

**The Professional Lives of Hong Kong Primary School**

**Physical Education Teachers**

**Thesis Submitted for the Degree of**

**Doctor of Education**

**University of Leicester**

**by**

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## **DECLARATION**

This thesis is my own work and no part of it has been submitted to a degree at this, or any other, University.



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the professional lives of primary school physical education teachers (PSPETs) in Hong Kong. It is focused on the problems arising from apparent overload and the multiple roles of physical education teachers' worklives in Hong Kong brought about by education and curriculum reforms. The central research question is, "How do Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives". The study aims at inductively developing a grounded theory of how Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives in relation to a conceptual framework based on the following interrelated concepts - identity, socialization, professionalization, and career trajectory.

A qualitative research design is adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning that participants make of their professional lives. The methodological approach uses grounded theory methods, based on the meta-theory of symbolic interactionism. The researcher used semi-structured interviews, supplemented by documentary sources (diaries) for conducting data collection. Through purposive sampling methods (snowball sampling), eleven Hong Kong PSPETs participated in this study. Data were analyzed through three major types of coding, namely, open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

The grounded theory that was constructed from the study is termed the Theory of Diversified Adaptation. The theory developed from four dovetailing categories each of which is built on "clusters" of concepts related specifically to the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs: "*switching*", "*interplaying*", "*diversifying*" and "*assimilating*". The associations between the above categories are moderated by patterns of data that suggest a threefold typology for PSPETs in Hong Kong – "*Engagers*", "*Adherers*" and "*Dissenters*". This typology represents three distinct types of PSPETs based on differences in how they manage their work lives. Additionally, four main different sets of inter-related propositions are drawn from the findings of the study. They are the Theory of Diversified Adaptation; the categories and major processes of the theory; the context of PSPETs' work lives, identity, socialization experience and career trajectory; and the typology of PSPETs.

The construction of the substantive theory thus contributes to an increased appreciation of the diversity of PSPETs' work in Hong Kong and to the literature on physical education teachers' professionalization and professionalism. Recommendations include the professional development of PSPETs concerning multiple roles in schools are made to different stakeholders including policy-makers, teacher education institutions, school principals, and teachers. Although the theory is generalizable only to PSPETs in situations similar to the present cohort, it has implications that further studies might seek further theory development by testing the theory in similar and different contexts.

## DEDICATIONS

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my mother and father (deceased), who knew the importance of literacy, though they were not literate, and nurtured me to grow not only academically, but aided me in the development of my whole person.

Also to my wife, Elean, with my heartfelt thanks. She has shown me unfailing support and is also working on her Ph.D. at the moment.

It is also dedicated to my children. To my son, Lok Kei Rocky, age 16, who is looking for his goals and identity; to my second son, Lok King Marcus, age 10, who is joyful and hardworking in every aspect; and to my daughter, Tao Myrtle, age 6, who is lovely and makes every effort to experience this social world.

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My final dedication is to all professional primary school physical education teachers in Hong Kong

*- Carpe Diem -*

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## PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

The following original publications arose from the study reported in this thesis:

**Sum, K. W. & Dimmock, C. (2006).** A conceptual framework for understanding the professional lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers. *International Journal of Learning*, 13(2), 29-38.

**Sum, K. W. & Dimmock, C. (2005).** A discourse on the improvement of Hong Kong physical educational provision. *International Journal of Eastern Sports and Physical Education*, 3(1), 228-46.

The following conference presentations arose from the study reported in this thesis:

**Sum, K. W. & Dimmock, C. (2009).** The switching work lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers. *Proceedings: the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of the European College of Sport Science*, 530-531. European College of Sport Science.

**Sum, K. W., Ha, S. A., Chan, W. K. & Dimmock, C. (2008).** Diversified professionalism of primary school physical education teachers in Hong Kong. *Proceedings: the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of the European College of Sport Science*, 383. European College of Sport Science.

**Sum, K. W. (2006).** Factors affecting the professional lives of PE teachers in Hong Kong. *Proceedings: the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of the European College of Sport Science*, 393. European College of Sport Science.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Title	i
Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedications	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Publications and Presentations	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Lists of Figures	xii
List of Tables	xiii

### **CHAPTER ONE: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background and Context of the Problem	1
1.2.1	Professional Lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong	2
1.2.2	Training and Status of Hong Kong Physical Education Teachers	4
1.2.3	An Overview of Hong Kong Primary Schools	6
1.2.4	The Place of Physical Education in Hong Kong Primary Schools	6
1.3	Aims and Purposes of the Study	9
1.4	Research Questions	10
1.5	The Significance and Outcomes of the Study	11
1.6	Limitations of the Study	12
1.7	Research Methodology	13
1.8	Outline of the Thesis	14

### **CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1	Introduction	16
2.2	Theoretical Foundations	17
2.2.1	Identity	17
2.2.1.1	Personal Identity	17
2.2.1.2	Professional Identity	18
2.2.2	Socialization	20
2.2.2.1	Professional Socialization	21
2.2.3	Professionalization	23
2.2.4	Career Trajectory	25

2.3	A Review of Previous Research on the Professional Lives of Physical Education Teachers	27
2.3.1	Physical Education Teachers' Professional Lives	28
2.3.2	The Status Problem of Physical Education Teachers	29
2.3.3	The Role of Physical Education Teachers	30
2.4	The Emerging Concepts	31
2.5	Conceptual Model	33
2.6	Conclusion and Implications	36

### **CHAPTER THREE            METHODOLOGY**

3.1	Introduction	38
3.2	The Justification of the Research Paradigm	39
3.3	Grounded Theory	45
3.3.1	The Development of Grounded Theory	45
3.3.2	Theoretical Basis of Grounded Theory	46
3.3.3	Important Features of Grounded Theory	47
3.3.4	The Constructivist Approach of Grounded Theory	50
3.4	Data Collection and Analysis	51
3.4.1	Interviewing	52
3.4.2	Documentary Sources (Diaries)	57
3.4.3	The Pilot Study	58
3.4.4	Sampling	64
3.4.5	Access	67
3.4.6	Background and Standpoint of the Researcher	68
3.4.7	Data Analysis	69
3.4.7.1	Open Coding	70
3.4.7.2	Constant Comparative Analysis	73
3.4.7.3	Axial Coding	73
3.4.7.4	Categorization	75
3.4.7.5	Theoretical Sensitivity	76
3.4.7.6	Selective Coding	76
3.5	Establishing Trustworthiness	77
3.5.1	Credibility	78
3.5.2	Transferability	78
3.5.3	Dependability	79
3.5.4	Confirmability	79
3.5.5	Generalizability	80
3.6	Ethics	81
3.7	Summary and Conclusion	82



## **CHAPTER FOUR THE THEORY OF “DIVERSIFIED ADAPTATION” – AN OVERVIEW**

4.1	Introduction	84
4.2	The Participants and Their Characteristics	85
4.2.1	Winnie (Respondent 1, R1)	85
4.2.2	John (Respondent 2, R2)	85
4.2.3	Toby (Respondent 3, R3)	86
4.2.4	Chunk (Respondent 4, R4)	87
4.2.5	Rose (Respondent 5, R5)	87
4.2.6	Holly (Respondent 6, R6)	88
4.2.7	Justin (Respondent 7, R7)	88
4.2.8	Jeddi (Respondent 8, R8)	89
4.2.9	Kenny (Respondent 9, R9)	89
4.2.10	Thornley (Respondent 10, R10)	90
4.2.11	Eagle (Respondent 11, R11)	90
4.3	Emergence of the Theory	91
4.4	Steps in Arriving at the Theory	92
4.4.1	Open coding	92
4.4.1.1	Adaptation types	93
4.4.1.2	Adaptation dimensions	93
4.4.1.3	Adaptation properties	94
4.4.2	Axial Coding	94
4.4.3	Selective coding	95
4.5	The Story of Diversified Adaptation	96
4.6	The Main Propositions of Diversified Adaptation	99
4.6.1	Propositions of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation	100
4.6.2	Proposition of the Processes of “Diversified Adaptation”	100
4.6.3	Propositions of the Context of PSPETs’ Working Life, Identity, Socialization Experience and Career Trajectory	102
4.6.4	Proposition of the Typology of the PSPETs	102
4.7	Summary	104

## **CHAPTER FIVE CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES OF THE THEORY OF “DIVERSIFIED ADAPTATION”**

5.1	Introduction	105
5.2	The Main Propositions of the Theory	105
5.3	Concepts and Categories	107
5.3.1	Switching (Work Lives)	107
5.3.1.1	Multi-dimensional Knowledge	108

5.3.1.2 Acclimatizing to the Organization	109
5.3.1.3 Reconcilable Scope of Work	110
5.3.1.4 Multi-level Job Specification	111
5.3.1.5 Irregular Work Hours and Workloads	113
5.3.1.6 Summary of the Switching (Work Lives) Category	114
5.3.2 Interplaying (Identity)	115
5.3.2.1 Contribution of Expertise	116
5.3.2.2 Status Construction	118
5.3.2.3 Negotiation	120
5.3.2.4 Bonding	122
5.3.2.5 Personal Characteristics	123
5.3.2.6 Summary of the Interplaying (Identity) Category	124
5.3.3 Diversifying (Professionalism)	125
5.3.3.1 Organizational Sensitivity	126
5.3.3.2 Sources of Satisfaction	127
5.3.3.3 Dealing with Influential Persons and Critical Incidents	128
5.3.3.4 Status of the Profession	129
5.3.3.5 Educational Reform as a Trend	131
5.3.3.6 Versatile Roles	132
5.3.3.7 Summary of Diversifying (Professionalism) Category	134
5.3.4 Assimilating (Career Trajectory)	136
5.3.4.1 Characteristics of Organization	137
5.3.4.2 Self-orientation of Career	137
5.3.4.3 Other Obligations	139
5.3.4.4 Career Aspirations	140
5.3.4.5 Summary of Assimilating (Career Trajectory) Category	142
5.4 Summary	144

## CHAPTER SIX      A TYPOLOGY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN HONG KONG

6.1 Introduction	145
6.2 The Nature of Typologies	145
6.3 The Engagers	148
6.3.1 The relationship between Engagers and the switching category	149
6.3.2 The relationship between Engagers and the interplaying category	149
6.3.3 The relationship between Engagers and the diversifying category	150
6.3.4 The relationship between Engagers and the assimilating category	151
6.4 The Adherers	151
6.4.1 The relationship between Adherers and the switching category	152

6.4.2	The relationship between Adherers and the interplaying category	152
6.4.3	The relationship between Adherers and the diversifying category	153
6.4.4	The relationship between Adherers and the assimilating category	154
6.5	The Dissenters	155
6.5.1	The relationship between Dissenters and the switching category	155
6.5.2	The relationship between Dissenters and the interplaying category	155
6.5.3	The relationship between Dissenters and the diversifying category	156
6.5.4	The relationship between Dissenters and the assimilating category	157
6.6	Conclusion	158

## **CHAPTER SEVEN CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1	Introduction	159
7.2	Summary of the Study	159
7.3	Implications for Theory	166
7.4	Implications for Practice	168
7.4.1	Implications for Policy-makers	168
7.4.2	Implications for Teacher Education Institutions	170
7.4.3	Implications for School and the Principals	173
7.4.4	Implications for Physical Education Teachers	174
7.5	Recommendations for Further Study	175
7.6	Conclusion	177

<b>REFERENCES</b>	180
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## **APPENDICES (in the order of first mention)**

1.	Interview Questions in Association with Specific Research Questions	198
2.	Documentary Sources (Diaries)	201
3.	Informed Consent Form	203

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.1 “Spinning Top” Model - a conceptual framework for studying PSPETs’ professional lives	35
Figure 3.1 Data Collection and Interpretation Procedures (Pilot Study)	60
Figure 3.2 PSPETs Professional Lives - the relationships between categories and memo (Pilot Study)	61
Figure 3.3 Purposive Sampling (Snowball) Chart	66
Figure 3.4 Open Coding of an Interview Transcript	71
Figure 3.5 Open Coding of Diaries	72
Figure 3.6 Sample of Axial Coding – Theoretical Memo	74
Figure 3.7 Sample of Categorization	75
Figure 3.8 Sample of Selective Coding – Theoretical Memo	77

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 3.1      Summary of Participant Characteristic	67
Table 5.1      The Categories, Concepts and Processes of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation	106
Table 6.1      The Relationship between the Types and Categories of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation	148

# CHAPTER 1

## THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

### **1.1 Introduction**

*...I'm just a human being in front of a bunch of other human beings giving a part of myself that I care about and giving them things that I care about ... (an interviewee responding to the question asked by Goodson)*

*(Goodson, 2003, p. 72)*

The aim of this study is to develop a theory of the professional lives of Primary School physical education teachers (PSPETs) in Hong Kong. The central research question of the present study is, “How do Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives?” PSPETs in Hong Kong have been defined by the researcher as professionals who specialize in teaching physical education in primary schools in Hong Kong.

The present chapter introduces an overview of the thesis. First, it states the background and context of the problem. This includes an examination of the professional lives, training and status of PSPETs, an overview of Hong Kong primary schools and the place of physical education in Hong Kong primary school. The research aims and proposed significance of this study are then discussed. The main research question and specific research questions are also presented. The significance and outcomes of the research are explained. Finally, limitations of this study are described. A brief outline of the thesis is also given at the end of this chapter.

### **1.2 Background and Context of the Problem**

Hong Kong PSPETs bear a heavy workload derived from teaching and administrative tasks, in a turbulent climate for education and constant waves of curriculum reforms. Much attention has been focused recently on the perceived need to improve the quality of teaching in primary schools in Hong Kong (Education Commission, 2000). Hence, this study specifically looks at the issues affecting PSPETs, their professional lives, training and their

status. The focus of the study is thus Hong Kong primary schools and the place of physical education teachers in them.

### ***1.2.1 Professional Lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong***

Over the past decade there has been considerable debate around the essential mission of physical education teachers. Many studies have found that they have struggled for legitimacy in their schools. They feel isolated and devalued by colleagues relative to their instructional duties, and believe that their subject area is marginalized (see for example, Johns & Dimmock, 1999). In addition, researcher has defined the relationship between teachers' personal and professional lives in terms of role conflict (Burden, 1982). For gender related issues, Lightfoot (1983) expressed the view that female teachers typically seek to integrate their domestic and professional responsibilities and identities. While an international survey suggested that physical education seems to have attained the same or a similar legal status to other subjects, as a school subject, it is allocated less curriculum time, hence its lower status (Hardman & Marshall, 2005). According to many researchers (Flintoff, 2003; Macdonald & Kirk, 1996; & Sparkes et al., 1993), physical education teachers experience school life very differently from other subject teachers, not only because of the low rank of physical education in the hierarchy of subjects, but also because of the fact that physical education has been defined as peripheral to the central functions of the school. According to a study of the status of teachers and the teaching profession in England, the general public considered teaching to be an attractive career despite teachers consistently perceiving teaching as less rewarding than higher status professions (Hargreaves et al., 2007). However, Hardman and Marshall's (2005) survey of the state and status of physical education in schools in the international context revealed that physical education teachers enjoy the same status as other subject teachers in most of the European countries. Hardman and Marshall (2000) further commented that the education system of Asian countries is "examination oriented and it views physical education as a component of play and leisure rather than an intrinsic part of the educational process" (p.

214). Along this line, very little is known about the professional lives of PSPETs after the introduction of drastic change in work hours and an increased workload, especially concerning ways in which the teachers have adjusted to the changes associated with their working environment in Hong Kong.

Looking back to the “halcyon days”, as some older teachers see them, two decades ago, the Hong Kong primary school teachers worked on a half-day basis as if they had a part-time job, but received full-time benefits and a high social status. “Half-day professional work and half-day personal life” is always the description of that memorable era. Time passed, and education reforms and school restructuring brought those days to an abrupt end. Most of the primary schools gradually changed their system from a half-day school to a whole day school, beginning in the 1990’s. The new school system, together with the new curriculum and education reforms, added stress to the primary school teachers and the senior management personnel.

