

# Design of the Model of Constructivist Learning Theory for Moral Education in Physical Education Teaching

Chenyu Wang

The P.E. Department, Zhengzhou Institute of Aeronautical Industry Management

Zhengzhou 450015, Henan, China

E-mail: wchenyu@126.com

Received: January 11, 2011 Accepted: January 17, 2011 doi:10.5539/ies.v4n3p62

## Abstract

In order to achieve better effect of moral education in physical education teaching, this article employed constructivist learning theory to design the model of moral education according to the characteristics of physical education teaching, in order that the majority of P.E. teachers draw lessons from it in their teaching practice, and service to cultivate high-quality talents.

**Keywords:** Constructivist learning theory, Physical education teaching, Moral education

## 1. Proposing of the Problem

At present, some heartbreaking moral issues have appeared among students in China, and cultivation of a lofty moral sentiment among students has become an important topic encountered by educational practitioners in China. It has been proved by practice that, moral education should not only attach great importance to the role of formal curriculum (moral education courses), but also should pay attention to exploring moral factors in hidden courses (such as teaching of various subjects), so as to edify the moral sentiment of students and foster their lofty personality. (Qu Zhenguo, 2006) Physical classes are organized and opened by taking the physical movement of students as the major content, and its teaching content contains quite a lot of moral education factors, one of hidden courses for moral education. However, in the physical education teaching in China, P.E. teachers do not pay attention to exploring these moral education factors, and empty mechanical teaching is the major content for moral education. Thus, the effect of moral education is not quite ideal.

It has been proved by oversea education practice, with moral education by the means of constructivist learning theory, students' experience in acquired knowledge of moral education is more profound, so they might abide by this sort of moral concept all their life, which is a feasible and effective moral education means. (Leslie P. Steffe, et al, 2002) Nevertheless, constructivist learning theory is a new term for the vast majority of physical education teachers in China. Hence, they may not quite apprehend its concept and proposal and have no idea about how to employ constructivist learning theory in physical education teaching. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and realistic significance to study how to employ the constructivist learning theory in moral education.

## 2. Introduction to the Constructivist Learning Theory

Modern cognitive psychology replaced the learning theory of behaviorism step by step at the end of the 70s of the Twentieth Century, and was then transformed into the constructivist learning theory. According to this theory, the learning process is one in which people acquire and construct their framework of knowledge through their interaction with the outside environment with their existing knowledge skills and experiences. Learners are not passive receivers of knowledge, but active constructors of knowledge. Teachers are not transmitters of knowledge, but organizers for the learning activity of students. (Gu Mingyuan & Meng Fanhua, 2001) Thus, when the constructivist learning theory is applied to moral education in physical education teaching, teachers have to attempt to create a comfortable learning environment, encourage students to realize organic integration of former and new knowledge and enable learners to take an initiative to construct knowledge of their own. (Deng Ruofeng, et al, 2002)

## 3. Characteristics of Physical Education Classes and Moral Education in Physical Education Teaching

Physical education classes are aimed to enable students to acquire quality required by the society to improve themselves through some physical activities. Therefore, physical education classes are mainly organized and opened through some physical activities of the students. In view of the characteristics of P.E. classes, different teachers put forward different opinions about whether P.E. classes are suitable for moral education. Some P.E. teachers hold the

view that it is not suitable for moral education merely through the physical activities of students. Those who hold this viewpoint mistakenly consider moral education as the ideological education of the Communism and politicize the content of moral education. There are also some teachers who hold the opinion that, although all sports events may be regarded as means to cultivate the moral sentiment of students in some aspects, they deny that it is likely to foster students spirit of bravery, perseverance, bearing hardships and standing hard work, solidarity and coordination merely through one or several classes of hurdles, long-distance running, relay race, basketball class and football class, etc. It is hence indicated, these teachers are not quite familiar with the reality that current moral education not only includes political and ideological education, but also includes civic accomplishment education. Its connotation has already been expanded. However, these teachers have not been aware of the significance of hidden moral education courses, let alone their possibility to explore the moral education connotation of the teaching content of P.E. classes. At present, the civic accomplishment education includes the following four: 1) social value standard, such as, cooperation, integrity and civic spirit, etc.; 2) standard of personal value, such as, loyalty, honesty and tolerance, etc.; 3) standard of value about the nation and the world, such as, patriotism, peaceful civic responsibility and international understanding, etc.; 4) standard of value about the cognitive process, such as, matter-of-fact scientific approach and distinguishing the true from the false, etc. (Feng Zengjun, 2002)

