

Serving PE Teachers' Professional Learning Experiences in Social Circus

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在職體育教師於雜藝課程之專業學習經歷

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Abstract

Background: Social circus has long been the folklore in the Chinese culture. Recently, initiatives have been undergoing to introduce it in the school physical education curriculum in Hong Kong.

Aims: This article reports a study on 38 PE teachers' professional learning experiences while attending two 2-day workshops respectively concerning learning how to teach social circus in school.

Method: Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through post workshop evaluation questionnaire and interviews of 16 randomly selected participants. The interpretive inquiry was adopted as theoretical framework for generating meanings.

Results: The findings indicated that all participants perceived their professional learning experiences positively. Factors facilitating their professional learning were the participants' high professional expectation of the workshop, rich content of the program that could satisfy their novel experience and enhance their teaching, and the instructors' good performance. They believed that social circus could be developed for cultivating students' motor skills, physical fitness, Chinese cultural heritage, personal qualities, creativity and satisfaction as well as serving as inclusive activities. However, lacking of teaching materials, incompetence in professional skills, inadequate supply of equipment, anticipated managerial and safety concerns and the support from other PE colleagues were found to be the major difficulties for its implementation. On the other hand, high professional expectation, satisfying and novel experience, learning something, helpful with teaching, rich content and good instructors' performance were enhancing factors for their professional learning. The findings generate understanding and insights on how serving PE teachers' learn to improve their curricular practices for maximizing students' learning.

Key Words : Social Circus, PE Teachers, PE Teachers' Professional Development, PE Teachers' Professional Learning

背景：雜藝是一項具中華文化特色的民間體育活動。近年來，一些老師已嘗試將雜藝引進於學校體育課程內。

目的：本文旨在報告 38 位中小學體育教師於 2 個兩天雜藝工作坊的專業學習經歷。

研究對象及方法：研究是透過工作坊評估問卷和與 16 位隨機抽樣參加者的訪談，利用量及質的數據和詮釋理念作為理論依據以理解各參與教師的專業學習經歷。

研究結果：研究結果顯示所有參加工作坊的教師均贊同雜藝課程有助發展學生的技能、體適能、中國民族價值、個人素養、創意、滿足感及作為切合不同運動能力學生之共融活動。教學資料的缺乏、雜藝專業知識及技能不足、器材難求、預見之教學管理及安全考慮和校內其他體育同工的認同皆是推展相關課程的主要障礙。此外，嚴謹的專業要求、滿足感，新的學習經歷、顯証學習、幫助教學、豐富內容及優良導師的表現均是促進教師專業學習的元素。本研究結果有助了解及如何協助在職體育教師專業學習，改善課程運作和促進學生學習。

關鍵詞：雜藝；體育教師之轉變；體育教師之專業發展

Serving PE Teachers' Professional Learning in Social Circus

Introduction

How physical education (PE) teachers learn professionally in new curricular initiative has been the concern of PE scholars and practitioners (Bechtel & O'Sullivan, 2007; Cothran, 2001; Doutis & Ward, 1999; Patton & Griffin, 2008a; Pope & O'Sullivan 1998; Rovegno & Bandhauer, 1997a, 1997b). This article reports a study of 38 serving primary and secondary school PE teachers' professional learning experience in social circus. Subsequent to this introduction section, the development of social circus and concepts of PE teachers' professional development are discussed. It follows with the method section discussing the adoption of the interpretive research perspective. Quantitative and qualitative data of the post workshop questionnaire and the interviews are analyzed and discussed. It ends with the conclusion and recommendations highlighting the possibility of including social circus for facilitating students' learning in PE.

Development of Social Circus in Local Schools

With similar terms like acrobatics or jongleurs' show, social circus has been identified as one of the cultural activities in China (Portman Acrobatic Show, n.d.) as well as performing arts in the Western World (Imperial Circus, n.d.). A review of respective literatures and websites (蔡欣欣,1998 ; Imperial Circus Website,n.d.; TravelChinaGuide Website, n.d.) illustrates that social circus has long been the Chinese cultural, folklore and festival activities as early as the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). With the name of Acrobatic art or

“Hundred Plays”, it was a part of the culture performed in village harvest festivals in the Western Han Dynasty (221BC -**220 AD**).