In addition, it is common in Hong Kong primary schools that PSPETs have a duty not only to teach PE classes, but also to teach up to three other academic subjects, such as Chinese language, English language, and mathematics. In addition, PSPETs have to coach sports teams as an additional duty compared with the other teachers. The nature of the duties of a primary school physical education teacher makes it a very time-consuming and energy demanding profession (Ng, 2002). Aside from teaching and coaching, there are still a number of administrative duties specific to this profession, such as annual athletic meets, swimming galas and different sports tournaments periodically assigned by the senior management of particular schools.

While reforms for schools and teachers continue to be proposed (Curriculum Development Council, 2002; Curriculum Development Council, 2004; & Sum, Chan & Ha, 2004), it seems appropriate to try to understand more about Hong Kong PSPETs and their professional lives. The increasing workload of teachers in schools at local levels since the advent of education and curriculum reforms advocated by the government and scholars cannot be disputed. Hence,



a useful way to understand these forms of marginality and how they have interacted to shape teacher experience is to focus on the professional lives of physical education teachers.

Studying the daily work lives and experiences of the teachers allowed the researcher to study their work situations and perceived problems in relation to the institutions they worked for and the people they worked with.

### ***1.2.2 Training and Status of Hong Kong Physical Education Teachers***

The majority of physical education teachers are trained in the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Only a small number are from other local or foreign universities from which they have usually gained an additional post-graduate diploma majoring in physical education. An inspection of the curriculum of physical education teacher training at the HKIEd and CUHK, shows that the provision of practical coaching experiences for student teachers is lacking. Students must take the initiative to enrol in coaching courses offered by the National Sport Associations and Coach Accreditation Committee of the Hong Kong Sport Institute during their pre-service training or in-service training. Also, there is no administrative training or practice. These omissions are in contrast with the teaching practice for their core physical education subjects, which take place throughout their entire undergraduate studies.

With the increasing demand for better trained and more physical education teachers in Hong Kong, the HKIEd upgraded its programme from diploma level to bachelor level in 2000.

Principals in primary to secondary schools are more willing to employ higher qualified physical education teachers at their schools. It is also becoming a trend that many in-service non-degree physical education teachers are taking part-time programmes in order to upgrade their academic and professional knowledge to bachelor level or above.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is crucial in bringing about change in teachers' classroom practices, their attitudes and beliefs, as well as in students' learning outcomes (Guskey, 2002). According to the new mandatory policy from the EB (Education Bureau),

each teacher has to take a minimum of 150 hours of CPD programmes over a three-year cycle. The aim of the policy is to ensure professional growth through lifelong learning and through the sharing of working experience in this dynamic subject (ACTEQ, 2003). Research by Ha et al. (2004) found that physical education teachers feel more secure and confident about implementing curricular changes after being provided with support on a collaborative basis. CPD programmes were deemed helpful and important because teachers needed continuous support from professional agencies outside the school framework. Participants felt that in-service training was needed to equip them to implement a physical education programme in line with the curriculum reform. The in-service training programme was deemed to be practical and effective, bringing about good communication among schoolteachers, educational experts, and government curriculum officers. Although there are an increasing number of reports on the value of in-service training through collaborative projects between physical education teachers and universities and other agents, few research efforts have attempted to document the processes and effectiveness of such projects.

Numerous research studies regarding physical education and physical education teachers have been carried out in Western countries during the last two decades (Pajak & Blase, 1989; Pennington et al., 2004; & Sparkes et al., 1993). These studies have revealed a need for those engaged in the teaching of physical education to take an in-depth look at physical education and its provisions as a whole in Asian countries, even though few comprehensive studies have examined physical education teachers' value orientations (Ha & Xu, 2002), occupational socialization (Wright, 2001), and perceptions of curriculum change (Ha et al., 2004). Physical education teachers are overworked (Ng, 2002). They are sceptical of educational reform, and have received no additional support for curriculum change (Ha et al, 2004), all of which make the current conditions uncondusive to change.

As PSPETs have become involved in creating and fulfilling the simultaneous roles of teacher, coach, sports administrator and physical education teacher, theoretical debates have pointed to tensions in those relationships. A wealth of evidence also points to the low status of physical

education in the education system (Hardman & Marshall, 2005; Hardman & Marshall, 2000; & Armour & Jones, 1998). Physical education teachers have had to manage their multiple roles as best they can. This study seeks to understand more about the ways in which physical education teachers manage their professional lives.

### ***1.2.3 An Overview of Hong Kong Primary Schools***

According to 2007/8 statistics on the number of primary schools in Hong Kong (EB, 2008), there were 631 primary schools with 385,949 students enrolled and 22,787 (19,378 degree holders; 3,409 non-degree) primary school teachers. The information provided above includes local, English Schools Foundation (ESF) Schools and other international schools. The average class size was 31.7 with a student-teacher ratio of 17.2:1. The PSPETs, under this setting, are not only required to teach their specific physical education subject, but must also teach other subjects in the primary school education system in Hong Kong.

### ***1.2.4 The Place of Physical Education in Hong Kong Primary Schools***

Education and curriculum reform have been popular topics for discussion in Hong Kong education circles since the 1990s, and have taken a prominent position in the Hong Kong Government's agenda since the new 3+3+4 reform was launched (EMB, 2004). The new 3+3+4 reform, which began in 2006, is a new academic structure of three years of junior secondary schooling, three years of senior secondary schooling and four years of university education. Physical education plays its part in the curriculum - in line with the new initiatives of the reform proposals. According to the Physical Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Curriculum Development Council, 2002), the curriculum aims of physical education are to help students to "develop motor skills and acquire necessary knowledge through physical activities and cultivate positive values and attitudes for the development of an active and healthy lifestyle; to acquire good health, physical fitness and body coordination through an active lifestyle; to promote desirable moral behaviours, cooperation in communal life,

ability in making decisions, and the appreciation of aesthetic movements; and to have basic competence and confidence to face different challenges” (p. iii). From a policy-wide point of view, physical education is a subject that seems to have great potential to achieve the objectives of the reforms, as elaborated below.

According to the Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong (Education Commission, 2000), emphasis will be placed on learning for life and learning through life, and these will be major concerns in the coming ideology of the education system. Factors in all-round development and life-long learning, such as enjoying learning, communicating effectively, having a sense of commitment, and being creative are becoming key components of education policy. Since physical education has been recognized as one of the Key Learning Areas (KLA), the Curriculum Development Council of the Education Commission expects students to be educated in many life skills through physical activities, but also to learn generic skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking, as well as promoting positive values and attitudes towards life.

Although physical education activities in school are sometimes given low status as a recess period (O’Sullivan, 1989) or seen as an unimportant goal of the school (Sparkes & Templin, 1990), it is a unique and dynamic discipline that teaches movement and is concerned with the physiology, psychology and social consequences of movement. In order to achieve the ultimate aim of whole-person development in education, physical education deals with “education through the physical” (Wuest & Bucher, 2006). It is also well known that participating in physical activities can relieve stress, alleviate anxiety and depression, and boost higher-level thinking (Booth et al., 2002; & Cotman & Engesser-Cesar, 2002). Physical education and school sports (PESS) have potential to make contributions to young people’s development in four broad domains: physical, social, affective and cognitive (Bailey et al., 2009). From a public health perspective, physical education in school is perhaps the last window of opportunity available to shape physical activity habits for life (Leslie et al., 2001; & Sparling & Snow, 2002).

In Hong Kong, a mere one to two PE lessons per week are being allocated in the curriculum, compared to the extra study time given to the “more important” academic subjects such as language and mathematics. Parents, not surprisingly, tend to devalue physical education and are afraid of interfering with their children’s academic study (Johns & Dimmock, 1999). It seems that physical education is continually marginalized, and has been, for more than ten years in Hong Kong.

Since the outbreak of SARS in 2003, it is apparent that public awareness of health and the value of an active life style have become a major concern for Hong Kong citizens. In addition, school physical education is gaining social importance in the face of increasing obesity and inactivity among students. Physical education can provide opportunities for physical education teachers to lead students back to a healthy life style through a new health oriented curriculum, a good teaching and learning atmosphere and an authentic assessment scheme. As physical education is universally incorporated into all three domains - cognitive, psychomotor and affective, it is unrealistic to adopt an uncritical acceptance of physical education policy, curriculum, assessment scheme and even physical fitness level from Western paradigms.

Every school has its own culture and uniqueness, and there is no standardized measurement that will fit all schools (Dimmock, 2000). Based on Dimmock’s (2000) explanation, “culture is a contested concept and it is defined as the enduring sets of beliefs, values and ideologies underpinning structures, processes and practices” (p. 43). In addition, it is clear that Asian students’ physical fitness levels are different from those of Western students (Chun et al., 2005). Class size, teaching approach, physical resources and subjects taught differ in Asian and Western countries.

In Hong Kong, physical education became one of the eight KLAs in 2002 (Curriculum Development Council, 2002). According to the new Physical Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide, the physical education curriculum should provide all students with essential lifelong learning experiences for whole-person development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physical development, social skills and aesthetics. Students are entitled to have this

learning experience in physical education throughout their primary and secondary schooling. It is also suggested that 5-8% of the total curriculum time be allocated for PE KLA in both primary and secondary schools. In short, the new curriculum is attempting to transform physical education from a skills-oriented discipline that emphasizes the development of motor skills to a more comprehensive health-related one.

Physical education teachers are clearly an essential component of the education system. Lawson (1989) pointed out that the status of physical education directly influences the relationship that physical education teachers have with the principal, other teachers in the school, and the district. With this in mind, physical education is important to all students who attend school and is particularly salient for those who are responsible for the well-being of students – physical education teachers.

### ***1.3 Aims and Purposes of the Study***

This study investigates the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong. It was carried out through the inductive development of a theory, based on grounded theory methods, of how Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives. An in-depth qualitative study generated a framework towards this understanding. The main objective was to find out how PSPETs are socialized and professionalized as they experience changes to their personal and professional identity in their workplaces and in society. Such changes might have positive and/or negative influences on their professional lives, and in turn might eventually affect their career trajectories.

This study was restricted to physical education teachers currently teaching in Hong Kong primary schools.

### ***1.4 Research Questions***

Over the last decade, Hong Kong has experienced a steady and significant drop in the birth rate. As a result, the numbers of students enrolled in many primary schools has declined, resulting in a threat to the job security of primary school teachers. In spite of this, teacher workload in schools has increased because of education and curriculum reforms advocated by government policy. There is a clear need to study the work lives of primary school physical education teachers, to understand how they perceive their personal and professional identities, and their experiences through socialization and professionalization. It may also be worthwhile to look at their career aims and career trajectories. Thus, the main research question of this study focuses on how Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives.

The purpose of this study is to develop a theory inductively, based on grounded theory methods, of how Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers manage their professional lives. Such a theory should have relevance for an important area in physical education, namely, professionalization. Outlined below are the aims of this research.

The central research question of the present study was “How do Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives?” In order to address the above question, a number of specific research questions (SRQs) are posed. These are:

1. How do PSPETs describe their work and how do they feel about their daily work lives?
2. How do PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve?
3. How do PSPETs describe their socialization and professional experiences?
4. What are PSPETs’ career aims and how do they describe and conceptualize their career trajectories?

### ***1.5 The Significance and Outcomes of the Study***

The main significance of this research is the grounded theory that emerges from the study. This study was also significant for the following six reasons.

**First**, there is limited research on teachers' professional lives, and even fewer studies of physical education teachers' professional lives, in non-Western settings. In particular, no studies have been conducted in Hong Kong that describe the work lives of PSPETs, making this study the first investigate the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong.

**Second**, methodologically, the data collection techniques used to study teachers generally and physical education teachers particularly, have been predominantly questionnaires and structured interviews. Often these formats draw the participants' attention to specific questions designed by the researchers on the basis of their own personal experiences, including biases and predispositions about the topic. Such inquiry tends to indicate statistical relationships between phenomena, but do not necessarily indicate the reasons underlying complex relationships. The present study is significant in that it used semi-structured and open-ended interviewing to allow participants to describe and construct the meanings they made of their work, rather than respond to predetermined questions or address topics that were important only to the researcher.

**Third**, this study focuses on PSPETs and invites them to reflect on their own identities, and to discover whether there are any discrepancies between their multiple identities in the socialization and professionalization process.

**Fourth**, increased understanding of how professional lives are formed and experienced by PSPETs may help teacher educators to better prepare future physical education teachers. Researchers (Olson and Osborne, 1991) have generally supported the importance of socialization studies when considering improvements in teacher education.

**Fifth**, particularly for pre-service physical education teachers, such findings and implications may provide a more focused and culturally applicable framework to help them further understand the particular context of their work. In-service physical education teachers who



have experienced and have encountered problems may be able to better prepare pre-service physical education teachers for their careers.

**Sixth**, for policy makers attending to the need to plan the professional training of physical education teachers and retain young professionals who have just entered the field, this study may provide useful insights into the working environment, conditions, support, and particular career trajectory of PSPETs in Hong Kong.

### ***1.6 Limitations of the Study***

The study has a number of limitations, as follows:

**First**, the sample size is comparatively small, but typical for grounded theory studies in doctoral work, with 11 respondents interviewed. As a result, the findings and suggestions are specific to this case, and possible generalizations to other PSPETs are limited.

**Second**, the investigation is highly dependant on the respondents' readiness to answer the interview questions. In addition, the interview was conducted in Cantonese and subsequently transcribed into English. As a result the findings were highly contingent on the interpersonal skills of the interviewer (Wragg, 2002; & Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005). Since interviews were face-to-face conversations, anonymity was not possible and the subjects may have believed that sharing certain information would not be in their best interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

**Third**, interviews may be less standardized, as there can be discrepancies between respondents' words and actions, deliberate lying, unconscious mistakes, memory failure, and the need to impress on the part of respondents (Borg & Gall, 1983).

**Finally**, the researcher spent 11 months on data collection and a considerable number of hours transcribing and analyzing the data. As well, the participants had to contribute time for interviews and record a one-week diary on a daily basis, which could have caused them to lose interest in participation. These factors, taken together, were a hurdle for a single

researcher to face throughout the research process.

As stated earlier, the purpose of the study is develop a framework or typology that best describes the professional lives of a particular cohort of primary school physical education teachers in Hong Kong. This may be the first study of its kind focused on physical education teachers in Hong Kong, to use grounded theory. It is hoped that with the detailed description and rigour of the investigation, and full contextualization of the study, that others may be enabled to transfer relevant findings to their own situations, that is, “retrospective generalization”, which could allow readers to understand PSPETs’ past and/or future experiences in a new way (Eisner, 1991, p. 205).

### ***1.7 Research Methodology***

It is argued that PSPETs can make sense of their lives through their identity, the socialization and professionalization process, and their career trajectory. Qualitative research is best suited to studying these kinds of lived experience processes (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The form of qualitative research that the researcher chose in this study is grounded theory, a method used to gain an in-depth understanding of the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong. In addition, the study employed a social theory of symbolic interactionism, which assumes people make sense of their worlds through social interaction, and sharing of meanings, with others. Data for grounded theory studies are obtained, coded and related, with the intent to develop a theoretical understanding of a phenomenon. The theory is generated from the data, rather than the data being gathered to prove or disprove a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data sources for this study initially were Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers. Data were collected through interviews and documentary sources (diaries). To sustain maximum variation of the sample, individual participants were selected through snowball or chain sampling techniques (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling was also

employed in order to ensure a spread of respondents and theoretical sampling was also employed to maximize opportunities to tell the storyline.

### ***1.8 Outline of the Thesis***

This thesis consists of seven chapters. **Chapter 1** introduces the background to the study, particularly the Hong Kong context, and describes the subject of physical education and the subject teachers amid the climate of education and curriculum reforms. Central to this chapter is a discussion of the aims and purposes, and significance of the study. Most importantly, the research problem and research questions are identified as well as the limitations of this study.

**Chapter 2** reviews existing literature in relation to the aims and the task of constructing a conceptual framework for this thesis. The conceptual framework is built on four interrelated concepts, namely, identity, socialization, professionalization, and career trajectory. The review focuses on existing and current research relevant to the professional lives of physical education teachers.

**Chapter 3** discusses the research design for, and methods used in, the study. It justifies the design in terms of the research paradigms and methodology chosen. It also explains and justifies the adoption of grounded theory in the study, detailing data collection and analysis, and the establishing of trustworthiness and ethics procedures.