Since a variety of physical exercises are required in P.E. classes, students not only need guidance and assistance from teaching for their physical exercise, but also require mutual cooperation, help and assessment from other students. Objectively, P.E. classes call for interaction from multiple aspects, which determines that quite a lot of moral education contexts are implied in P.E. teaching. For instance, such moral education factors as solidarity, cooperation and competition are implied in interaction between teachers and students and interaction between students. With guidance from teachers and help from students, if these moral education contexts are experienced by students themselves, the effect of its moral education would be several hundred times better than empty mechanical teaching. Therefore, the characteristics of P.E. classes determine that the constructivist learning theory can be applied for moral education.

#### **4. Design of the Model of the Constructivist Learning Theory for Moral Education in Physical Education Teaching**

In moral education of physical education teaching with the method of the constructivist learning theory, first of all, teachers may analyze the moral education value implied in the teaching content according to characteristics of the teaching content; then, according to the moral education value in the teaching content, teachers may establish background knowledge of students in moral education; thirdly, they can devise the presentation means of knowledge in moral education; fourthly, they are able to fulfill how to employ the constructivist learning theory to conduct moral education among students. Then, why the author chose to arrange the running of 100m and the relay race of 4x100m together for teaching? First of all, these two courses are similar in terms of technique and learning them together avoids negative transfer of technique, which arranges the content of teaching by taking into account the characteristics of the physical education technique. Secondly, the 100m running is an individual event and the purpose of arranging an individual event is to enable students to come to know about the importance of personal efforts; the 4x100m relay race is a team event and the purpose of arranging a team event is to enable students to come to know about the importance of team cooperation. Furthermore, this arrangement is convenient to conduct moral education among students in terms of personal efforts and collectivism.

##### *4.1 Analyzing the Moral Education Value Implied in the Teaching Content*

The characteristics of 100m running is to break through the destination at the highest speed and the philosophical value it implies is just as a flash flood which is frozen to a speed beyond time. In the moral education among students, we can connect moral education with our behaviors in the life. In our life, there is always a critical moment which requires 100-yard dash energy and the utmost efforts we can to surpass our opponents to reach the destination. The relay race of 4x100m not only requires each team member to finish his own competition task at the fastest speed, but also requires him to create the best playing space for his companions. The moral education value the relay race implies is how a team enables its team members to complete their task at the fastest speed within the limit allowed by the rule. If compared to the realistic life, it is that each member in the collective can create the best playing space for his companions with the pre-condition that he has already given full play to his own capacity. In such way, the effect of  $1+1>2$  can be accomplished in the collective.

##### *4.2 Establishment of Background Knowledge of Students in Moral Education*

After the teachers demonstrated the technique, rules and do's and don'ts of the 100m running and the relay race of 4x100m, students were required to exercise and test by themselves and their scores were recorded by their teachers. Based on the test scores of students, teachers divided all students into two groups for the rival exercise of 100m

running according to the principle of approximation of the total scores. Similarly, according to the principle of approximation of the total scores, every four students constituted a group for the rival exercise of 4x100m relay race and their scores were recorded one by one. The purpose of arranging teaching content and sequence in such a way was to enable students to generate moral experiences in different contexts and furthermore to enrich their background knowledge in moral education.

#### *4.3 Organization and Presentation Means of Knowledge in Moral Education*

After students completed the single exercise and test of the 100m running and the group work test of the 4x100m relay race, they were called together by their teachers to answer the following questions: What was the situation of your personal exercise in the 100m running and the situation of your group work in the 4x100m relay race and the reasons for any similarity or difference? P.E. teachers paid attention to guide students' action and ask them to answer these questions after discussion. Then, the teachers recorded the answers of their students.