In the Tang (620 AD-900AD) and Sung Dynasty (1000 AD-1300 AD), social circus has been well developed as a performing arts in imperial functions. The Ming and Ching Dynasty had marked the decline of social circus as performing arts in imperial functions. Deserted imperial social circus performers made use of their skills performing in the public to earn living. They also incorporated social circus in the opera and dance (Chinese Graphic Arts Net Website, n.d.).

Since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, great efforts have been initiated to develop social circus as national arts. On the first anniversary, the Government established her first State-level Acrobatic Troupe in 1950 and played a friendly mission of performing in the former Soviet Union (Imperial Circus Website, n.d.). Since then, acrobatic troupes have been set up in provinces all over China and large scale international competitions, conferences, seminars and exchange visits were organized frequently.

According to the Chinese Graphic Arts Net, there are over 120 acrobatic troupes with more than 12,000 people participating in the performing arts. As a Chinese Folk and cultural activity, social circus has the potentiality of developing to be a PE activity for cultivating Chinese cultural heritage.

Participants involved in social circus manipulate objects and body like plate spinning, ball and club juggling, diabolo or Chinese yo-yo tossing, tumbling and balancing. The skills

require participants to be trained with efforts in manipulation, bodily coordination, balancing, arts of performing, creativity and team spirit. Accordingly, personal transformation can be fostered through encountering of difficulties and physical risks while practising and eventually experience of being capable and valuable beings.

Social circus has also been recognized for providing opportunities of interpersonal dialogue, free thought and expression. Sensible issues like sexuality, gender, inclusion, prejudice and discrimination may also be inbuilt in the discussion. Participants' perspective, confidence, tolerance and knowledge can be expanded (Social Circus, n.d.). Its merits of universality and accessibility enable people with whatever age and ability to excel their own potential.

In recent years, attempts have been made for incorporating social circus as a curriculum initiative in the school PE curriculum in Hong Kong. It has first been introduced to Hong Kong schools by the Kely Support Group. The Group is "a bilingual charitable organization providing a comprehensive range of harm reduction services that inform, empower, and build peer support in young people" (Kely Support Group, n.d.). In 2005, the Kely Support Group launched the "Coca-Cola Get Active Be Empowered Project" to promote a healthy and active lifestyle among youths in secondary schools. The Group continued to promote social circus by introducing the "2006 Stay with Youth", "2007 Stay Active Youth Ambassador" and "2008 State with Youth, Stay with You" programmes to educate and empower youngsters with an active and healthy lifestyle (Kely Support Group, 2008).

Since then, some local schools included social circus as one of the co-curricular activities for promoting students' healthy and active school life (Workers' Children Secondary School, n.d.) as well as a social-intervention activity in the form of the community social circus fun day (Chung Sing Benevolent Society Mrs. Aw Boon Haw Secondary School, n.d.) etc...

In 2008, the idea of incorporating social circus in the school PE curriculum was initiated by the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Two 2-day workshops were organized for local PE teachers with the tutors from the Kely Group. The workshops convey the intention of the Hong Kong Institute of Education of promoting Chinese cultural heritage through PE, developing PE teachers as the change agent and promoting innovative curricular practices for offering better PE provision for students. Cultivating students' Chinese cultural heritage through PE has been advocated in the recent curriculum reform of PE (Curriculum Development Council, 2002). The workshops aim to “explore the culture of our nation through physical activities” (Curriculum Development Council, 2002, p. 35). Incorporating social circus in PE curriculum and launching a study on how PE teachers' learn and develop professionally appear to be a timely initiative. The study also serves as a backdrop for possible curriculum genesis with the promotion of a new curriculum orientation and content.

PE Teachers' professional Learning and development

In the past decade, numerous efforts have been initiated curriculum improvement through professional development programmes for teachers in schools in the education reform in Hong Kong (Poon & Wong, 2008). All curriculum improvement initiatives aim to provide better and relevant education provisions for students in response to rapid global and local technological, social and economic development. Accordingly, curriculum initiatives commonly include elements of reform, improvement, renewal and innovation.

Similarly, there have been also curriculum improvement initiatives in PE initiated locally and abroad in the past decades like the adoption of teaching games of understanding (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982; Liu, Li & Cruz, 2006; Li & Cruz, 2008), sport education (Cruz, 2008; Siedentop, 1994), fitness curriculum (Corbin, 1994); teaching social and responsibility

through physical activities (Hellison, 1995); assessment for learning (Hay, 2006; Li, Liu, Cruz, Chow, Kam, Wong & Lin, 2006); and nurturing creativity and critical thinking (Li & Cruz, 2008). However, information concerning the number of teachers and how they think of these initiatives is limited.