**Chapter 4** presents the overall constructed theory describing the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong, named “Theory of Diversified Adaptation”. The chapter also describes the participants and their characteristics, the emergence of the theory, steps in arriving at the theory, the story of “diversified adaptation” and the main proposition of the theory.

**Chapters 5 and 6** include the formation and development of a grounded theory of professional lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers in the form of discoveries that support a theoretical framework. They build upwards from coding and concepts to category formation and eventually to the theory, typology and proposition that

emerge.

Finally, **Chapter 7** contains a summary of the study, implications for theory and practice, and recommendations for future research and a conclusion of the overall thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *2.1 Introduction*

This study set out to investigate the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong. It was carried out through the inductive development of a theory, based on grounded theory methods, of how Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives. In order to help test and validate the emerging theory, the literature review is not simply carried out prior to the study, but adopts an “ongoing” review process both during and after data collection. For this reason, this chapter is written with caution to ensure that the theory is not inappropriately influenced as it evolves from the data (Morse, 1994; & Pandit, 1996). Therefore, a critical discussion of the literature relevant to the concepts and categories identified in the findings of this study is provided in Chapter 5.

The aim of this theory was to understand how Hong Kong PSPETs manage their typical daily work lives in relation to their identity, socialization and professionalization processes, and career trajectory. An in-depth qualitative study generated a framework towards this understanding. Hence, the study adopted the concepts of identity, socialization, professionalization and career trajectory to underpin the exploration of their professional lives. The main objective was to find out how PSPETs go through the socialization and professionalization process as they experience changes to their personal and professional identity in their work places and in society. These changes might have positive and/or negative influences on their professional lives which in turn might eventually lead to changes in their career trajectories.

The present chapter intends to critically review the theoretical foundations of identity, socialization, professionalization, and the career trajectory of PSPETs. The researcher will then use these concepts to underpin the exploration of their professional lives. Previous work

on the professional lives and careers of physical education teachers will be reviewed. Explanations of these four concepts are included in order to justify why they are helpful in examining teachers' lives, particularly in the Hong Kong context, so as to gain greater understanding in developing a qualitative research approach to understanding the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs.

## **2.2 Theoretical Foundations**

An individual in a society has both a personal and a professional identity. He/she experiences the socialization process within his/her culture, develops a sense of self, and becomes a member of a society or organization. An individual also experiences a socialization process in an organization within his/her profession. This process is termed "*professionalization*". A physical education teacher is an individual in a particular organization or society. He/she goes through the socialization process by experiencing the changes of his/her personality identity and professional identity within that organization or society. Those changes might have a positive influence on his/her professional life or create a negative perception of his/her profession which might eventually lead him/her on a different career trajectory. The following discussion is an exploration of the relationship between these elements in establishing a theoretical framework that underpins the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong.

### **2.2.1 Identity**

**2.2.1.1 Personal Identity.** Identity relates to a unique self that exists in a group of people or a society. It is also a concept which embodies our sense of uniqueness as individual beings and as members of groups sharing values and beliefs (Taylor & Spencer, 2002, p. 1). Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others (Weeks, 1990, p. 88). The personality of an individual is a

complex set of attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and values that may influence the society or organization or vice versa. Stone (1962) explained identity by differentiating between “identification of” and “identification with”. Whereas “identification of” is only membership, “identification with” is called identity. In addition, people with the same identity have a sense of belonging to the group. Erickson (1968) elaborated on identity even further by adding “identity is not the sum of childhood identifications, but rather a new combination of old and new identification fragments” (p. 90). Identity is not synonymous with role as role can be assigned. Weber and Mitchell (1996) specify that “the taking up of an identity is a constant social negotiation that can be permanently settled or fixed, occurring as it necessarily does within the irreconcilable contradictions of situational and historical constraint” (p. 109). It has been argued that the construction of one’s identity often involves some sense of the past (Bender, 2001). The preservation of the past thus becomes a part of the process of preserving the present, and also of preserving one’s own identity. Thereby, Lowenthal (1985) contends that the past is essential to one’s sense of identity, and that the competence to recollect and identify with one’s past can enable one to search for one’s own meanings and values. Rose (1962) commented on identity by putting his concentration on humans’ ability to use symbols as social beings. Shared symbols, meanings and values are important in the formation of identification in a group, organization or society. Mercer (1990) emphasizes that people are not talking about the same thing when referring to identity, since identity contains so many different connotations. As he states, “one thing at least is clear – identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (p. 43). Identity also “builds on an earlier socialization theory that was used to explain who physical education teachers were, their attraction to the profession, and how these teachers assumed assigned roles in the school setting” (O’Connor & MacDonald, 2002, p. 39).

**2.2.1.2 Professional Identity.** According to Sachs’s (2001) comments on teachers’ professional identity, it is a set of attributes that are imposed upon the teaching profession

either by outsiders or members of the teaching fraternity itself. Sachs also quoted from Epstein (1978) that identity is essentially a concept of synthesis, integration, and action which “represents the process by which one seeks to integrate his/her various statuses and roles, as well as his/her diverse experiences, into a coherent image of self” (p. 101). Teachers’ identity is clearly and closely entwined with institutional structures and processes. Zembylas (2003) argues that teacher identity is constantly becoming, in a context, embedded in power relations, ideology, and culture. It also refers to how a teacher’s “self” is constructed and reconstructed through the social interactions that he/she has in a particular socio-cultural, historical, and institutional context. In particular, new teachers’ identities are shaped and reshaped over time (Flores & Day 2006). Zembylas (2003) also expressed that identity formation involves how the social operation of power and agency influences the discourses about emotion and identity, and vice versa.

To further explore the understanding of professional identity, Coldron and Smith (1999) contended that the construction of social identity generally involves taking a position in social space. In consequence, Coldron and Smith (1999) state that “the professional identity of teachers is a particular instance of this process. One’s professional identity as a teacher is a matter of where, within the professionally pertinent array of possibilities, a particular person is located” (p. 714). Professional identity is the individual’s sense of worth and value based on how he/she is viewed by colleagues and he/she sees him/herself in the work situation.

Professional identity cannot be separated from the personal experiences of life. Teachers see their professional identity as a combination of their distinct aspects of expertise. Their perceptions of their professional identity seem different from their prior perceptions of this identity during the time that they were still beginning as teachers. The experience of teaching is, therefore, continually a sustainable identity as a teacher (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

As Woods and Jeffrey (2002) stressed in their work, there is a reconstruction of primary teachers’ identities in terms of their feelings, values, beliefs, thoughts, and cherished ideals. Professional identity, subjectively, refers to how individuals manage their attitudes and



behaviours towards their career and profession. In addition, Cooper and Olson (1996) note that the professional identity of teachers is continually “being informed, formed, and reformed as individuals develop over time and through interaction with others” (p. 78), in the preconceptions of how society, history and culture influence who teachers become. The teachers’ professional identity is created and recreated through continuous reflexive monitoring of their actions and reactions and thereby is seen by Giddens (1991) as “steering a way between commitment and uncertainty” (p. 194). O’Connor and Macdonald (2002) indicate that identification as a physical education teacher is “reflective of the type of relationship between physical education and sport in different school contexts, teachers’ personal philosophies, and the risks and rewards derived from dual commitments to teaching and coaching” (p. 49).

In sum, the term identity has a common taxonomy with various approaches, based on a theory of the multidimensionality of identity: the subjectivity of the individual, behaviour patterns specific to the person, and the individual’s membership in a societal group (Schwartz, 2005). Therefore, it is important to examine how PSPETs feel about their typical work lives and their professional identity in the context of Hong Kong primary schools.

### **2.2.2      *Socialization***

Socialization is defined as an ongoing process of learning a variety of new roles over time in a society, whereas organizational socialization is also a long-term process, but is generally defined as a process in which an individual not only learns how to work in a particular organization or a society, but also comes to accept and behave in ways that are appropriate to that organization or society (Fisher, 1986). Another important consideration in the process of socialization is the interpersonal interactions that take place among an organization’s members. As Merton (1982) notes, socialization also refers to “the acquisition of the attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge needed to fulfill social roles or to modify them effectively” in a society, and “defects in this process are a prominent source of

disorganization” (p. 69). Socialization continues throughout life as one’s relationship with family, school and peer group including the media are crucial to this learning process (Cohen & Kennedy, 2000, p. 380)

**2.2.2.1 Professional Socialization.** When socialization appears in an organization that involves someone’s career and profession, professional and occupational socialization takes place. Professional socialization is a lengthy and ongoing process (Gouldner, 1958) by which an individual is instilled with professional values and learns about “appropriate” and accepted work norms and practices. It is also the process by which an individual goes through occupational socialization and learns how to perform his/her work appropriately and effectively for a particular organization, such as a school. Professional socialization and development is a social learning process that includes the acquisition of the specific knowledge and skills that are required in a professional role and the development of new values, attitudes, and self-identity components (Hall, 1987; McGowen & Hart, 1990; & Watts, 1987). Gouldner’s (1958) theoretical underpinning on professional socialization distinguishes between “locals” and “cosmopolitans”. The term “*locals*” refers to the characteristics of the career aspiration of an individual with regard to an employing company, while the term “*cosmopolitans*” refers to the characteristics of the career aspiration of an individual with regard to a profession. Professional socialization occurs through a network of situational exchanges from which individuals imperceptibly assimilate a web of values which are taken for granted and which are based on a social consensus of professional behaviour (Lave, 1988). During professional socialization, PSPETs internalize knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavioural models, as well as the ethical and moral values of the subject or occupation. However, certain critical experiences may trigger an active construction of professional identity.

Considering an individual who enters an organization, there is a distinction between professional socialization and organizational socialization. Organizational socialization refers to a process in which an individual not only learns how to work in a particular organization,

but also comes to accept and behave in ways that are appropriate to that organization (Fisher, 1986). It is essential, therefore, that the individual performs his/her job well in order for the organization to fulfill its function and meet its objectives.

An individual who has been socialized into an organization may not have been professionally socialized, or vice versa. According to Merton's (1982) socialization of professionals, an individual is engaged in learning a professional role by combining component knowledge and skills, attitudes, and values, so as to be able and motivated to perform this role in a professionally and socially acceptable way. There are two broad classes which the individual is required to become acquainted with in the professional role during socialization. One is direct learning through didactic teaching of one kind or another in an organization. The other, according to Merton (1982), is "indirect learning, in which attitudes, values, and behaviour patterns are acquired as by members" (p. 159) in an organization. The latter means the individual learns from sustained involvement in that organization, comprising colleagues and students, as well as parents, which make up a social organization in a school setting. It may not, however, be knowledge acquired and skills gained professionally in terms of attitudes, values and behaviour patterns of such an organization. Thus, an individual starting his/her professional career may not be professionally socialized if the organization he or she works for does not nurture or treasure the knowledge and skills brought by the individual. This will eventually deprofessionalize or even marginalize the profession. At this point, the individual could be organizationally socialized by the particular organization he/she works in.

Organizational socialization takes place with the result of either professionalization or deprofessionalization. Both an organization and a profession have role expectations and requirements for employees (Gouldner, 1958). It is nevertheless the case that some occupations acquire a unique status and come to require a high commitment to the profession and to the organization (Morrow & Goetz, 1988). In an extreme case, professional socialization and organizational socialization may clash if some occupations require individuals only to be moulded into roles that are expected of them solely as a member of the

organization without considering their professional knowledge, skills or even professional development or ethics and code of conduct.

In relation to the purpose of this study, it is interesting and important to understand whether Hong Kong PSPETs experience either organizational socialization working in particular schools or professional socialization as members of the teaching profession, or if they experience both.

### **2.2.3 Professionalization**

Professionalization particularly refers to the desire by teachers to be publicly acknowledged as “professionals”, and denotes the issues of status that have tended to preoccupy historians and sociologists. The term “profession” has produced a wide variety of meanings and interpretations. Professionalization has also been identified as existing in four areas: professionalism (degree of professional competence attained), professional status, professionalism, and the professionalization of training itself (Bourdoncle & Robert, 2000).

Bourdoncle and Robert (2000) explained that:

“Professionalization designates a process of rationalizing and improving the efficiency of those skills and knowledge recognized as necessary to professional practice at a given time....Professionalism refers to the process by which the individual, at the end of his or her training, comes to support and internalize the collective norms and values characteristic of the profession” (pp. 71-81).

The term “profession” has produced a wide variety of meanings and interpretations. Goode (1957) confined it to a sense of identity associated with shared values, an agreed role definition, a common technical language, and recognition that a professional group has power over its members. The concept of teaching as a profession is ambiguous and has not been well defined. This was expressed by Englund (1996) when he said that professionalization is related to the authority and status of the teaching profession, and that professionalism is concerned with the internal quality of teaching as a profession. It also seems that teacher professionalization has been a source of enormous interest, administratively, in identifying, codifying, and applying professional standards of practice to the teaching force by

governments and bureaucracies (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996).

Professionalization is a sociological concept that has little concern for the quality of teaching (Helsby & McCulloch, 1996). Teachers are considered as professionals because all educational organizations are staffed with professionally qualified staff. In the view of teachers as reflective practitioners, Englund (1996) commented that the rhetoric of teacher professionalization implies a narrow, technical-rational view of teachers' effectiveness. Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) clearly distinguished "professionalization" as a social and political project or mission designed to enhance the interests of an occupation group, from "professionalism" which "defines and articulates the quality and character of people's actions within that group" (p. 4).

Though Bridges (1999) suggests that professional teachers have academic qualifications and also act in an ethical manner based on an explicit or implicit code of conduct, the concept of professionalism is basically described by such values, goals and expectations at work. The question raised in professionalism is what real competence the professional teacher ought to have. In fact, professionalization and professionalism are related and cannot be kept totally apart. In this regard, Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) revealed at least five different overlapping discourses of teacher professionalism. These discourses are classical professionalism, flexible professionalism, practical professionalism, extended professionalism, and complex professionalism. They then later stretch to a sixth agenda of teacher professionalism - postmodern professionalism. Postmodern professionalism, as defined by Hargreaves and Goodson (1996), is "characterized by increasing organizational complexity, economic flexibility, and scientific and moral uncertainty on a scale of global proportions" (p. 19). What Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) espoused in their idea of postmodern professionalism are: (1) discretionary judgment over the issue of teaching and curriculum, (2) moral and social purposes, and value of what teachers teach, (3) commitment to working with colleagues in a collaborative culture, (4) occupational heteronomy rather than self-protecting autonomy, (5) active care and not just an anodyne service for students, (6) continuous learning

related to one's own expertise and standards of practice, and (7) recognition of high task complexity (pp. 20-21). Professionalism is a multi-dimensional construct and has been measured in terms of job characteristics, work behaviour, professional commitment, and career commitment at different times (Berman, 1999). Miner (1993) and Miner et al. (1994) proposed five types of professional role requirement that capture the essential dimensions of professionalism. They are acquiring knowledge, acting independently, accepting status, providing help, and exhibiting professional commitment. Teachers' professionalism, Goodson (2003) argued, is being driven by government guidelines ranging from assessment to accountability to curriculum definition and is being rather technicized than professionalized. Goodson also argued that there are two kinds of professional groups of teachers. The first one is comprised of old professionals who believe in teachers' collective control of their work and who resist hierarchical control which can be seen as deprofessionalization. The other group is comprised of new professionals who tend to accept the new political dispensation and hierarchies, new government guidelines, and new curriculum which "can be seen as shifting the ground to defining new professionalisms" (Goodson, 2003, p. 128).

Professionalization, which is considered to be the new discourse for in-service training and professional development, starts at the beginning of pre-service training with further important stages of professionalization taking place during the in-service years. Professional identity and professionalization are also greatly affected by the working environment, policies, personnel, student mix, and particularly, PSPETs' participation in community service. In this regard, it is worth noting that, although the teaching of physical education is regarded as a profession in Hong Kong, PSPETs' actual feelings and experiences of being professionalized, deprofessionalized, marginalized or trivialized while working in schools will be key issues for investigating their professional lives.