As to the above questions, the answers mainly included the following two: 1) I had good performance in my personal exercise and my score in the group work was not as good. This might well be due to the fact that I had no opponent in my personal exercise, so I was a little bit relaxed, while I was nervous in the group work exercise since I had opponents, so my score was declined. 2) I had higher score in the group work exercise than in the personal exercise. This might well be due to the fact that I had no competition pressure in my personal exercise, so I didn't give full play to my potential.

After the 4x100m relay race group work was over, P.E. teachers called all students together and asked them the following questions: Was your score in the group work of 4x100m relay race higher than all your scores added in the personal exercise of 100m running? What was the reason?

As for this sort of closed-end questions, students' answers mainly included the following two: 1) My performance in the rival exercise of the 4x100m relay race was better than the performance in the personal exercise of 100m running, since we concentrated on cooperation, especially in the baton exchange and let our companions who passed the baton acquire enough running speed at the take-over area. 2) My performance in the rival exercise of the 4x100m relay race was worse than my performance in the personal exercise of 100 running, since our group members didn't cooperate well and lost time in the process of baton exchange, so our companions who passed the baton hadn't been able to acquire a fast initial speed.

#### *4.4 Establishment of Moral Education Knowledge among Students*

Establishment of knowledge in moral education was implemented in the means of proposing questions by the teachers. The questions of the teachers were: 1) What beneficial enlightenment did the 100m running bring to you? 2) What beneficial enlightenment did the 4x100m relay race bring to you?

Students' answers to Question 1) mainly included the following:

1) Our life is sometimes like the 100-yard dash, in which we have to do our best to surpass our opponents and reach the destination.

2) In our life, we have to have the courage to encounter competition, since pressure of competition might stimulate our potentials to attain our best condition and bring considerable performance. However, we also have to tackle in a correct way failure caused by competition. When we compete with those opponents compared with whom we still have a long way to go, we shouldn't be trapped in sorrow, because you might innately not be as good as others in some aspects. What is important is the process to participate, enhance and practice ourselves.

3) Competition leads to increased pressure and drop of my school performance. Thus, in my life in the future, I should keep a state of mind that I keep out of the affair and handle affairs in accordance with our own pace.

Students' answers to Question 2) mainly included the following:

1) In order for a collective project to achieve excellent performance, all members in the collective need to unite in a concerted effort with concord and coordination and try to create the best playing space for the other companions, such as, successful baton exchange, let the companions get the fastest running speed in the take-over zone and play the team advantage of 1+1>2. In such way, a virtuous circle is realized in the collective. Thus, when we handle affairs in any team, we not only have to give full play to our own capacity up to the hilt, but also have to try to create the best playing space for our companions.

2) Our nation is also a large collective, in which all departments and sections have to strive to realize a virtuous circle. In such way, our nation can get thriving and prosperous, resist foreign countries' riding roughshod over our nation and avoid such humiliations as invasion by the Eight-Power Allied Forces and the Opium War.

## 5. Conclusion

When teachers employ the constructivist learning theory for moral education in physical education teaching, they have to design teaching process according to moral education value implied in teaching content, devise closed-end questions about moral education knowledge in some aspects to present to students in different teaching stages and lead students to summarize and experience knowledge in moral education. In the process of teaching, teachers have to be qualified for the following three jobs. Firstly, they ought to establish background knowledge of moral education for students; secondly, they should devise organization and presentation means of knowledge in moral education; thirdly, they have to lead students to discuss establishment of knowledge in moral education with students. If all P.E. teachers devise moral education teaching content with this method in their physical education teaching, it is more likely for students to accept this method and conduct moral practice than empty and mechanical teaching. Furthermore, the largest advantage of this method is that students can draw lessons from others in their establishing their methods of knowledge in moral education, which is favorable for them to reflect and examine their knowledge in moral education.

## References

- Deng, Ruofeng, et al. (2002). Teaching of Fitness Knowledge and Skills under Guidance of the Constructivist Learning Theory. *Journal of Physical Education*, (2).
- Feng, Zengjun. (2002). *Development of Contemporary International Education*. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 241
- Gu, Mingyuan, & Meng, Fanhua. (2001). *New International Education Idea*. Hainan: Hainan Publishing House, 276-282
- Leslie, P. Steffe, et al. (2002). *Constructivist in Education*, translated by Gao, Wen, et al. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 303
- Qu, Zhengu. (2006). *Modern Education*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 212-213