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# WHEN POSITIVISM PARADIGM BECOMES OVER DOMINANT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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## Abstract

There are so many definitions about physical education, but one certain thing that always becomes a common concept is that physical education uses physical activity as a medium to realize the orientation of educational process. Ironically, so many misconceptions happen in the physical education teaching learning process. Physical activity that is supposed to become a medium to get the educational goal, precisely have become the main goal. This fact is supported by so many positivistic method in physical education sains development. As matter as general understanding, positivism does not believe on metaphysics dimension. Meanwhile, physical education has a certain object that cannot be separated from metaphysics system, that is human being (students). Thus, positivistic way of thinking has so many weakness to explore human beings' (students') problems. It is not something wrong when positivism approach is implemented in the physical education development. However, when it dominates, physical education is going to fall into mere technique and biomechanics discourse. Physical education will becomes sains system that does not have sense of humanity values.

**Keywords:** Physical education, Positivism, Paradigm.

## INTRODUCTION

Humans from various civilization know and employ physical activities as their living ritual. As seen in several cultures, it is important to note that only few of the activities are similar to today's sport. In pre-civilization era, physical activities were closely related to local religious practices.

For decades sports have been used to depict competition and rules based physical activities, liberating human from daily routines. Sports and games play various roles for centuries. In old Greek, feasts used sports and games, like when people worshipped the gods or as parts of funerals. Homer, a great writer from Greek, depicts sports in his work entitled *Illiad and Odyssey*. Physical contest like running, wrestling, boxing, and hunting are preferred sports in old Greek era. Historical artefacts like paintings, statues, and documents show that sports were also played in other old civilizations (Hutchinson and Lee, 1958: 5).

In Rome empire, sports tended to be form of amusements for public. They were conducted to show the power and authority of politic leaders. Then, in middle era, folk games clearly reflected gap of gender and social class in society. Farmers, knights, and clerk men had different kind of sports fitting their social status. This pattern continues until the era of renaissance in sort of countries in Europe. In the enlightenment era, sports are closely liked to local cultures and ideology. After industrial revolution, sports were bordered by individual's status. Since 1920s, sports totally changed; global society got more complex as complex as the growth of politic, economy, culture, and education (Coakley, 2004: 92-93).

In *Undang-Undang Sistem Keolahragaan Nasional* No. 3 year 2005, sports can be divided into three dimensions: 1) sport for achievement, 2) sport for education, and 3) sport for recreation. Referring to formal terminology in Indonesia, sport is labelled as education for Physical, health, and recreation. Further, based on the present curriculum, physical education is defined as follows

Physical education is basically an integral part of the whole educational system aiming at developing health, physical fitness, critical thinking skills, social skills, reasoning and moral behaviour through sport activities (2003: 5)"

Another definition, simple definition for physical education is that it is not teaching about physical. In physical activities are not the main goal, but only the means to achieve the goal. Indeed, physical education is separated from the teaching process, but that is not the main goal.

It is clear that so many teachers and practitioners misinterpret the physical education. In many cases, physical condition becomes the assessment point of the teaching. This might be a weak assumption due to research, but teachers prior examination puts motoric skills as assessment point.

It is clear when we observe research room of some Physical Education Teacher Education in Indonesia. Both by teachers and students concern more on physical matter only. Experiment approaches and measurement are strong. In result, physical education concern on problem of biomechanic and physiology. Taking a look on curriculum structure in some PETEs in Indonesia, it is clear that bioscience dominate the teaching. Physical education studies more problems of empirical data as a specific mark of scientific paradigm.

Education critic state that some big amount of budget for education is far from the root of the society. Education becomes an alienating process placing students far away from real problem, and encourages to solve the problems (Freire, 1996: 23). Education is too busy with the discipline development without direct implication in society. That also hits physical education. Some studies are so science that neglects to reality and humanity dimension that is full of values and metaphysical problems.

#### POSITIVISM PARADIGM

August Comte (1798—1857), A French philosopher known as a father of positivism. Positivism derives its meaning factual. In positivism, our understanding cannot exceed facts. Therefore, empirical science is an example. Therefore, it is unquestionable that positivism denies philosophy known as metaphysics.

In the development of modern philosophy, positivism paradigm has big influence. The result can be seen in the rapid development of science and technology. Various kinds of technology findings become the assessment point of a result and a process from experiment approach that marks the way of positivism.

In short, positivism is "*positivus, ponere*" meaning to put. The complete meaning of positivism is a common philosophical position concerning on factual aspect of science. Generally, positivism tries to explore the verifications on the empirical data based sense. In other words, positivism is a philosophy stream that respects empiric as the only and right source of knowledge and denies cognitive value of metaphysics (Lorenz, 1996: 858).