#### **2.2.4 Career Trajectory**

Career trajectory refers to the age when a person begins work and how they develop a

career, years of experience, and sector experience. Career trajectory is also a commitment to moving through the status hierarchy of a profession (MacLean, 1992) and has been conceptualized mainly in terms of promotion. In the Chinese context, including Hong Kong, this is important and Schwartz (1999) reported that Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China place strong emphasis on power and ranking in social affairs and the distribution of resources. In addition, within traditional Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism, the value of work is strongly emphasized and is taken as the basis for social order and management.

Diprete (1987) argues that career trajectories are imperfectly constrained by formal job ladders; individuals may make lateral moves from one job ladder to another. In terms of mobility within organizations, therefore, career trajectory can either involve vertical or lateral mobility through a hierarchy (Diprete, 1987). A typology of teachers' careers has been developed by Bobbitt et al. (1991). His typology identifies teachers' careers into movers, stayers and leavers. Draper et al. (1998) further suggested different career strategies based on the developed typology. The typology proposed by Draper et al. (1998) offers a way of encapsulating past career decision making and future career intentions, and identifies continuing professional development needs. A set of four combinations is as follows:

- i) "Stayers" refers to teachers who have not sought promotion in the past and do not intend to do so in the future;
- ii) "Movers", in contrast, refers to teachers who have sought promotion in the past and intend to do so again in the future;
- iii) "Starters" refers to teachers who have not applied for promotion in the past but intend to seek promotion in the future; and
- iv) "Stoppers" refers to teachers who have sought promotion before but do not intend to do so in the next five years.

The consideration of a career trajectory has to be based on an individual's past decision making, career expectations and satisfaction, and future career intentions, together with organizational culture, organizational socialization, and critical incidents occurring throughout

the trajectory.

In addition to traditional career patterns in Hong Kong primary schools, contract-based employment also affects employees' career trajectories. It is recognized that teachers today are engaging in new career paths. In recent years, many jobs have been permanently cut through restructuring and reengineering, and as previously mentioned, many primary schools are experiencing lower enrolment, which threatens the job security of PSPETs. With these changes has come a corresponding drop in the career aspirations of those who work within primary schools in Hong Kong. Thus, many are witnessing a shift from the permanent career to the contract-based career. Contract-based careers may be less connected with the long-term goals and mission of an institution. The contract-based teacher's own personal career choices and search for self-fulfillment are the unifying or integrative elements in his/her life. The extent to which career structures constrain movement and divergence in career trajectories in Hong Kong primary schools are thus an important issue in the study of the professional lives of PSPETs.

### ***2.3 A Review of Previous Research on the Professional Lives of Physical Education***

#### ***Teachers***

The careers of teachers in general have been explored by Day et al. (2007), Day (2004), Day (1999) and Goodson (2003) and Hargreaves & Goodson (1996). These studies have developed our understanding of the daily lives and career trajectories of teachers. In particular they argue that it is essential to develop distinctive forms of educational study which stay close to the everyday life and work of teachers with the wider rhetoric of reform, restructuring and rationalizing, within which agendas for teacher professionalism and professionalization are defined (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996).

Furthermore, Day (1999) claims that schooling needs to take account of the changing nature of society, placing an expectation on teachers to be adaptable and of a consistently high



quality in teaching. He further emphasizes that teachers' learning is affected by work experiences, life histories, career phases, external social and political conditions and contexts, school cultures, leadership and peer support, and opportunities for reflection (Day, 1999). In addition, he argues that professional development should be based upon an understanding of the complexities of teachers' lives and conditions of work. It should also focus on an understanding of how teachers learn and why they change or do not change. There is a developing awareness of the connection between teachers' private lives and the personal and biographical aspects of their careers. Day continues that there is need to investigate such influences as roles, identities, beliefs, motivations and commitments of teachers and how these affect their work lives - whether positively or negatively. In turn, their impact will inevitable affect teacher effectiveness and pupil learning and achievement (Day, 2007). Goodson (2003) argues that teachers' life experience, background and life styles both inside and outside school and their latent identities and cultures may all impact on their view of teaching. The teacher's life-cycle is also an important aspect of professional life and development. Likewise, career stages and career decisions can be analyzed in a teacher's own situation whereas critical incidents in a teacher's life may crucially affect the perception and practice of his/her own work. Moreover, the teacher's stress, burnout and dropout would be other interesting perspectives to study under the umbrella of the professional lives of teachers (Goodson, 2003).

### ***2.3.1 Physical Education Teachers' Professional Lives***

Sparkes and Templin (1990) expressed that for those who choose to teach physical education, the construction of a career is highly problematic. This is not only because of the lack of support by students, faculty, and administrators in school, but also the lack of respect for their subject matter by parents. Sparkes & Templin (1990) also argued that physical education programmes make explicit the micropolitical nature of a career in a marginal subject. In addition, physical education teachers are able to contribute to and maintain social

interaction in a positive manner but still remain alone in their professional decisions (Stroot et al., 1994).

The personal and professional lives of physical education teachers, and the environment in which they work, have been examined by Lawson (1989). He provided a framework which identifies the multiple factors that influence workplace conditions. He claimed that these factors had a negative impact on physical education teachers' ability to be effective. These factors are: (1) lack of prestige for physical education, as indicated by interactions with the principal and the faculty, and (2) differential standards of time and grading policies between physical education and other subjects. It also appears that teachers enjoy autonomy in their workplace in which hierarchical influence is limited (Lortie, 1975). According to Stroot et al. (1993) and Templin (1989), physical education teachers often work in isolation and often do not have the opportunity to interact with others within the profession about their world of work. It was also reported that physical education teachers' early phase of socialization reflects the trend of proletarianization which includes the repetitive nature of work, lack of authority and autonomy, blurring between work and private lives, unsupportive staffroom culture, and unfulfilling interactions with students (Macdonald & Kirk, 1996). It is perhaps the teachers' thought that they are increasing their "professional" status. However, some basic changes including performance appraisal, shifts to local management and market forces, and cumulative, nonnegotiable tasks (Hargreaves, 1994) lead them to the process of deprofessionalization or proletarianization. This process eventually becomes more bureaucratically regulated, intensified and routinized, and oriented toward executing rather than conceiving tasks (Hargreaves, 1994). Those facts would then eventually affect teachers' professional and private lives throughout their career.

### **2.3.2      *The Status Problem of Physical Education Teachers***

Traditionally, PSPETs in Hong Kong have a low status with lower staff ratios, lower salaries, less graded posts, and less career prospects. While reform proposals for schools and

teachers continue to be proposed (Curriculum Development Council, 2002; Curriculum Development Council, 2004; & Curriculum Development Council, 2005), it seems that the status of physical education as a subject, and teaching physical education as a profession, have undergone tremendous changes in the past. Over the decade, PSPETs have been overloaded with work (Ng, 2002), deprofessionalized (Macdonald, 1999), and marginalized (Johns & Dimmock, 1999; Sparkes et al., 1993). Parents tend to devalue physical education and are afraid of physical education interfering with their children's academic study (Johns & Dimmock, 1999). Teachers, especially physical education teachers, are also overworked (Ng, 2002). They are sceptical of educational reform and curriculum change (Ha et al, 2004). Every school or organization has its own particular circumstances and unique culture, and each institution claims to provide a "quality" experience for its students. During a sharing session in a workshop for the physical education curriculum among leaders in primary schools in 2004, PSPETs called themselves 'seven-eleven' workers, which reflected that comparatively, their work lives and work duration are much longer. "Seven-eleven" means that primary school teachers often work from seven o'clock in the morning to eleven o'clock at night.

### ***2.3.3 The Role of Physical Education Teachers***

In O'Connor and MacDonald's (2002) study, role conflicts such as those among physical education teachers and sports coaches occur frequently. Though it appears that much of the nature of teachers' work in physical education, specifically that addressing teaching and coaching, is documented, physical education teachers constantly negotiate, both self-reflexively and publicly, ways to reduce tensions and maximize complementarity across the responsibilities, in line with their personal lives.

Teachers' roles and responsibilities are changing, or more specifically, expanding. O'Sullivan (2004) argues that professionals in primary schools, specifically physical education teachers/coaches, are presented with unique challenges. It is clear that physical education

teachers have to be teachers in school time and be coaches after school or during holidays. The job of coaching is a challenging and enjoyable aspect of physical education teachers' work which often takes place in a more relaxed out-of-school setting (O'Connor & Macdonald, 2002).

It may also be perceived that school administrators consider coaching success more important than teaching success when the performance of physical education teachers is evaluated, forcing them to favor coaching over teaching (Sisley et al., 1987). These contextual differences are in line with Lindholm (1997) who reported that individuals who were employed as teachers/coaches had greater perceived job opportunities than did individuals who only taught physical education.

The misconception that the job of teacher and coach are the same goes a long way toward perpetuating the teacher-coach role conflict (Chu, 1984) that has plagued the profession and has affected recruitment. Consequently, the heavy workload, the expanded roles and responsibilities, together with the increasing non-teaching duties, results in physical education teachers experiencing burnout in their work.

## ***2.4 The Emerging Concepts***

Teachers' professional lives have been well addressed in the staff development literature in educational settings. The first model was derived from Fuller (1969) who identified three developmental stages of teachers: survival, mastery, and impact. Fraser et al. (1998) indicated that the quality of teachers' professional lives was influenced by the "recognition of efforts" and the "influence over school policies", with women being more satisfied with the former and men with the latter.

In Hong Kong, Pang (2004) has conducted a study and developed the Teachers' School Life Questionnaire for investigating the lives of teachers. He defined "teacher commitment", "job satisfaction", "sense of community", and "order and discipline" as the main categories for the

direction of his quantitative study. Pang found that school characteristics had more effect on teachers' school life than did teacher characteristics, and the four categories relating to school life were in a causal order as - order and discipline, sense of community, job satisfaction, and teacher commitment with the former variable promoting the latter both directly and indirectly. Pang's (2004) findings support the view that "school organizational environment is a critical factor that affects teachers' feelings and behaviour. The interaction between its organization climate and teachers' feelings will determine teacher dedication" (p. 78). Order and discipline determines school climate and community refers to the collection of individuals who are together bound to a set of shared values which affects teachers' professional socialization and organizational socialization. Pang (2004) also expressed that job satisfaction and commitment are closely-knit concepts, and for schools are two important ingredients to teacher dedication which may affect the development of self- and professional identity through a strong organizational culture in schools.

Physical education in Hong Kong has been adopted as a key learning area (KLA) and one of the ways to achieve a healthy life style for youngsters. However, the status of PSPETs is still questionable and problematic, and is so rooted and embedded that different roles within the teaching profession are sharply distinguished and ascribed with differences of prestige, with physical education teachers being ranked as the lowest (Musgrove and Taylor, 1969).

Nevertheless, the social expectation of the teaching profession, including physical education, is changing in that teachers are now being pushed to reach higher levels of professionalism in such a way that learning and teaching effectiveness is improved.

After looking into the professional lives of physical education teachers, it is now appropriate to look at how they perceive themselves with regard to their self-identity and professional identity. Different professional identities may have been derived from various experiences in their professional lives. Regarding identity, Featherstone (2000) states that physical education teachers just like other individuals in an organization, have "multiple identities" and "fragmented identities" and those identities are always unstable and evolving subject to

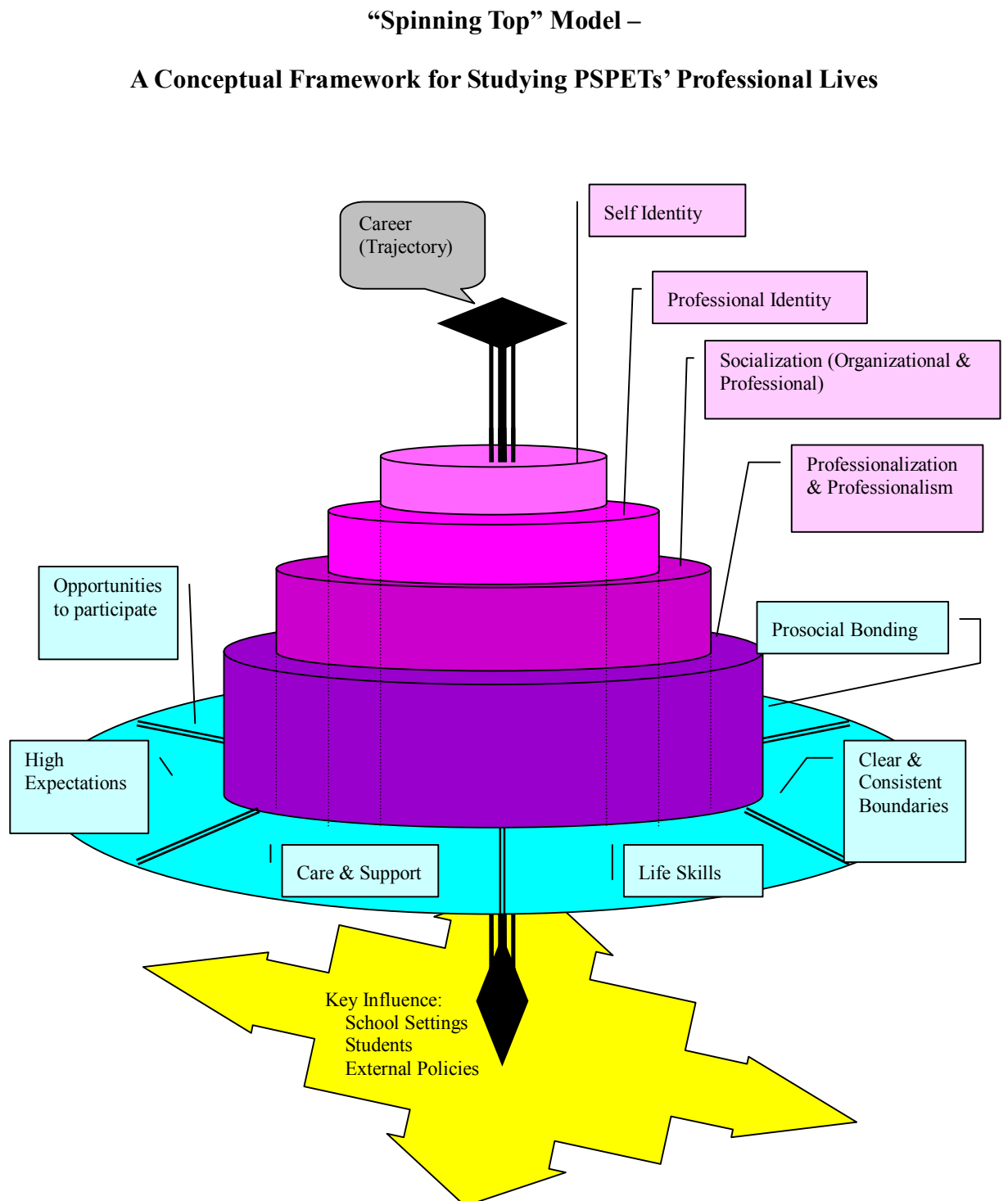
slippage, blurring, and entanglement with others (Hall, 1996). Their perception of how they think of their profession is especially influential. The identity is strongly connected to impressions regarding physical education teachers which construe them to be fit and strong as well as good-looking role models. The identities of PSPETs also depend on social expectations which mean that the institutional environment shapes their identity and legitimizes the professional status of the teaching force. As discussed earlier, teachers' identity is clearly and closely associated with institutional structures and processes. Therefore, the key influences in teachers' work life contexts, particularly their professionalization experiences, include their school settings, students and external policies with particular support from school; departmental leadership and staff collegiality are key contributory factors to how teachers' perceive their stability of identities which influence teachers' well-being and sense of effectiveness across all career phases (Gu, 2005).