For curriculum initiatives to be successfully implemented teachers are the keys and their “resistance” and “eagerness” for initiation are the major concerns (Stillwell & Willgoose, 2006, p. 96). Recently, Bechtel and O’Sullivan (2007) relate those inhibitors and enhancers to organizational/ contextual and personal/ psychological factors. They affect teachers’ willingness to be involved in their professional learning and initiation of change (Patton & Griffin, 2008a; Richardson, 1990; Rovegno & Bandhauer, 1997a).

Rovegno and Bandhauer (1997b) identify 5 school cultural norms that impact on teacher’s professional learning process while implementing movement education. They suggest that understanding these norms facilitate teachers’ initiation of curriculum change. Sparkes (1990) on the other hand reveals that the micro-politics of the school as the key factor affecting teachers’ professional improvement. He concludes that if teachers are not united in curriculum initiative efforts, it is hardly for any change to take place. McCaughtry, Martin, Kulinna and Cothran (2006) indicate from their study of comprehensive curriculum reform project that teachers’ emotional dimensions in terms of socio-cultural, moral, professional, political and physical geographies also affect professional learning and development.

Faucette and Graham (1986) and Ha, Wong, Sum and Chan (2008) find in their studies that principal support, collegiality and empathy positively contribute to the success of the teachers in implementing curriculum initiatives. In the Saber-Tooth Project concerning the inquiry of the role of professional development in a curricular reform effort, shared-vision as well as the appropriate workplace conditions were key factors in inducing teachers’

curriculum initiation. Pope and O'Sullivan (1998) conclude similar finding of the importance of context in affecting teachers' willingness to make conceptual changes in delivering of the sport education.

Moreover, teacher dispositions are also reported important to PE teachers' professional learning and development. Cothran (2001) studies the PE teachers' characteristics in facilitating self initiated curricular improvement. Teachers' reflection, the power of the students and teachers' solicitation of outside help are major characteristics that induce curriculum changes successfully. Rovegno and Bandhauer (1997b) explore the psychological dispositions involved in PE teachers' professional learning process. They conclude that 5 dispositions including: a) possessing appropriate and adequate content knowledge, b) accepting difficulty and asking for clarification, c) aligning with sound philosophy and theory, d) creating a willingness to explore, and e) suspending judgment on new idea concerning changes. All of the teacher dispositions have to be understood before any curriculum improvement initiative can be successfully implemented and their professional learning and development facilitated.

Recently, physical educators also provided considerable evidences that teachers' curriculum improvement were possible when they had undertaken systematic professional development programmes or projects (Deglau & O' Sullivan, 2006; Martin, McCaughtry, Hodges-Kulinna, & Cothran, 2008; Patton & Griffin, 2008b; Ward & O' Sullivan, 2006)

In conclusion, the inhibitors of PE teachers' professional development include district practice and policies and educational priority, class size, workload, time constraints, lacking of support and resistance from other colleagues. Enhancers like engaging in community of practice, teachers' psychological disposition, informal opportunities to learn with and from others, shared vision, professional development programme and vision, support from principal, colleagues and students, decision making, external support, centrality of PE as well

as ownership of curriculum improvement initiatives have been found facilitating professional development.

Armour and Yelling (2004) commented that research on PE teachers' professional learning and development are rather sparse. More important, for any educational initiative like social circus to be successfully launched, PE teachers' voices and thought about their professional learning have to be unearthed. The current study aims to fill the shortage of teachers' professional development literature and studies by examining how serving PE teachers think about their curriculum improvement initiatives when encountering with their professional learning of a newly develop PE activity, social circus.

Method

The study inquired how 38 serving PE teachers experienced their professional learning of social circus in two 2-day workshops during the summer vacation in July 2008. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The interpretive inquiry perspective was adopted to capture their experiences holistically. It stressed on "hermeneutics" highlighting the importance of understanding and interpreting how participating teachers gave meanings to their learning experiences of social circus with the awareness of the context (Bleicher, 1982).

The Professional Development Workshops

The PE teacher development programme titled "the Summer School for PE Teachers" provided a unique opportunity for examining PE teachers' professional learning when encountering with a new PE activity, social circus. It is an annual professional development programme initiated by the Education Bureau, Hong Kong. Through a half-day conference, one full-day experience sharing seminar and 25 workshops, local PE teachers were provided

with opportunity to share and learn with each others' innovative school based PE practices and new PE curriculum initiatives. Two 2-day social circus workshops served as one-shot professional development programmes which were organized for primary and secondary school PE teachers. They aimed to introduce teachers with respective contents, skills, safety precautions and pedagogies.