Positivism as a philosophical stream emerged in French in nineteenth centuries. August Comte paralyzes positivism to initiation of world scientifically whose main job is limited on surface depiction, far from the five senses calculation. He tries to prove that positivism stands on materialism or idealism. Due to this material, Comte writes 'this madzab is a sad porridge, a middle party of philosophy, destroying materialistic and idealistic with many certain problem'.

Comte, in order to get a structured society, soul and mind must be fixed. Mind, to him, consists of 3 levels. The first level is theology explaining everything with any reasons exceeding destiny. Second level is metaphysics explaining through abstraction. Level three is positivist level neglecting the serious and determined cause and effect.

Today era of Comte should worship positivism. Spirit of positivism should be included in any discipline like in mathematics, physics, and biology. What is not positive is not experienced and therefore better to be included to positivism.

In other sciences, positivism also becomes the foundation. H. Taine (1828-1893) also uses it. In sociology Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) also bases on positivism. This also happens in England, especially by John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). This applies to all system (Prof. I. R. Poedjawijatna, 1997: 120-121). Historically, there are three phases in the development of positivism:

1. The first supporters are Comte, E. Littré, and P. Laffitte (French), J. S. Mill and Spencer (England). Despite problems in theory (Comte) and logic (Mill), the main seat in positivism is on sociology.
2. Second phase is in 1870-1890s and relates to Mach and Avenarius. Both leaves formal knowledge on real objective objects becoming the mark of early positivism. In Machism, problem of innitiation is defined from an extreme psychologism perspective, included in subjectivism.

The growth of last positivism or neopositivism is related to Vienna circle activity (O. Neurath, Carnap, Schlick, Frank). These two groups combine atomism, logism, logic positivism, and semantic. The main concern of the stream is philosophical problems on language, symbolic logic, structure of science trace, etc. The supporters take a pece way between logic and mathematic, as well as formal ephistemological problems. (Lorens bagu 1996: 860).

### POSITIVISM PARADIGM IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Education is a conscious, well prepared and systemic effort to do changes toward better quality of student. That is the essence of the definition of education. Physical education should attempt the same. In aggregate concept, physical education is an education that makes use of activity of physical education. Object of study believed till now is 'human in movement' meaning that movement is not what should be observed, but more on the belief that any humanity aspect is movement. Therefore, the core point is the movement.

Considering human and essence of humanity, all dimensions of humanity cannot be separated. In some discourses, problem of soul and body seems to be confronted. In brief, in any debate problem of talking about humn cannot be separated from its metaphysic aspect.

Further, what is the relation between metaphysic and education? George R. Knight answers by emphasizing that old human society and the modern one in their socio-economy and science are affected by perspective of cosmology, teology, anthropology, and ontology. Therefore, belief and practice of education cannot be separated from the metaphysic believed. In other words, metaphysic is a study on ultimate reality where any concept in education must be leaned to fact and reality, in order to be free from illusion. A different metaphysic belief will bring different system and approach in education. Even, metaphysic belief directly influences more on educational issues such as the core of curriculum, teachers' role, teacher-students relation, individuals and society, etc.

This is closely related to the special mark of positivism paradigm which does not believe in reality in the metaphysic degree. To positivism, the truth in metaphysic cannot be verified scientifically so that it does not deserve to be acknowledge as a science truth.

Further, one criticism always emerges related to this paradigm is that the nature of the developed research in this way of thought is a verification to the existing theories. Therefore, no new findings can be expected in the physical education development. The wide range of horizons of physical education covering all dimensions of humanity is trapped in the narrow and dry mechanical and biological problems.

In this sense, it is clear that a force of method happens in a knowledge tradition. Education science which is included in humaniora (*geisteswissenschaften*) is approached, studied, and analyzed through the eyes of science (*naturewissenschaften*). Epistemologically, two kinds of science have different characteristics. The principal difference lies on the problem of formal object in relation to the cause effect, and reasoning. Science needs reasoning (*erklären*), and humaniora uses involvement or understanding (*verstehen*) or hermeneutics.

The term education in Indonesia is always linked to the representation of two harmonious processes; transfer of knowledge, and transfer of value. The first process, with positivism, might result in no problem. However, it is

Students are highly expected to get the meaning of any teaching through a unity which later  
their living. Once again, positivism fails in this area.

in many definitions and practices is expected to put physical activities as a medium  
the general goal of education. From various studies, to achieve the goal, the process  
the metaphysic process of the students. Therefore, a pattern of education giving relevan  
construct will be gained.

fact shows that physical education is dominated by positivism believing only one truth; the  
measured, and experimental. In result, many meanings, values, and humanity analysis disappear  
education. Physical education falls in the corner of biological and mechanical space that disallow  
students.

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