## **2.5 Conceptual Model**

Following this vein, in order to foster a positive professionalization experience, a “spinning top” concept may be applied which can facilitate a clear picture to view PSPETs' professional lives (see Figure 2.1). A resiliency theory (Henderson & Milstein, 1996) shows that there is a resiliency wheel where the left side of the wheel is the combination of three elements: (1) *Care and support* include unconditional positive regard, support and encouragement; (2) *High expectations* include making sure that people know that we believe they can be successful as well as providing the resources for them to do so; (3) *Opportunities to participate* include giving people opportunities to demonstrate their competence and willingness to contribute in meaningful ways; and the right side of the wheel are the protective factors that may mitigate risk and deal with mitigating risk factors in the environment: (1) *Prosocial bonding* includes increasing positive connections between people in their environments; (2) *Clear and consistent boundaries* includes policies and rules that

govern people behaviour; and finally, (3) *Life skills* includes skills of decision making, communication, stress management, conflict management and so forth. As Gu and Day (2007) affirm, using resilience theory to understand the interactions between work and life over the course of a career and in different contexts adds to existing knowledge of variations in teachers' work and lives. This resiliency wheel could be a foundation for establishing and underpinning teachers' identity, professional identity, and organizational and professional socialization so that their career trajectories could be moved according to such influence factors. With self-identity embedded into professional identity, and professional identity embedded into organizational and professional socialization, teachers' professionalization and professionalism in their lives could be reflected by using career trajectories as an axis of the "spinning top". It was mentioned previously that PSPETs might choose to be stayers, movers, starters, or stoppers in their career trajectories (Draper et al., 1998) which would vary according to their personal needs, expectations or preferences. The harder the individual spins the top (with those concepts), the more he/she could experience in his/her professional life. An individual's career trajectory will be influenced by factors such as school settings, students and external policies.

Figure 2.1: (based on the literature review)





## ***2.6 Conclusion and Implications***

This chapter has considered the professional lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers (PSPETs). It has argued that identity, socialization, professionalization and career trajectory form useful conceptual frameworks for underpinning the study of the professional lives of PSPETs. Teachers' work ranges from professionalization to deprofessionalization experiences. In this respect, there is a need to study the physical education teachers' world of work and how they feel in their work lives since their work is often carried out in isolation (Stroot et al., 1993). As Robertson (1996) has stressed "the outcome of the reorganization of teachers' work is increased segmentation for the purposes of organizational flexibility, pedagogical deskilling, a new conception of professionalism linked to managerial activity, the reconstruction of a teacher as a learner-manager, an expansion of tasks to include management activity, and tighter external controls" (p. 50). In addition, Goodson and Walker (1991) have given reassurance that "much of the work that is emerging on teachers' lives throws up structural insights which locate teachers' lives within the deeply structured and embedded environment of schooling" (p. 148).

The justification for the study of the professional lives of PSPETs not only involves the context of their lives but also the concern for the development of a wide intertextual and intercontextual mode for analyzing their professional lives. The definition of physical education teachers' professional lives made by different teachers can be understood by their work life perceptions. In order to understand PSPETs' professional lives, we should better understand the daily experiences and perceptions in their work and work place. A sociological conceptual framework which gives an account of teachers' professional lives is needed and is helpful in understanding the ideology and beliefs of PSPETs in Hong Kong. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate how PSPETs perceive their professional lives. Finally, the professional satisfaction of PSPETs can be instructive in terms of improving their professional lives.

To summarize this literature review, the researcher found that there is very little known about how PSPETs adjust to the changes associated with their professional lives and experiences. The present researcher intends to use the grounded theory approach to explore the richness and complexity of the professional lives and experience of PSPETs through their own voices, describing these two areas and exploring the meaning of those experiences for them, before finally generating a theory to explain their professional lives and careers.

This chapter has reviewed the professional lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers (PSPETs). The concepts of identity, socialization, professionalization, and career trajectory which shape their lives have been critically reviewed. The chapter began with concepts of identity, socialization, professionalization, and career trajectory which underpin the framework of this study. The second part provided a review of previous research on the professional lives and careers of physical education teachers. The third part introduced the emerging concepts and a conceptual model on the need to explore teachers' professional lives. Finally, the chapter relates and justifies how useful those concepts and previous research are to the exploration of the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs.

The next chapter describes the research design and methodology that the researcher employed to study the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### ***3.1 Introduction***

The aim of this study is to develop a theory of the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong. The study employs a qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong, namely an inductive grounded theory method, based on the meta-theory of symbolic interactionism. The justification for using a qualitative approach and a grounded theory method will be discussed. The aim of this chapter is to design an appropriate research methodology for studying the professional lives and experiences of PSPETs and to investigate the possibility of developing a theory to portray the processes involved in doing so by using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The development, theoretical basis and important features of grounded theory will be described and justified in this chapter. The research problem, the aim of the study and the appropriateness of the research paradigm, positivism or interpretivism, will be explored. A detailed discussion of how this approach and methodology was applied to the study of the professional lives and experiences of PSPETs is the main purpose of this chapter. Its sub-theme is to provide an alternative approach to more traditional methods of investigation and a feasible way for physical education practitioners to generate theory that is grounded in the realities of their daily work. With this regard, the purpose of this chapter is to design a research methodology for investigating “the professional lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers”. The chapter also examines the objectives and aims of the research study. Appropriate research paradigms such as positivism and interpretivism are discussed, and a suitable approach to this specific topic suggested. Lastly, the method of data collection and analysis will be emphasized and interpreted.

### ***3.2 The Justification of the Research Paradigm***

The present study employed a qualitative design to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong, namely an inductive grounded theory method, based on the meta-theory of symbolic interactionism. The justification for using a qualitative approach and the grounded theory method are now discussed.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the term “paradigm” is a scientific term that provides familiar language that facilitates discussion among scientists. Strauss and Corbin also state that “the paradigm is nothing more than a perspective taken toward data, another analytic stance that helps to systematically gather and order data in such a way that structure and process are integrated.....the basic terms used in the paradigm often follow the logic expressed in the language that people use in their everyday description” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 128). Based on Batch’s (2002) notion, which follows this line of thinking, there are five research paradigms: positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, critical/feminist and post-constructivist. For each paradigm, there is the ontological question - What is the nature of reality?; the epistemological question - What can be known and what is the relationship of the knower to what is to be known?; and the methodological question - How is knowledge gained?

To be more specific and to relate this to educational research paradigms, there are two major theoretical perspectives. One is positivism and the other is interpretivism, which Batch (2002) named “post-positivism”. In addition, Batch (2002) also outlined the following:

1. The ontology of positivism is that reality is out there to be studied, captured and understood, whereas the ontology of interpretivism is that reality exists but is never fully apprehended.
2. The epistemology of positivism is how the world is really ordered and the knower is distinct from the known, whereas the epistemology of interpretivism believes that the approximations of reality and researcher are the instrument of data collection.
3. The methodology of positivism is experiments, quasi-experiments, surveys and correlation studies, whereas interpretivism uses rigorously defined qualitative methods, frequency counts and low-level statistics.
4. The products of positivism are facts, theories, laws and predictions, whereas the products of interpretivism are generalizations, descriptions, patterns and grounded

theory.

Positivism is to be considered as a type of investigation that seeks a statistically proven relationship between defined variables by using numeric results and quantitatively explicit findings, whereas interpretivism is a paradigm that uses qualitative methods such as formal interviews, observation and documentary analysis as a means of collecting data (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Interpretivism gives meaning to data and makes sense of social situations by generating explanations for what is going on within the data (Batch, 2002). Given the above theoretical perspectives in educational research paradigms, interpretivism is considered to be more closely suited to this study's research questions, and more capable of generating a detailed, rich, and in-depth understanding of the professional lives of PSPETs.

Positivism is also considered to be quantitative research. Quantitative researchers try very hard to keep out of the data-gathering process by using laboratory measurements, questionnaires, and other so-called objective instruments. Quantitative studies are also designed in such a way that the researcher's influence can be excluded as far as possible in order to guarantee the objectivity of a study. There are, however, a number of disadvantages associated with quantitative research, e.g. it has been argued to be "garbage in and garbage out" in terms of the quality of data; technical difficulties associated with aspects of analysis; large volumes of complex data without appropriate care which can swamp the researcher; and decisions made based on it can have far-reaching effects on the kinds of findings that emerge, which can create false promises (Denscombe, 1998).

Quantitative research is an approach that fulfills methodological standards with the consequence that its investigations and findings often remain too far removed from everyday questions and problems (Flick, 2002). Flick (2002) also cited Max Weber saying:

"Max Weber (1919) proclaimed 'the disenchantment of the world' as the task of science.....In the case of social science, the low degree of applicability and connectability of results is taken as an indicator of this. ....scientific findings are not carried over into political and institutional practices and picked to pieces: Science no longer produces 'absolute truths', which can uncritically be adopted. It furnishes limited offers for interpretation, which reach further than everyday theories but can be used in practice comparatively flexibly." (Flick, 2002, p. 3)

Thus, in this study, the researcher's decision on a research approach depended on whether a quantitative or a qualitative approach made more sense in attempting to answer the research questions. Quantitative methodologies are more suitable if the objectives of the research have to do with hypothesis testing, counting or measurement, whereas qualitative methodologies are more suitable if the objectives of the research is to understand, discover, meaning or experience, or generate theory (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; & Patton, 1990). Since the purpose of this study is the understanding of the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong, "qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomenon such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). In contrast to quantitative research, the emphasis of interpretivism is upon words rather than numbers. In other words, qualitative research emphasizes induction, whereas quantitative research largely emphasizes deduction (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). Interpretivism puts more emphasis on the qualitative method that seeks to understand the meaning of an experience for the participants in a specific setting and the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Researchers interact with participants, and their sensitivity and perceptions are crucial in procuring and processing observations and responses (Thomas & Nelson, 2001).

Following in this vein, Morrison (2002) also argued that all educational research needs to be grounded in people's experience and the core task of an interpretivist is to view research participants as research subjects and to explore the meaning of events and phenomena from the subjects' perspectives. In other words, qualitative research emphasizes induction. This means that qualitative research focuses on the essence of a phenomenon. The objectives are primarily description, understanding and meaning. Since there is no preconceived hypothesis in qualitative research, researchers strive instead to develop hypotheses from observations. Qualitative research is a viable approach to solving problems in the field of education. It also allows answers to questions to be obtained in a natural setting through systematic observation

and interactional methodology. Punch (1998) pointed out that qualitative research is the study of social life in natural settings. Since this study involves an educational research setting, it comprises those characteristics and emphases providing an implicit and explicit understanding, explanation and development of theory on the professional lives of PSPETs.

Criticisms of the status of qualitative research are frequently made, especially by institutional review boards (IRBs). Denzin and Giardina (2007) argue that those criticisms are from a strongly political and decidedly nonobjective stance (p. 13). In fact, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) with a result that qualitative research is scientific research as acknowledged by the National Research Council (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). There are many different ways to look into and analyze human activities and behaviours in society and qualitative data can, therefore, be analyzed using multiple perspectives and practices. Qualitative research is an umbrella term referring to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. Since the data collected from qualitative studies have been termed soft, and are not easily handled by statistical procedures, qualitative researchers tend to collect their data through sustained contact with people in settings where subjects normally spend their time. As a result, data collected are rich in their description of people, places and conversation (Biklen, 1992). Morse (1994) refined the concept of qualitative research to consist of inference, insight, logic and luck, eventually incorporating hard work and creativity into it.

The qualitative approach to studying various aspects of education, particular in this study, is a suitable methodology for dealing with critical problems of practice and extending knowledge in the field (Merriam, 1988). As Morrison (2002) has stressed, research methodology is critical since ontology and epistemology affect the methodology that underpins researchers' work. An appropriate methodology provides a rationale by which researchers conduct research activities. Methodology is a term that in a broad sense refers to the process, principles, and procedures by which we approach and seek answers (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). The researcher of this study, therefore, attempts to construct theories using the inductive

process to explain relationships among categories of data. A theory that evolves from data is called a grounded theory and this will be discussed in the following section.

Traditionally, educational research has emphasized the quantitative approach, with many researchers feeling that qualitative studies have remained outside the mainstream of educational research. In fact, it is unwise to try to make a clear distinction between qualitative and quantitative studies; one approach should not be considered superior to the other. Strauss and Corbin (1998), however, also stressed that “qualitative research produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11).

Nonetheless, qualitative research, especially in education, is a means of conducting research with people. A natural science researcher is different from an education researcher; hence this study needs to be grounded in people’s experience. It aims to investigate “from the inside” through a process of empathetic understanding (Morrison, 2002). Qualitative research is a circular interlinking of empirical steps that justify the character of discovery. The adoption of qualitative research allows this study to realize the epistemological principle of *verstehen* (understanding from within) with a greater degree of sensitivity than linear design (Flick, 2002, p. 45). In addition, Strauss and Corbin (1998) stressed that:

“Getting to the heart of the matter, our advice to readers concerning this matter is to think in terms of the interplay between qualitative and quantitative methods. Confronting but overly simple positions, such as ‘They supplement each other’ and ‘They complement each other,’ will not provide sufficient guides in your work if you are aiming at building theory.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 31)

This study’s research topic is not an artificial laboratory situation but the practices and interactions of subjects in everyday life; therefore, under the umbrella of qualitative research, various research approaches, including the tradition of symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and structuralism, were employed.



A qualitative research approach is an emerging paradigm encompassing many data gathering techniques. Qualitative data consist of (i) detailed descriptions of situations, events and people; (ii) direct quotations from people about their attitudes, beliefs and experiences; and (iii) excerpts from historical documents. Researcher, in this study, may use one or a series of techniques to collect information. When a qualitative approach is employed, the researcher is the main “measurement device” of this study.

In view of the above arguments in favor of a qualitative approach, such an approach was considered to be best suited to the present study of the professional lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers. It was especially relevant when looking into the professional lives and experiences of teachers, teacher preparation, teacher pay and compensation, teaching career, professional longevity and career mobility, differentiated staffing and career development, accountability and assessment, order and discipline, sense of community, job satisfaction, and teacher commitment. It was very interesting to investigate and analyze each of these areas. A qualitative approach to research can identify the perspectives of the research participants and uncover their experiences and feelings. The professional lives and experiences of a significant period in PSPETs’ careers are seen as most appropriate for understanding a phenomenon. In addition, this study is regarded as “a culture from within which the production of knowledge and identities take place – within the material and institutional contexts that structure everyday life provides the underlying site for the critical interrogation of sporting (physical education) experiences, forms, meanings, structures and practices” (Silk et al., 2005).

In addition, in studying the professional lives of PSPETs, this research employed a qualitative research, namely a grounded theory method, based on the meta-theory of symbolic interactionism. The use of grounded theory method for this research on the professional lives of PSPETs was considered appropriate, as little research has been carried out in the physical education area, particularly with primary school physical education teachers (PSPETs) in the Asian region. In sum, the use of qualitative research was a viable approach to solving

problems in this research topic. Answers to the specific research questions were best obtained in natural settings through the interactional methodology of qualitative research.

### ***3.3 Grounded Theory***

#### ***3.3.1 The Development of Grounded Theory***

Grounded theory is a systematic approach to data collection and analysis that allows the discovery of theory to explain social behaviour. First used in the 1960s by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), it is an approach to the development of inductive theory, which is derived from the study of the phenomenon it presents (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is also an inductive methodology used to generate theory through the systematic and simultaneous process of data collection and analysis (Goulding, 2002). This grounded theory methodology emerged as an alternative strategy to more traditional approaches to scientific inquiry which relied heavily on hypothesis testing, verificational techniques and quantitative forms of analysis, which were particularly popular in social sciences at the time (Babchuk, 1996). Grounded theory then split into two streams, each of which was associated with one of the two original authors. The “Glaserian” method and the “Strauss and Corbin” version are two different perspectives in terms of methods of analyzing data (Goulding, 2002 & Babchuk, 1996).

Like other qualitative research methodologies, grounded theory is of most use when there is little research in the subject area under investigation or when a new point of view is sought, even if there is already some knowledge about the research phenomenon. Grounded theory provides a means of guiding the collection and interpretation of data and of discovering categories and concepts that can be linked to describe processes and build theoretical frameworks.

The major difference between grounded theory methodology and other approaches to

qualitative research is its emphasis on theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory as both a research methodology derived from the assumptions and theoretical foundations of symbolic interactionism and as a method for systematically developing theories through an ongoing process of comparative analysis.

Indeed, it was Pandit's (1996) opinion that grounded theory requires the researcher to have certain qualities, such as confidence and creativity. He also believed that the more experienced a researcher is the better the theory he/she will produce. Nevertheless, grounded theory is an approach with origins that are consistent with the interpretive paradigm and the symbolic interactionist perspective (Annells, 1996 & Goulding, 2002).