Data Collection

The questionnaire technique was adopted for data collection as it was regarded as the quickest means for collecting a large amount of data within a short period of time.

Questions aiming to acquire respondents' demographical information, their opinion on the effectiveness of the workshops, their perception on the values of social circus and difficulties of possible implementation were structured. Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A pilot study was conducted to ensure the relevance of the questionnaire. The drafted questionnaire was sent to 2 PE teacher trainers and 2 serving teachers for comment. They were briefed and discussed with the details of the study. With their advice, the contents, wordings as well as the presentation of the questionnaire were amended and finalized.

The semi-structured interview was adopted as the second data source. 8 participants from each workshop were randomly selected for the interviews. Each interview lasted for about 20 minutes. The duration was regarded suitable for collecting necessary information and maintaining participants' concentration. Interviewing questions including their professional learning experiences of social circus, changes in the perceptions of the values of the activities, difficulties anticipated for the implementation of the new contents and their willingness to incorporate in their future PE teaching were structured.

The questionnaire and interview data were collected immediately at the end of the two workshops. The timing was thought to be versatile and practical. All teachers were briefed

with the aims and details of the research project as well as the questionnaire. They were explained with their rights and obligation, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

Data Analysis

All data from the questionnaire were processed with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) procedures. For ease of interpretation, some findings revealed in the questionnaire were presented in the form of percentages and descriptive statistics. While the interviewing data were transcribed, coded and organized inductively. Emerging and recurring themes concerning teachers' changes resulted from their professional learning experiences were decontextualized with content analysis and constant comparison as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Phenomena such as their difficulties encountered, perceived values and willingness to introduce social circus in their school PE curriculum were interpreted in a wider context of their PE teaching. They were then interpolated with the data and cross-case analysis in the process of "saturate", "abstract", "conceptualize" and "test" with a spiral and back and forth manner.

"Trustworthiness" and "authenticity" (Lincoln & Guba, 2003) of the qualitative data were employed to establish the credibility and legitimacy of this research. Interviews were translated and direct quotations with teachers' own wordings were extracted to ensure the authenticity of the data. The data were also used to triangulate and crosscheck those obtained from the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Post-Workshop Questionnaire

Concerning the analysis of the questionnaire results of 38 respondents, about 42 %

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(n=16) were male while 58% (n= 22) were female PE teachers. 45% (n=17) of the respondents came from secondary schools. 39% (n=15) came from primary while 16% (n=6) were from special schools. The majority of them (nearly 87%) were experienced PE teachers with over 10 years of teaching. The details of their teaching experiences were included in Table 1.

Table 1: Teaching Experiences of the Respondents

Years of teaching	Total number of respondents	%
1-9 years	5	13.1
10-18 years	21	55.3
19 years or over	12	31.6

The Interview

A total of 16 participants including 9 male and 7 female PE teachers (anonymously assigned as Case 1 to Case 16) were randomly selected and invited to participate in the interview. 8 were secondary school PE teachers, 6 came from primary while 2 from special schools. 4 interviewees claimed that they had some experience of participating in social circus while the majority of them (n=12) had not involved in any social circus activities before attending the workshops. The statistics of the teaching experience of the interviewed teachers were included in Table 2.

Table 2: Years of Teaching Experience of the Interviewees

Years	No. of Interviewees	Case No.
1-5	2	1, 4
6-10	2	3, 7
11-15	2	9, 11
16-20	6	2, 5, 6, 14, 13, 12

21-25	0	
26-30	3	8, 10, 15
Over 30	1	16

Professional Expectations

When being asked with their professional expectations of enrolling in the workshops during the interview, most (n= 10) expressed that they would like to learn a new physical activity (Case 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16). They wanted to know more about social circus and to see whether they could introduce it to their students. Case 3 expected to introduce it in the rainy day PE lessons. Similarly, Case 12 voiced that, “I would like to try social circus to see whether it can benefit the all round development of my students”. Case 2, on the other hand, illustrated her expectation on the workshop by saying that, “I would like to understand more about the teaching procedures of social circus. I hope I can get more information concerning organizations that may support my teaching of social circus in the future”. Case 1 who had experience in social circus claimed that,

I think I am a bit different from others as I have the privilege of experiencing social circus before. I want to learn more advance skills, teaching procedures and techniques. I would like to share with PE colleagues about teaching social circus in schools. (Case 1)

Most participants in this study were motivated and joined the workshops with professional expectations. Learning how to teach social circus for enhancing their students' development was their major goal of attending the workshop. Their high professional expectation and willingness to explore supplement the list of psychological dispositions suggested by Rovegno and Bandhauer (1997a) for enhancing professional development.

