum design idea of dividing learning level and setting corresponding learning objectives according to the physical and mental development characteristics of students in the “curriculum standard.”

Table 1

*Course Contents of the Curriculum Standard of Physical Education and Health in Compulsory Education (2011 Edition)*

| Sports participation | Sports skills | Learning | Physical health | Mental health and social adaptation |
|----------------------|---------------|----------|----------------|------------------------------------|
|                      | mental health and social adaptation | Experience; sports fun and success | Master; sports knowledge; methods | Master; knowledge; methods | Build a good body shape and posture | Comprehensive development of physical fitness and fitness ability | Improve the ability to adapt to the natural environment | Cultivate strong will | Learn how to control emotions | Form a sense of cooperation and ability | Have good sports ethics |
| Level 1 (grade 1-2)  | ✓              | ✓        | ✓              | ✓                     | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                      |
| Level 2 (grade 3-4)  | ✓              | ✓        | ✓              | ✓                     | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                      |
| Level 3 (grade 5-6)  | ✓              | ✓        | ✓              | ✓                     | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                      | ✓                      |

The “guidelines,” on the other hand, adopt discipline knowledge and skills, common abilities (including collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, general information technology, mathematics, problem-solving, self-study, and self-management) and positive values and positive attitudes (including perseverance, respect for others, sense of responsibility, national identity, and commitment). The content of learning can be divided into six categories: sports skills, health and fitness, sports-related values and attitudes, safety knowledge and practice, activity knowledge, and aesthetic ability. In the “guidelines,” the physical education curriculum in the first and second learning stages of primary school is divided into general physical education. As shown in Figure 2, general physical education in the first stage of learning mainly includes the basic activities of mobile skills, balance and stability skills, and control equipment skills, laying the foundation for further learning sports activities in the second stage. In the second stage of the study, the category and quantity of sports activities are regulated.

The biggest difference between the “curriculum standards” and the “guidelines” in the design of course content is based on the setting of learning objectives. In Hong Kong, China, the six categories with sports skills as the core are the design basis of curriculum content organization. Based on the three abilities of subject
knowledge and skills, common ability, positive values, and positive attitude, the learning objectives of each learning stage are expressed. Under the “curriculum standard,” the objective judgment is intuitively based on the purpose of students’ learning content. Generally speaking, both of them have strong cohesion in the learning stage, and both pay more attention to the cultivation of sports skills and knowledge, emotional attitude and values, as well as safety awareness. They also have certain similarities in the design of sports activities, which is conducive to the sustainable development of the physical education curriculum and the understanding and internalization of learners, so as to better implement the basic concept of physical education curriculum.

![Figure 2. Activity categories of general physical education in Hong Kong guidelines.](image)

**Comparison of Curriculum Evaluation**

It can be seen from Table 2 that the curriculum evaluation in the “guidelines” and the “curriculum standards” is consistent in many aspects. First, adhere to the diversification of evaluation subjects. The evaluation subject is not only limited to the teachers and students themselves but also tries to gather various forces to play a multi-faceted role to promote teachers’ teaching and students’ learning while taking care of students’ diversity; secondly, diversified evaluation methods are adopted in evaluation methods, especially focusing on the combination of process evaluation and summative evaluation; thirdly, more efforts should be made to include more information diversified content. The two curriculum standards pay more attention to the evaluation of skills, knowledge, emotional attitude, and values; and fourth, in terms of evaluation objectives, the two curriculum standards aim to evaluate the process of learning and teaching, so as to improve teaching and provide students with opportunities for further self-development.

In addition to the above similarities, there are many differences in details between the two curriculum standards. First, the main difference between the two is that the “guidelines” pay more attention to the formulation of the corresponding evaluation content according to the evaluation method, while the “curriculum standard” selects the appropriate evaluation method for evaluation through the evaluation content; second, the “guidelines” of Hong Kong elaborate the specific methods under the evaluation methods. Teachers use the most commonly used methods of progress assessment in teaching, such as oral feedback, assessment form, learning
diary and learning process files, group study, electronic assessment, and so on. The above methods are described in detail or attached table, and the impact of each method on teaching or students’ learning is elaborated. In the summative evaluation, the content of evaluation is evaluated by standard test or peer-evaluation method at the end of the semester. In the school assessment, since there is no public evaluation in the primary school learning stage, two assessment tools designed by the Education Bureau or professional teams are provided, namely, the “Hong Kong Students’ Physical Fitness Survey” and the “Sports Chapter Award Scheme”.

Table 2

Comparison of Curriculum Evaluation Between Curriculum Guidance in the Field of Physical Education Learning (Primary One to Secondary Six) 2017 and the Curriculum Standard of Physical Education and Health in Compulsory Education (2011 Edition)

| Evaluation subject | Evaluation method | Evaluation content | Evaluation objectives |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Teacher evaluation | Progress assessment | Common abilities, values and attitudes, other learning skills, learning progress, etc. | Assessment of learning promotion |
| 2. Student evaluation (including self-evaluation, mutual evaluation, group evaluation, etc.) | Summative assessment | Skills, attitudes, values | Assessment as learning |
| 3. Evaluation by other staff (head teacher and even parents) | School in school assessment | Use assessment tools to evaluate performance | To provide an important basis for recruiting students |

**Conclusion and Enlightenment**

The main body composition of the primary school PE curriculum standard system in mainland China and Hong Kong, China is not very different, and the functions of both have certain similarities. But there are some differences in the arrangement, expression, and detail of relevant contents. The differences are more prominent in the curriculum framework, curriculum content, and curriculum evaluation. First, in the curriculum framework, the expression of the “curriculum standard” is rational and the way of exposition is clearer, while the “guidance” has more coverage and universality. Secondly, there are differences between the “curriculum standard” and the “guidance” in the content of the course. Finally, in the aspect of curriculum evaluation, the “guidance” has made the evaluation method more detailed and clarity in level.
Through the comparison of primary school physical education curriculum standards between Mainland China and Hong Kong, China, the following suggestions can be put forward for the further improvement of the curriculum standards of primary school physical education and health curriculum in China: On the one hand, as a guiding document for physical education and health curriculum, we should try our best to broaden the elaboration of other elements in the curriculum standards, and increase the flexibility of curriculum standards on the basis of rationality. On the other hand, the secondary objectives and methods are further refined and described. We can choose representative “course examples” to provide more teaching ideas for teachers, and finally, make the curriculum standards correctly grasp and implement.

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