Symbolic interactionism focuses on the meanings of events for people and the symbols they use to convey that meaning. Meanings are developed through experience or interaction and the meanings that people assign to events determine their response (Stryker, 1967). As a method of inquiry, grounded theory is oriented to the generation of theory. The focus of analysis is behaviour and its constituted meanings as these are expressed through symbols and social interactions (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). The analytic process results in codes, categories, hypothesized relationships among categories, and a conceptual framework that is interpreted to explain the phenomenon being studied.

### **3.3.2      *Theoretical Basis of Grounded Theory***

As previously stated, grounded theory is a research approach which is consistent with the interpretive paradigm and the symbolic interactionist perspective (Annells, 1996). Symbolic interaction focuses on processes that exist between individuals or groups rather than on social structure. It has its origins in the work of Blumer (1967) and Mead (1934). Blumer (1967) has outlined three basic premises to symbolic interactionism:

1. Individuals will act towards things in terms of the meaning they have for these things. Meanings are central to the understanding of behaviour.
2. This meaning is formed from social interactions, during which symbolic actions and languages are perceived.
3. The use of meaning is an interpretive process. The individual first perceives that

something has meaning, then organizes and makes sense of that meaning in order to determine what actions will be taken. Therefore, when individuals associate with one another, they are involved in interpretive interaction.

In order to understand human behaviour, however, grounded theorists have to learn the interpretative processes that shape an individual's behaviour. Grounded theory is consequently the method of choice when the problem being examined is considered a dynamic process (Stern, 1980). As mentioned earlier, grounded theory is an approach with origins in the interpretive paradigm of symbolic interactionism and is "both a theory about human behaviour and an approach to inquiring about human conduct and group behaviour" (Annells, 1996, p. 380). It thus provides an appropriate conceptual and methodological framework upon which to base this study. This supports the choice of a grounded theory approach to achieve the aim of the study, which is to develop a substantial theory of the professional lives and experience of PSPETs.

Symbolic interactionists are initially concerned with discovering how people define and experience their world. The basic principle of this perspective is that the way people act towards things is based on the meaning those things have for them. Meanings emerge from social interaction and are continually modified through the interpretative process (Stryker, 1967). Using this perspective, grounded theory provides a means of studying human behaviour and interaction, creating a new perspective and understanding of common behaviour (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

### **3.3.3      *Important Features of Grounded Theory***

Three important features of grounded theory are theoretical sampling, the constant comparative method and theoretical sensitivity.

The process of data collection whereby the researcher simultaneously collects, codes and analyses the data in order to decide what data to collect next is called theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data are firstly examined to see what can be defined and discovered. This is followed by the researcher deciding where to look for fresh data to refine the emergent

concepts and theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Informants are not chosen, therefore, on the basis of their representativeness, but rather because of their contribution to the phenomenon under scrutiny, which will help the researcher test ideas (hypotheses) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), that is, important concepts for the emerging theoretical ideas.

Constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) involves comparing segments of data within and between groups in order to generate categories, concepts or hypotheses relevant to the study area. Each datum is compared to other data and commonalities among data are represented by codes and categories. A given datum is assigned to as many categories as seems fitting (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is a hypothetical process, as a judgment is made about what coded data belong to which categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). If a category's scheme is incorrect, the researcher generally recognizes this fact while collecting more data. The researcher may hypothesize that data belong in a certain category and may prove or disprove the hypothesis of categorization by collecting more data. This process is deductive in nature because previously formed concepts are consequently verified. Since categories are conceptualized, relationships are identified among the categories and linked together to form a tentative conceptual framework. Categories may be grouped according to a meaning that appears to join them. Grouped categories are named as a higher-order category. The categories it includes are considered its properties. This categorizing of categories continues until a core category forms (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Literature may be used concurrently to test and validate emerging themes and is used as data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Instead of a standard literature review at the beginning of the study, excerpts from relevant studies are included as the theory emerges. The relevancy of information is determined by whether it fits and works within the emergent scheme. Data collection ceases when no new information about the emerging theory is forthcoming from ongoing interviews, a stage of data saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Together with the process of data collection and analysis, memos are written to record suggested questions, thoughts, hypotheses and relationships, and diagrams are drawn to track

back the construction of theory. These memos form the basis of the final written report.

Comparison proceeds until a core category emerge, which links all the categories and sub-categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicate, memos can serve as reminders or sources of information during the process of data collection and investigation. Memos are meant to be more analytical and conceptual than descriptive (p. 127).

Basically, there are three types of memo: 1) Memos that contain the actual products of open, axial and selective coding are named as code notes; 2) Memos that contain a researcher's thoughts and ideas about theoretical sampling and other issues are known as theoretical notes; and 3) Memos that contain procedural directions and reminders are known as operational notes. Memoing techniques and processes are critical when researchers realize that the final theory needs conceptual density and integration.

Diagrams are considered to be as important as memos, as diagrams are devices that visually depict the relationships among concepts. Diagrams can be heavily involved in the three types of coding: open, axial and selective. Researchers might have little to do with diagrams because relationships between concepts have not yet emerged during the open coding phases. An initial logic diagram can be used to sort out the various relationships between a category and its subcategories or among several categories in axial coding. At the final stage of coding – selective, diagrams reflect the depth and complexity of thought in the evolving theory and can integrate the concepts around a core category and the filling in of categories in need of further development and refinement (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 235-8).

To conclude, the process of grounded theory building consists of five analytic phases and nine procedures. The five non-strictly sequential analytic phases are research design, data collection, data ordering, data analysis and literature comparison. Within these phases, nine procedures are followed; review of technical literature, selecting cases, developing a vigorous data collection protocol, entering the field, data ordering, analyzing data relating to the first case, theoretical sampling, reaching closure and comparing emergent theory with extant

literature (Pandit, 1996). Furthermore, a grounded theory approach has been used in this study to examine professional lives and experience, as the approach provided the researcher with the tools to examine a phenomenon in considerable depth. Use of the techniques and procedures outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) enabled the researcher to explore the richness and complexity of the professional lives and experiences of PSPETs as expressed in their own words, their descriptions of their experiences and exploring the meanings of those experiences for them.

### ***3.3.4 The Constructivist Approach of Grounded Theory***

As mentioned in the previous section, grounded theory has divided into two streams, each of which has become associated with one of the two original authors – Glaser and Strauss. Glaser advocates a more ‘pure’ perspective towards qualitative analysis, while Strauss has a more pragmatic epistemology into empirical inquiry (Moghaddam, 2006). Indeed, much debate has ensued since the 1960s, when Glaser and Strauss first wrote about grounded theory, about what truly it is (Babchuk, 1996; & Charmaz, 2000). Different standpoints on grounded theory have been further explained by Charmaz (2000), who argues that grounded theory is “a constructivist approach that recognizes that categories, concepts and theoretical levels of an analysis emerge from the researcher’s interactions within the field and questions about the data” (p. 522). Charmaz adds that “moving into postpositivism”, grounded theory “offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Charmaz continues, “constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings” (p. 510).

Based on Charmaz’s comments on grounded theory, Glaser (2002) further explains the generation of a grounded theory is a careful application of all the grounded theory procedures. Furthermore, Charmaz states that “data are narrative constructions...they are reconstructions of experience” (p. 514). Therefore, grounded theorist aims for analysis based on the portrayal

of subjects' experiences.

By adopting the constructivist approach to grounded theory, the researcher can hence move further into “the realm of interpretative social science”. The approach also recognizes the interactive nature of both data collection and analysis, as Charmaz states, this “resolves recent criticisms of the method, and reconciles positivist assumptions and postmodernist critiques” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 521). The design and analysis of this study is guided by the constructivist approach. Adoption of this approach indicates a belief in the assumptions of multiple social realities and a mutual construction of findings linked to the investigator and participants (Charmaz, 2000).

### ***3.4 Data Collection and Analysis***

According to Byra and Karp (2000), the data collection techniques employed in qualitative research in physical education are interviewing, focus group interviewing, phenomenological interviewing, participant observation, stimulated recall, thinking aloud, projective slide viewing, document analysis, open-ended questionnaire, critical incidents and video commentary. Interviewing, documentary analysis and observation are the conventional methods of data collection for qualitative study. The researcher originally considered using observation because it offered the benefit of a physical presence and would have enabled him to map the PSPETs as they went about their daily work. However, because of practicalities, the researcher decided against using observation since it was too time consuming. In addition, there was the chance of a halo effect (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 315) whereby his presence may have changed the normal behavior of the participants. In fact, this occurred with the pilot survey, when informants were asked to be observed at work, they felt uneasy about being “watched over.” The researcher thus used semi-structured interviews, together with documentary sources (diaries) for conducting data collection in this study. The semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data collection. They were conducted



over an 11-month period.

### ***3.4.1 Interviewing***

Interviewing is commonly used by qualitative researchers and is one of the oldest research techniques. An interview is an instrument of research and discovery that uses the process of skilled conversation, usually between two people though sometimes more, and is directed by one in order to obtain information from the other (Gillham, 2000). Despite it involving the collection of data through direct interaction between the researcher and the individuals being studied (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005), interviewing is paramount in sociological research, and is a common and powerful way in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from respondents. Wragg (2002) claims that the technique of interviewing allows investigators to enquire into matters concerning “the relationships between insider and outsider groups and the individual” (p. 143). Gillham (2000) emphasizes the importance and value of such face-to-face interviews and the richness of communication that can be derived from them. Interview techniques may be a single strategy for data collection or employed in conjunction with participant observation and/or document analysis. The interviewer may use this descriptive data to develop insights about how respondents interpret their perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Interviewing has enjoyed great popularity and widespread use in clinical diagnosis and counseling, where the concern is for the quality of the response (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

As stated by Charmaz (2002), “in-depth qualitative interviewing fits grounded methods particularly well”. This kind of interviewing is “a flexible, emergent technique; ideas and issues emerge during the interview, and the interviewers can immediately pursue these leads” (p. 676).

There are different types of face-to-face interviews that serve different purposes, ranging from more structured, to semi-structured, and unstructured. The structured interview is organized in advance and includes content and procedures, whereas the unstructured interview is an “open

situation with more flexibility and greater freedom than structured interview” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 273). It also provides greater breadth than the other types, given its qualitative nature (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 365). An interview can be one-time, or it can take place many times with lengthy sessions. The most common type of interviewing is individual, face-to-face verbal interchange, but it can also take the form of group interviewing. A group interview is a generically designated “focus group” interview in which the interviewer asks group members very specific questions about a topic after considerable research has already been completed (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Different types of interviewing are suited to different situations and each type has its own advantages and disadvantages.

The semi-structured interview was considered best suited to this study. It is usually preferable as the main research questions set by the interviewer create the overall structure. However, the use of a prompt and probe technique encourages broader coverage and more in-depth exploration. It can also use a mixture of closed and open-ended questions and the interviewer can assert control when necessary.

Gillham (2000) claimed that the major disadvantage of the interview is the fact that it is time consuming to develop and pilot an interview, and to set up and travel to an interview location, as well as to transcribe and analyze the material obtained. Subjectivity and bias are also considered a disadvantage as interview questions may lead the respondent towards the expression of certain beliefs endorsed by the investigator, or if the interviewee wants to please the interviewer or the interviewer asks leading questions to support a particular point of view. As a result findings are highly contingent on the interpersonal skills of interviewers (Wragg, 2002; & Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005).

Since interviews involve one person talking with another, anonymity is not possible and subjects may believe that sharing certain information is not in their best interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). In addition, the researcher may not know how many sessions and of what length are going to be needed. This will all depend on the verbosity of the respondents, their willingness to talk, and the value of what they are saying (Burns, 1994, p. 280). Lastly, an

interview may be less standardized, as there may be a discrepancy between a respondent's words and actions, deliberate lying, unconscious mistakes, memory failure, and the need to impress on the part of a respondent (Borg & Gall, 1983).

Despite these weaknesses, the semi-structured interview method was used to describe the professional lives of PSPETs. The investigator found this to be the most appropriate method of allowing PSPETs to present the richness and complexity of their professional lives and experiences in their own words, as well as of allowing them to describe their experiences and explore the meanings of those experiences for themselves.

Interviews are especially useful for uncovering the subjective domain; the world of feelings, perceptions, values, morals and experience, and as a method of data collection. They are also adaptable as interviewers are able to probe and clarify, giving a high response rate. Interviews are also flexible in nature (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). A good interview produces rich data that are filled with words that reveal the informants' perspectives. Burns (1994) also identified the following advantages of semi-structured interviewing:

- 1) With the contacts being repeated, there is a greater length of time spent with the informant, which increases rapport.
- 2) The informant's perspective is provided rather than the perspective of the researcher being imposed.
- 3) The informant uses language natural to them rather than trying to understand and fit into the concepts of the study.
- 4) The informant is equal in status to the researcher in the dialogue rather than being a guinea pig. (Burns, 1994, p. 279)

In qualitative interviews, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) claim that "the interviews offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview." (p. 94) As a method of data collection in this study, the interview has a number of merits. An interview can help probe deeper into the feelings and meanings of the subjects, and is, therefore, particularly relevant to studies involving intangible matters such as values and problems. The interview as a technique also has the advantage of being a flexible measurement device; therefore, depending on the purpose of the study, the interviewer can choose between either having a clear focus, as in a structured interview, more

depth and exploration, as in an unstructured interview, or somewhere in between, as in a semi-structured interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is also believed that a well trained interviewer can alter the interview situation at any time in order to obtain the fullest possible response from the informant, which provides adaptability for data collection (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005) and perhaps, richness and vividness of material can be obtained as the result of a well prepared interview.

In a wholly beneficent sense, Webb (1971) described the methods of investigating the lives and labor of the people of London that were used by Charles Booth between 1887 and 1902. She highlighted the interview as procuring “the extensive and intimate information” with regard to each respondent, and “the memory of these willing witnesses amplifying and illustrating the precisely recorded facts” in the interviewers’ databanks (Webb, 1971, p. 239). Hence, the strengths of the semi-structured interview applied in this study are that they allow common themes to be addressed, but at the same time leave room for other aspects where they appear important to the respondents, so that the researcher is confident of obtaining comparable data across subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Individual inquiry is an indispensable way in which to experience the lives of respondents firsthand. In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research design, particularly in this study, interview questions can be modified over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance, or to exclude questions the researcher has found to be unproductive for the goals of the research (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

The semi-structured interview is more flexible and not completely predetermined by the investigator and so provides a way to answer the “Why” and “How” questions behind the main research question and specific research questions (Opie, 2004). Through this process we were better able to understand what PSPETs’ professional lives were like and to respond to the major issues facing them on a daily basis.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection to interview PSPETs. The semi-structured interview was particularly important, if not crucial in

this study because the purpose of the study required an exploration of the actual professional lives and experiences of PSPETs to gain insight into and understand the meaning of particular experiences. Detailed consideration was, therefore, given to the whole picture in explication. In addition, this study was also more concerned with respondents' subjective and personal feelings, and the values and problems they encountered in their professional lives, rather than some objective reality which would have justified research questions. These semi-structured interviews were open-ended enough to collect unanticipated, useful data. In support of this, Amis (2005) claims that the use of interviewing, particularly in sports and physical education settings, provides access to multiple realities, complexities, inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes of everyday lives.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to have PSPETs relive their experiences at work and reconstruct significant historical moments that changed their multiple roles, job performance and satisfaction, colleagues' support and mentoring, and gender related constraints. According to the specific research questions and the purpose of the study, interview questions using prompt and probe techniques were developed (Appendix 1). The interview questions were developed from previous literature on the professional lives and careers of physical education teachers and from critical reviews of the theoretical foundations of literature on identity, socialization, professionalization and career trajectory. These latter four concepts formed the conceptual framework, which gave an account of teachers' professional lives. They were helpful in understanding the ideology and beliefs of PSPETs in Hong Kong.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format (Wragg, 2002), all of which were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts were written up after PSPETs had been interviewed. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the source data, the researcher used two MP3 recorders to record the data to safeguard against any malfunctioning of the machines. Recorded material was then transcribed verbatim and translated from Cantonese into English as soon as it had been collected, while the researcher's memory was

still fresh. The researcher was responsible for data collection, transcription, translation and analysis to ensure quality, consistency and accuracy of data processing and interpretation.