Perceived Values of Social Circus

In the interview, all participants perceived positively the educational values of social circus for their students. It was the result of their practical experiences. In their mind, social circus could serve as inclusive activity for all regardless of the sporting ability. A summary of educational values was listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of the Educational Values of Social Circus

Possible Educational Values of Social Circus	Interviewing Participants (Case)
Cultivating Chinese culture	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 14, 16
Training of bodily co-ordination and involving in vigorous physical exertion	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15
Experiencing satisfaction, success and failure	2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 15
Developing capability of being assiduousness and diligence	5, 8, 13
Promoting creativity	5, 15, 16
Establishing confidence	2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 12

All participants supported the curriculum improvement initiative. Social circus fostered educational values for students. Students could improve physically through involving in vigorous physical exertion and coordination; enrich affectively in building confidence; and develop creativity, diligence and assiduousness. It could also serve as means for promoting Chinese cultural heritage. They appear to accept the activity and intend to incorporate social circus in the school PE curriculum.

Difficulties Anticipated for Teaching Social Circus in Schools

Most respondents of the questionnaire related a number of inhibitors that hindered their implementation of social circus in schools. Nearly 80% (n= 30) of them articulated the inhibitor with “lacking of suitable equipment for teaching”. Social circus was a newly developed PE activity and equipment was not popular, expensive and sometimes difficult to source in the market. Over 40% (n= 16) claimed that their “inadequacy of subject matter knowledge” in social circus was another inhibitor. Moreover, “inadequate suitable teaching venue” (26%) and “safety concern” (15%) were also mentioned hindering their implementation of such curriculum improvement initiative (Table 4)

Table 4: Anticipated Difficulties of Implementing Social Circus in Schools

Inhibitors	% (no. of respondents)
Lacking of suitable equipment	78.5% (n=30)
Inadequate knowledge of the subject	41.5% (n= 16)
Inadequate suitable teaching venue	26% (n= 10)
Safety concern	15.5% (n= 6)
Others	11% (n= 2)

Similar to the findings obtained in the questionnaire, most participants expressed in the interview that lacking of necessary equipment was the major inhibitor for their inclusion of social circus in their PE lessons (Case 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14). Some of them claimed that the competence in terms of subject matter might impose another inhibitor (Case 1, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 16). They demanded more relevant texts and audio-visual aids which could help their teaching. A few of them added that student discipline and safety issues were also major obstacles for introducing social circus in their school curriculum.

Most of them (13 over 16 interviewees) showed their intention of adopting the

curriculum improvement initiative by including the new content in their PE curriculum.

Apart from those above mentioned inhibitors like “incompetence of teaching the new activity”(Case 8) and “unavailability of expensive equipment” (Case 9), Case 15 worried that “if we want to include it (social circus) in the school PE curriculum, the acceptance and endorsement from other PE colleagues in schools would be necessary”.

All teachers concerned with technical and practical issues related to their teaching as inhibitors of curriculum improvement initiative. The reminder from Ward and Doutsis (1999) is worth to be considered. They commented that the major drawback for this one-shot design professional development programme was that “frequently, the content of the workshop is extremely imposed, and the teachers’ real needs (as they relate to their school culture) are not taken into consideration in the design of the programme. Moreover, many workshop presentations are distanced, physically, conceptually and psychologically, from what happens in the classrooms” (p. 389). It seems that professional supports such as further professional development programmes, supply of information in the forms of teaching packages including teaching hints, safety measures and equipment acquisition are necessary if the curriculum improvement initiative of social circus is going to be implemented in schools successfully. Developing systematic and purposeful teacher development programme for PE teachers of different career stages suggested by Ha et al (2008) is also worth to be considered. Further promotion of social circus as a valuable Chinese cultural activity to be included into the school PE curriculum for gaining the support from other PE teachers is also necessary.