### **3.4.2      *Documentary Sources (Diaries)***

In conjunction with interviews, participants were asked to keep diaries. These were seen as a secondary data source, the purpose of which was mostly for triangulation. Having more than one method of data collection has the potential for making any finding or conclusion more convincing and accurate (Yin, 1994). The diary is an important element that constitutes documentary evidence in qualitative research (Burgess, 1984). It is also a useful tool in providing the means of generating a large amount of data with minimum effort from the researcher (Robson, 1993, p. 254). Through diaries, the researcher may seek to combine different qualitative methods, such as information that might stimulate discussion at subsequent interviews (Barbour, 2007). As part of the research, PSPETs' daily activities were recorded for a 'typical' week - hour by hour on a daily basis. To do this, each PSPET was given 7 copies of the diary, one for each day of the recording period. The purpose of the diary was to reveal the work lives of the PSPETs. A sample of the diary is provided in Appendix 2 of this thesis. The intention was to ask diarists to record their activities and then to write a short piece reflecting on events, activities, relationships and conversations over a specific time span and to reflect on their work.

Diary keeping, as a form of self reporting, added an immediate and alternative dimension to verbal experience. It also provided a counter-check with other data derived from interviews and allowed experiences to be tracked in detail by the researcher (Morrison & Galloway, 1996). As Burgess (1984) noted, diaries are useful as preliminaries to in-depth interviews, as participants can reflect on their professional lives before the interview so that they can be better prepared to talk about the feelings, values and problems they have encountered at work at the interview that follows. The daily diaries that were kept for a week as part of this study began one week before the interview. In contrast to the interviews, the diary allowed PSPETs

to record data in privacy and in their own time.

Unfortunately, data collected from diary entries proved to be less than expected. Some participants were more conscientious than others in completing them. Hence, the diary entries yielded less data than originally planned, despite the fact that the researcher had provided clear instructions as to their completion - as can be seen in the informed consent form in Appendix 3. However, even with the limited amount of secondary data from the diary entries, the researcher was enabled to achieve some degree of triangulation.

### **3.4.3      *The Pilot Study***

A pilot study was conducted to determine the focus of the study and assess the feasibility of the proposed data collection methods, especially with regard to the use of in-depth interviews with PSPETs and the design of the interview schedule. In-depth interviews were used as a method of data collection. Two PSPETs (1 male and 1 female) with more than 10 years experience were invited for interview as part of the pilot study. The interview allowed the PSPETs to speak about their professional lives. The pilot study was conducted in the PSPETs' own schools with their consent. (Figure 3.1 depicts each major step of data collection and interpretation)

As this was a pilot study, only an open coding system was used in the analyses to check whether the interview questions were appropriate to answer the specific research questions. Code words were also written in the right-hand margins of the interview transcripts. A comparison was conducted at the end of each interview in order to shape the interview with the next PSPET. This sequence of "interview followed by analysis" enabled the emergent interpretations to be constantly crosschecked. Similar characteristics of individuals, events, actions, interactions, situations or phenomena were tentatively grouped to form categories and subcategories. Categories were expanded to present their characteristics and properties by accumulating examples of situations under which they occurred, and the location of the properties or dimensions (Figure 3.2). Memoing was a useful way of reminding the researcher

about the progress of the research, operational issues of the study, analytical work and any identified links or possible core categories. Memos were textual or diagrammatic and were written in the margins of the scripts. These memos enriched the conceptual schemes of analysis and some of these notes were suitable for reworking in the main study.



Figure 3.1

**Data Collection and Interpretation Procedures (Pilot Study)**

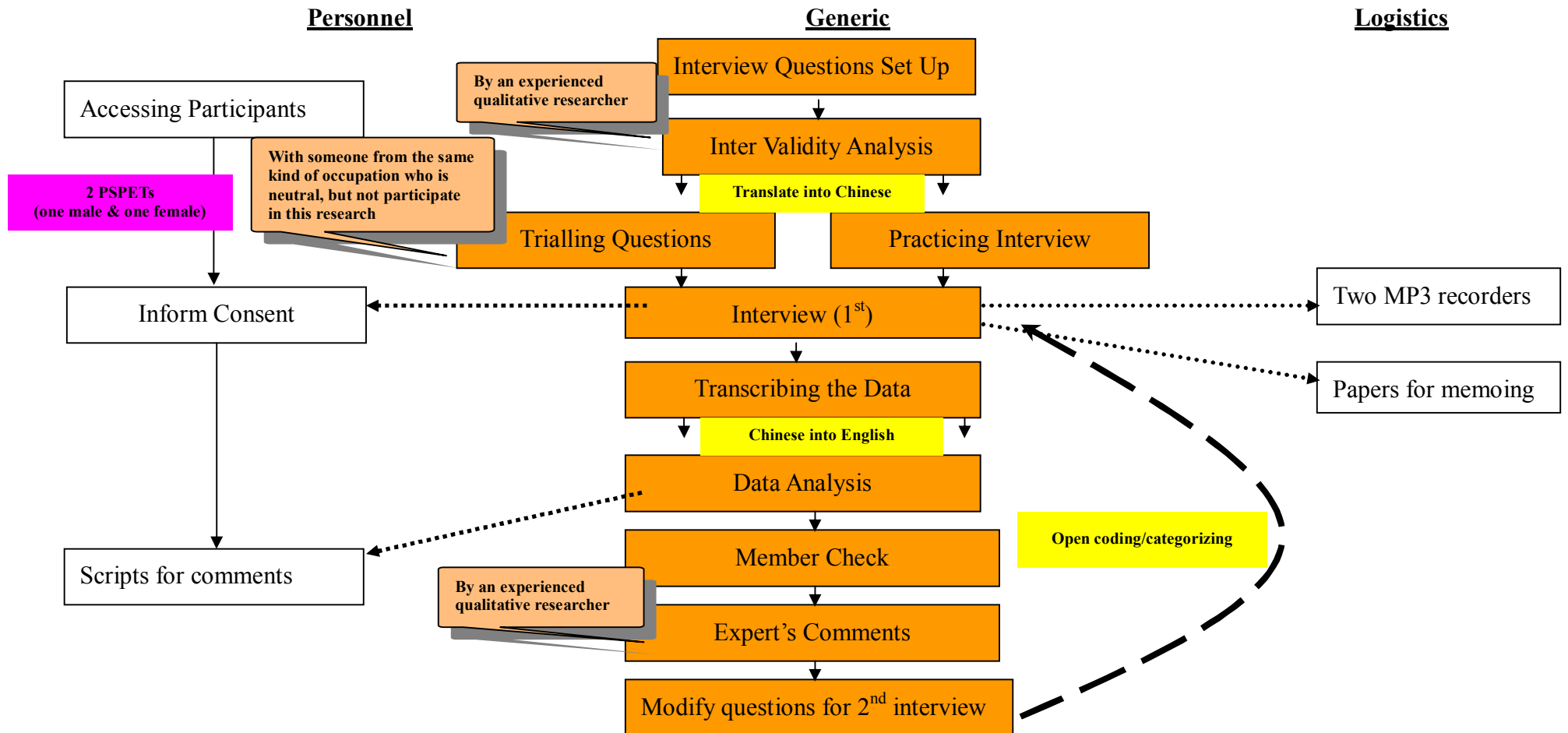
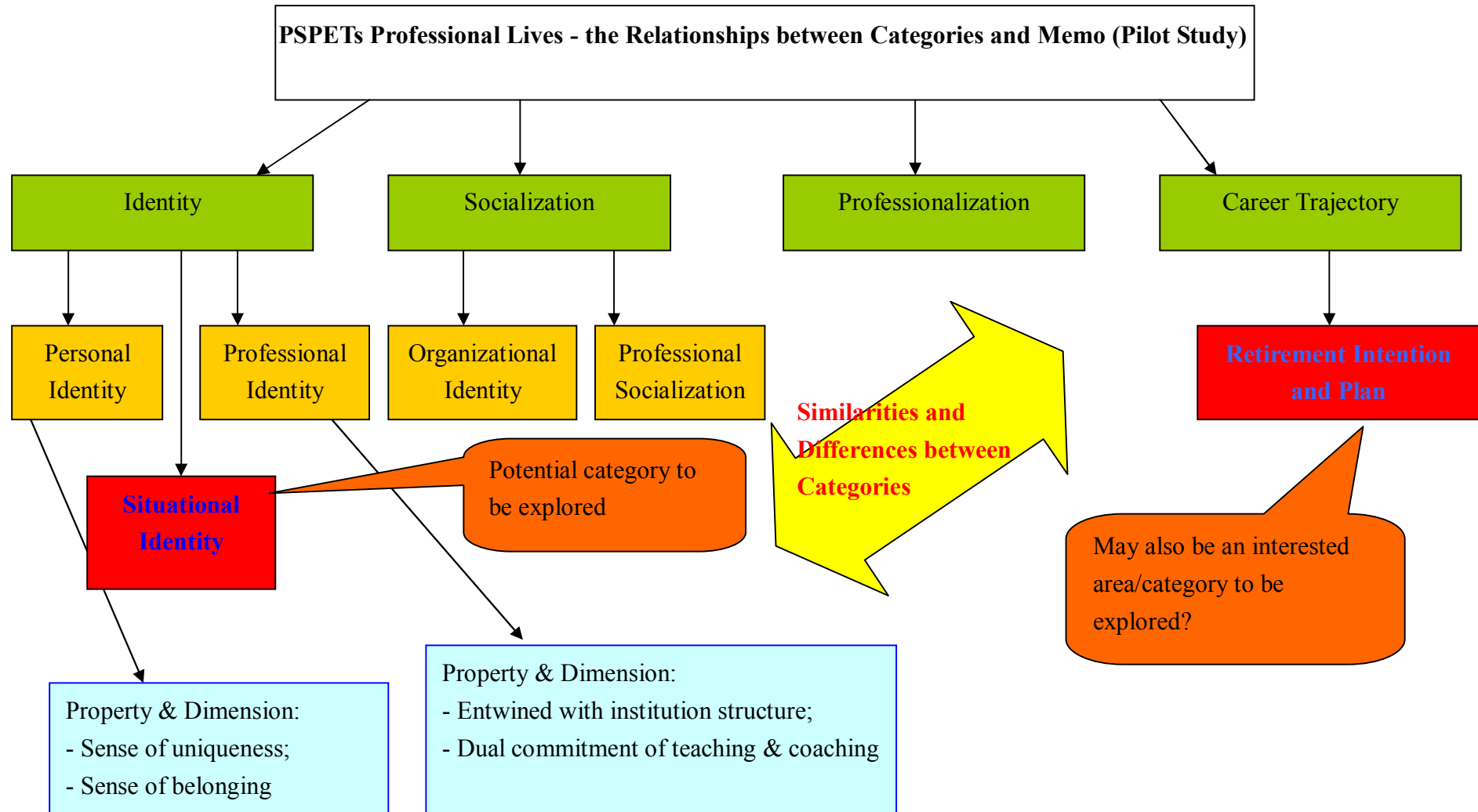


Figure 3.2



To avoid superficial answers, appropriate questions needed to be set which revealed more and more of what it is really like to be a teacher and which delved deeper into the lives of the PSPETs. The researcher believed that the richness and vividness of the data collected in these two interviews provided meaningful answers and theoretical support for the main research question.

After interviewing the two PSPETs in this pilot study, the researcher made the following comments:

- 1) Some original interview questions were modified and new ones added. For example, question number 1 asked, “If you had a job description when you joined your present school, could you please describe it?” As both respondents answered that they had not received job descriptions when they had joined their present schools it was decided that this question would be better modified to the following, “Even if you were not given a job description when you first joined this school, how did you understand the scope of your work responsibilities after you started working? And what is the scope of your work?”
- 2) The content and wording of the interview questions were changed and expanded to attain greater clarity. For instance, “self-esteem” was mentioned during the interview. This term, when translated into Chinese, is always confused with “self-efficacy” in terms of professional development and competence. It was, therefore, necessary to slightly amend some of the interview questions in order to make them more grammatically correct and meaningful in Chinese.
- 3) In order to uncover more about the richness and complexity of the professional lives and experiences of PSPETs, the researcher proposed the addition of the following two interview questions:
  - i. Do you see any differences in work life between you and other subject teachers?  
If yes, how? If no, why not? (could lead to answer SRQ 1)
  - ii. What/Who affects you most in your professional life in your present job? How

and why? (could lead to answer SRQ 1 & 3)

- 4) Also, since there was little data recorded from the interviews with regard to research question 4 specifically - career trajectory and promotion history, the researcher proposed the addition of the following two questions:
- i. Have you ever received promotion in your career? If yes, how many times and what is your current position? If no, do you perceive any reason or barrier as to why you have not been promoted? And what is your intention now?
  - ii. Do you want to retire at the official age of 60? Earlier or later? If yes, why? If no, why? And do you have plans to work after your retirement?

The purpose of these revisions was to confirm which interview questions were to be used and to minimize any possible misunderstanding during the interviews. The PSPETs were also asked to give their comments on the draft interview questions and interview schedule. Both respondents commented that the duration of the interview was appropriate and that the interviews gave a very accurate picture of their professional lives. The use of in-depth interviews with PSPETs was found to be feasible. It was also found that the respondents' answers yielded relevant, useful data to answer each specific research question. However, given the anticipated large amount of data to be collected and analyzed in the main study, it was recommended that the subsequent interviews be conducted at least three weeks to one month apart. This would not only give time for data processing, but would also provide time for the researcher to step back and theoretically analyze the data in a systematic way.

The fact that the pilot study was very small meant that the emergent categories were embryonic and tentative. From a technical perspective, the researcher found it very difficult to fully grasp the participant's answers and to write down field notes simultaneously; however, logic diagrams (Figure 3.2) made by the researcher helped to uncover the relationships between categories, and memos were written throughout the process of analysis to guide thinking and to record the analytical insights and interpretations that emerged. For instance, the researcher found that it was possible that some data would not fit into the proposed

categories, and that new categories would have to be created during data analysis. Field notes and memo techniques played crucial roles in collecting the essence of the data so the researcher had to be aware of the skills and timing involved in using such techniques in the main study.

Since the duration of the two interviews was less than an hour (57 minutes and 51 minutes respectively), the researcher found that the respondents still had the energy and willingness to talk about their current experiences in more depth. With the proposed addition of four more interview questions, it was suggested that each interview be divided into three phases. The first phase would be more of an open free-flowing conversation for the purpose of developing rapport. The second phase would introduce the purpose of the study and obtain information about the history of the school, its mission, background and atmosphere, as this information would be very useful and helpful for the study. The third phase would follow the interview schedule of the pilot study in order to allow PSPETs to relive their professional lives and experiences and reconstruct historical moments that were significant to changes to their multiple roles, job performance and satisfaction, and daily work lives.

The researcher found that the interview as a technique for data collection had enabled him to capture the professional lives of PSPETs. In terms of limitations of research methods, participants in the pilot study came from one teacher education institute and had similar backgrounds. It was possible, therefore, that the data obtained might be narrowly based and hence, biased. It was thus decided that for the main study, participants who had graduated from different teacher education institutes, with different backgrounds and levels of experience, who worked for different sizes and types of primary schools and who were of different gender, would be selected.