Enhancers of Professional Learning Perceived by PE Teachers

The workshops were well received by the participants. The majority of the respondents “agreed” and “strongly agreed” (97.37%, n= 37) that they satisfied with the workshops. They commended highly on the suitability of the content (95%, n= 36) as well as the

instructors' performance (97%, n= 37) as enhancers of professional development. They acknowledged that their satisfying professional learning experiences enhanced their willingness to teach social circus in schools (97%, n= 37). The workshops were helpful to their PE teaching (88%, n= 33) which enhanced their adoption of the curriculum improvement initiative (Table 5).

Table 5: Teachers' Responses on the Effectiveness of the Workshops:

Enhancers of change articulated by the respondents	Response % (No. of respondents) "agreed and "strongly agreed"
Helpful to their PE teaching	88% (n= 33)
Achieved the aims of the workshop for equipping them to teach social circus performance activities	97% (n= 37)
Satisfying with the content of the workshop	95% (n= 36)
Satisfying with the instructors' performance	97% (n= 37)
Satisfying with the workshop	97% (n= 37)

The data matched well with that of the interviews. "Satisfying", "novel", "happy", "interesting", "challenging" and "learning something" were the common articulations of teachers on their professional learning experiences. Case 2 and 4 expressed that they had learnt and mastered new skills which satisfied them most. Case 16 expressed that the workshop brought his sense of achievement because he had mastered the skills of ball juggling, diabolo manipulating and group performance techniques.

Some participants, on the other hand, related with the process of their professional learning. Case 3 expressed that, "if we want to master the skills, we have to practise and make effort". Case 9 supported by saying, "Good! Although we fail to perform some of the

tasks, we dare to try and learn”. Case 12 openly described her professional learning, “I enjoy very much the novel social circus activities in the workshop. Teachers have to cooperate and coach each others during skill practices and the performance. We learn a lot in the workshop”. Case 16 concluded that “we can only be succeeded in achieving something unless we have tried our best”. Most of them claimed that they had acquired the content knowledge in the form of fundamental skills of social circus as well as the pedagogical content knowledge concerning how to apply to their PE teaching in schools. (Case 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14)

Most PE teachers acknowledged the positive values that they had experienced in the social circus workshops. Their articulations concerning their satisfaction on the workshops illustrated some of the enhancers that facilitated their professional development. “Satisfying”, “novel”, “happy”, “interesting”, “challenging” and “learning something” are some of the pre-requisites governing professional learning of local PE teachers. Meeting participants’ professional expectations including “helpful to their teaching”, “equipping them to teach”, “satisfying content” as well as “good instructors’ performance” can be supplemented to the list of enhancers of professional learning suggested by Bechtel and O’Sullivan (2007) for PE teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Most PE teachers in this study joined the workshops with professional expectations and willingness to involve in their professional learning. They showed their common goal of learning social circus for further preparing and improving them to teach PE in schools. Such dispositions of high professional expectation facilitated positively their professional learning and development.

Most participating PE teachers accepted social circus as a viable physical activity to be included in the local school PE curriculum. They supported that social circus could foster educational values for the students like developing motor skills and physical fitness especially eye-hand coordination, cultivating Chinese cultural heritage, promoting personal qualities and creativity, enhancing satisfaction and serving as inclusive activities for all regardless of the sporting ability.

To reiterate, PE teachers have to be supported continuously to overcome the inhibitors of professional learning concerning their practical teaching problems. They included improving their competence of teaching, supplementing with supporting teaching material, helping to acquire equipment and equipping them with effective managerial skills. Moreover, supporting PE teachers to encounter with the organizational socialization impacts like gaining support from other PE colleagues in schools is also necessary if the curriculum improvement initiative is to be successfully implemented in schools.

From the questionnaire and interview feedbacks of the participating teachers, the enhancers of PE teachers' professional learning included "novel content", "satisfying", "happy", "interesting", "challenging" and "learning something". They might serve as reference as well as pre-requisites for future organization of professional programmes for local PE teachers.

According to Sparkes (1991), changes in PE teachers' professional practices have to induce at the surface such as adopting new or revised materials such as curriculum packages or technologies. Another level has to involve teachers to use new teaching approaches like new teaching strategies or activities. More important, PE teachers have to accept and alter their beliefs. He commented that movement toward the deeper levels of improvement was extremely difficult unless significant measures were required for movement toward deeper levels (materials, teaching approaches, and beliefs), otherwise, there was superficial rather

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than real change in their professional practices. Unless we can support local PE teachers with all levels of improvement through professional development programmes, the promotion of social circus in the school PE curriculum is still a long way to go.

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