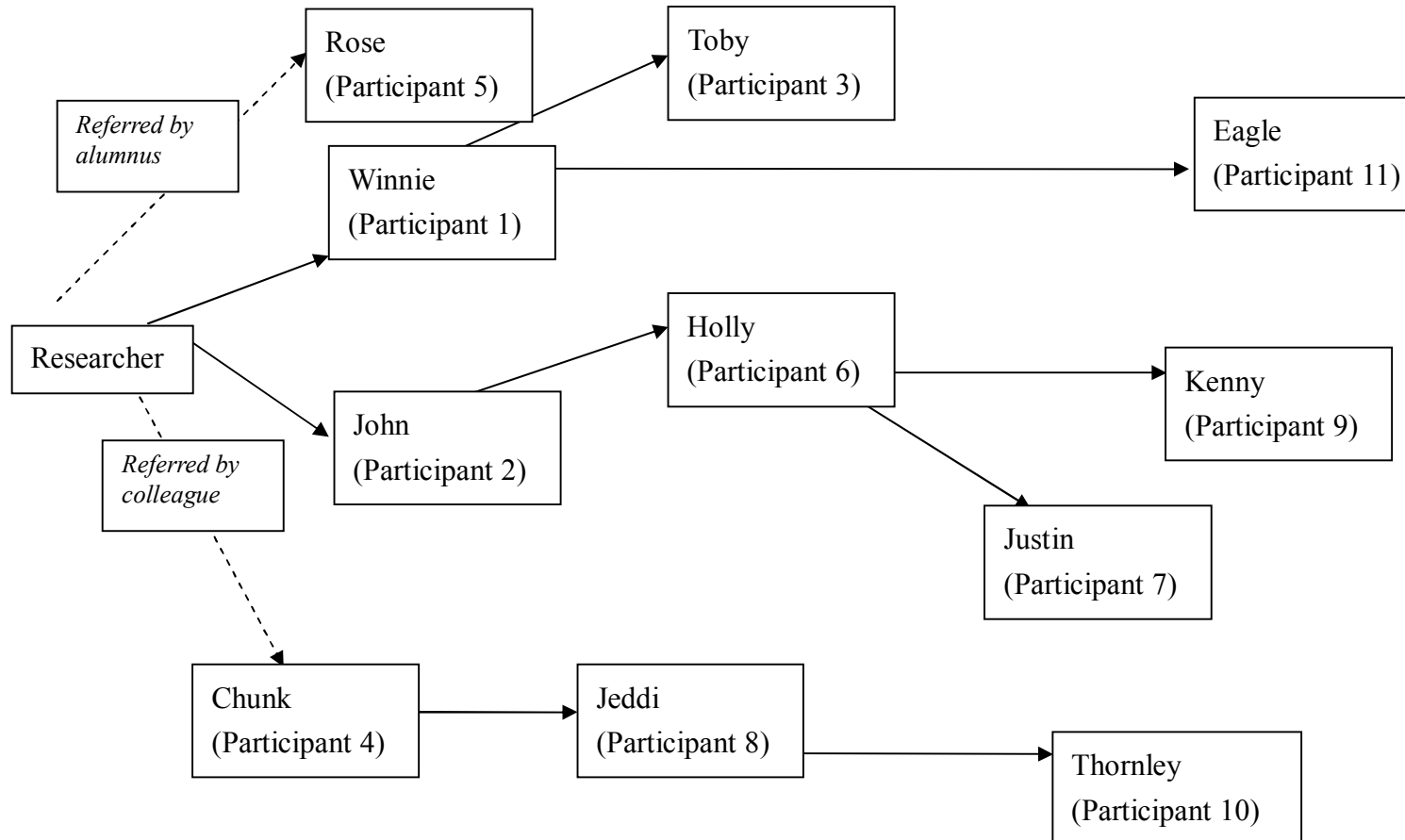
#### **3.4.4      *Sampling***

In the grounded theory method of inquiry, sampling is on the basis of concepts that have been proven to be theoretically relevant to the evolving theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This

is called theoretical sampling which “unlike the sampling done in quantitative investigations, cannot be planned before embarking on a grounded theory study. The specific sampling decisions evolve during the research process itself.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 192) The researcher, therefore, employed theoretical sampling in order that data collection be purposively directed towards informants and towards situations thought likely to provide data that promised to be relevant to and able to develop and build the emergent theory.

PSPETs in Hong Kong have been defined by the researcher as professionals who specialize in teaching physical education in primary schools in Hong Kong. Through snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 1990), the researcher identified suitable participants for study. PSPET interviewees were requested to help identify others from whom the researcher could extract or generate rich data. Selection of the next interviewee was based on what was found in the previous round of data collection and analysis processes (See Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3**  
**Purposive Sampling (Snowball) Chart**



In short, the PSPETs selected for this study were from a variety of backgrounds and were able to enrich the contexts for analysis. Eleven PSPETs were interviewed. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 59, with 6 males and 5 females. Their years of experience as PSPETs were between 2 and 30 years (See Table 3.1). The ratio of males to females varied slightly depending on the response and availability of the PSPETs. In addition, data collection ceased upon data saturation, which was when nothing new could be added to the data.

**Table 3.1: Summary of Participant Characteristic**

<b><u>Pseudonym</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Years of Experience</u></b>	<b><u>Interview Date</u></b>	<b><u>Interview Duration</u></b>
Winnie	F	38	18	23/04/07	58 minutes
John	M	46	22	06/05/07	64 minutes
Toby	M	31	9	27/06/07	65 minutes
Chunk	M	28	6	02/10/07	62 minutes
Rose	F	50	28	27/10/07	59 minutes
Holly	F	30	6	30/10/07	56 minutes
Justin	M	46	23	24/11/07	56 minutes
Jeddi	F	40	10	15/01/08	63 minutes
Kenny	M	59	30	26/01/08	72 minutes
Thornley	M	25	2	26/01/08	62 minutes
Eagle	F	41	15	05/02/08	84 minutes

#### **3.4.5 Access**

Potential participants were contacted by telephone and electronic mail to ask if they would agree to take part in the study. Twelve potential participants were approached and finally eleven accepted and one rejected participating in this study. Once a participant was identified the researcher approached him/her directly in order to help establish a relationship of trust, which facilitated the process of data collection. To establish an equitable relationship between participant and researcher, it was important to be explicit about the nature of the study. The researcher explained to the participants how the information would be collected, processed and used. A written consent form (Appendix 3) was forwarded before the data was collected.



In qualitative research, the protection of the participants' anonymity is essential; therefore, audio taped recordings of interviews were transcribed and labeled using pseudonyms that were used at various locations in the manuscripts. In addition, at the completion of the study, the audiotapes were destroyed, but the transcripts were maintained using the established pseudonyms. The researcher was the primary "instrument" for data collection and analysis, and extreme sensitivity was given to the nature and perspectives of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A researcher's perspectives are able to shape the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data.

#### **3.4.6      *Background and Standpoint of the Researcher***

It is important to articulate the researcher's background regarding this particular topic. The researcher taught in primary school as a physical education teacher for only six months twenty years ago. For the last eight years, the researcher has served as a teacher educator, training both primary and secondary school physical education teachers in Hong Kong. As a graduate majoring in physical education teacher training, the researcher has experienced the professional lives of physical education teachers at different levels of education settings – primary, secondary and tertiary. The researcher became very aware of the differences among his counterparts in terms of identity, socialization, professionalization and career trajectory during his 17 years of professional life. It was these experiences that developed his interest in PSPETs.

In this regard, the researcher's perspectives on the professional lives and experiences of PSPETs were shaped in 2 ways. First, the researcher was a faculty member in the Department of Sports Science and Physical Education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong that had used several primary schools for on-site teaching practice for pre-service and in-service physical education teachers' training. Secondly, the researcher had been invited in the past to be a workshop facilitator and speaker at the "Conference and Workshop for PE Curriculum Leaders in Primary Schools" organized by the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR. In

consequence, respondents may feel embarrassed about disclosing personal information to an insider. The fact is that the researcher does not have any strong views on this research topic; this is because PSPETs may have different experiences in accordance with the unique culture and particular circumstances of the schools that they work for. The researcher attempted to keep an open mind, and was willing to listen, and give voice to respondents in order to gain accurate findings and to corroborate them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, being a teacher educator, the researcher had certain advantages. The respondents found it easier to express experiences and feelings concerning their professional lives because of common language shared and the researcher's sense of perception of the local scene.

In taking part in this study, as the researcher has already stated in the above section about identification of the research question, professionals were not simply seen as products of their work environments, but rather as active participants in their professional development and the experiences they had in their workplaces; a process that continues throughout their careers. The sequence of thought was consistent with symbolic interactionism, which is often used as a theoretical basis for grounded theory studies (Goulding, 2002).

#### **3.4.7      *Data Analysis***

“All is Data” is a grounded theory statement. No matter what the researcher has, it is exactly and virtually what he is receiving (Glaser, 2002). What Glaser's approach tries to clarify is that constructivist data is a very small part of the data that grounded theory uses.

Glaser also mentions that:

“‘All is data’ is a well known Glaser dictum. What does it mean? It means exactly what is going on in the research scene is the data, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being, but also all the data surrounding what is being told. It means what is going on must be figured out exactly what it is used for, that is conceptualization, not for accurate description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more data to keep correcting the categories with more

relevant properties.” (Glaser, 2001, p.145)

The researcher began analyzing interview transcripts and field notes as soon as they were collected and transcribed. Open, axial and selective coding systems were used in the analyses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**3.4.7.1 Open Coding.** In open coding, interview transcripts and field notes were fractured sentence by sentence to generate categories and sub-categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61). Each word, line and paragraph was examined thoroughly to discover and label the phenomena being described. As data were coded, key words and codes that symbolized an event or process were written in the margin of the transcripts. These codes were called substantive codes because they account for the substance of the data. At this stage, an inquiring attitude was used in reviewing the transcripts as the researcher asked himself, ‘What is going on here? What does this mean? Under what conditions and with what consequences does this happen?’ Initially, in vivo codes, which consisted of words and phrases used by the respondents themselves, were used. The codes generated were the open codes and were compared for similarities and differences. Samples of open coding of interview transcripts and diaries are located in Figure 3.4 and 3.5 as follows:

**Figure 3.4**

**Open Coding of an Interview Transcript**

Mc \_ Interview 1 \_ 23/4/2007 (58mins)

Interview Transcript	Open Coding
<p><b>I:</b> <i>In comparison to what you are doing now, do you think things are getting more systematic, or complicated?</i></p> <p><b>T:</b> <i>Well, I can't say that it is getting more complicated. It is getting more organized and clearer. More things are now written with specifications, for both my colleagues and myself. For example, as I am now the activities supervisor, I have produced a work schedule for the year, which could be passed on to my successor. This is in regards to administrative work. On the planning side for our own subject, says P.E., we have not specified the work to be done on monthly basis, but we have planned by projects or schemes. For example, say we had a "little athletes" scheme; we would have written a proposal for the whole plan, which my colleagues and I would follow.</i></p> <p><b>I:</b> <i>So, you mean you did not have a job description; nevertheless you have developed your job to a stage where things are getting more systematic and mature and even have some automated processes. Can these processes be regarded as a kind of operation manual which you can pass on to your successors?</i></p> <p><b>T:</b> <i>Yes. But this does not apply to everything. Particularly, in my curriculum development work I have not developed things to such a level yet. Changes are still on their way as things are still in an initial phase. There were hardly any standard procedures.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepts the culture, values and attitudes of the members in the organization.</li>   <li>- Internal quality of teaching as a profession</li> <li>- Assimilates a web of values based on a social consensus of professional behaviour – indirect learning.</li> <li>- Accepts and behaves in ways that are appropriate to that organization.</li> <li>- Acts independently.</li> <li>- Commitment to working with colleagues</li>   <li>- Internal quality of teaching as a profession</li> <li>- Social negotiation; Crisis</li> </ul>

**Coding Memo:**

Culture, values, and attitudes are factors for considering PSPETs' work lives. Check and be sensitive if informants make similar comments or have similar experiences. These might lead to an exploration of their professionalization process.

**Figure 3.5****Open Coding of Diaries**

Hourly summary of weekly diary			Date of recording: 19 April 2007
Time	Coding	Details of activities	Feelings about identity, socialization, professionalization or/and career
2:00 pm	<i>Engaged in extra school duties</i>	Continued marking down all participants of the PTA function until 2:35; on duty in the playground until 3:00.	Relaxed at that moment.
3:00 pm	<i>Experienced teacher</i>	Continued marking down all participants of the PTA function until 3:25; had 6D English lessons until 4:35.	Peaceful in the classroom
4:00 pm	<i>Satisfaction with other subject involvement</i>	Had 6D English lessons until 4:35; on duty in the office until 4:50. Continued marking down all participants of the PTA function until 5:25.	Worked with satisfaction in class.
5:00 pm	<i>Deals with students</i>	Continued marking down all participants of the PTA function until 5:25. Had a 6D PE lesson until 6.	Pleasant feeling in class
6:00 pm	<i>Clashes with personal lives</i>	Had athletic training until 7.	Students are interesting.

**3.4.7.2 Constant Comparative Analysis.** The coded data were compared “laterally” with that of other subjects and the same piece of data was also compared “vertically” for changes or patterns occurring longitudinally within the studied individual. This means that in a sense the researcher constantly compared each piece of data with every other piece of data and in a spiral process for similarities and differences (Stern, 1980). In fact, comparison was conducted at the end of each interview so as to shape the interview with the next PSPET. This sequence of “interview followed by analysis” enabled the emergent interpretations to be constantly crosschecked.

**3.4.7.3 Axial Coding.** In axial coding, fractured data that share common properties are combined to form a central axis that reflects the meaningfulness of the category. It seeks to re-build data by putting it back together in new ways, and by making connections between categories. Developed categories and larger categories are reassembled in new ways under theoretical codes. This coding process is about the ways in which things are interconnected. Strauss and Corbin (1990) also used the term “coding paradigm” to describe the set of concepts used for making connections between things. Theoretical sampling for axial coding focuses on the relationships between categories and their subcategories. The idea is to relate a category (the phenomenon – interaction; causal or relational conditions; and context) to its subcategories (intervening conditions; action/interaction strategies; and outcomes and consequences).

Figure 3.6 provides an example of an axial coding theoretical memo on a category (“reconciling” scope of work).

**Figure 3.6 – Sample of Axial Coding – Theoretical Memo**

<b>Theoretical Memo: Rectifying</b> tm_int8_20080222	
<b>Causal condition</b> I don't have a personal job description but the school has provided clear documents and guidelines for each subject. I don't have a personal job list, but I have clear instructions for each position, regardless of the number of teachers in that post. I have guidelines for teaching Mathematics and PE but they are separate. I won't be given a combination of guidelines for Maths and PE.	→ <b>Phenomenon</b> Reconciling - Tackles everyday challenges and routines in accordance to PSPETs' scope of work.
<b>Properties</b> Commitment to the scope of work Nature of the scope of work Area of the scope of work Self adjusted by experience Mixture of different duties	<b>Dimension</b> Intensity - strong Clarity – high Extent - wide Frequency – high Extent – great
→ <b>Context</b> In the first semester, I am responsible for training, team leading and competitions. I also teach PE, Maths and Chinese. Later on I have less of an after-school workload, such as sports team training. After mid-term, the competitions have finished and I can take a rest.	→ <b>Intervening conditions</b> The school would make some additions and deletions to the document, and I would have to follow the guidelines strictly in terms of tasks.
→ <b>Action/interaction strategies</b> I didn't make amendments. But, if I found something that I felt I could perform better or I couldn't ignore, I would try to communicate with the seniors and to compromise.	→ <b>Consequence</b> At first I didn't have much experience and I always did my work wrong and I would have to redo the work. But, after running them for several years, I can arrange my work in a better sequence according to importance. I had to take work home when I taught Chinese, as I couldn't finish it at school. I now have a better arrangement. Also, I have experience in handling the work.

**3.4.7.4 Categorization.** Similar characteristics of individuals, events, actions, interactions, situations or phenomena were grouped to form categories and subcategories. These categories were compared with one another. Hypothesized relationships were established between categories and subcategories and were tested with incoming data. Categories were expanded to present their characteristics and properties by accumulating examples of situations under which they occurred. Furthermore, categories and their properties were referred to as the basis for theoretical sampling. A sample of category formation is located in Figure 3.7 as follows:

**Figure 3.7: Sample of Categorization**

<b>Concepts / Labels:</b>	<i>Surviving, developing, growing, competing, learning, possessing, building, mastering, adjusting, constructing, sharing, shifting, supporting, compromising, affirming, choosing, rejecting,</i>	<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Constant Comparative Analysis</b>
The properties and dimensions of the above concepts were uncovered and compared to form categories. Although the axial coding process took place within the text, the linking of categories to subcategories took place at the conceptual level using memos to track ideas and thoughts during the process.		↓(1) <b>Data Analysis</b>	<i>Generate categories.</i>
<b>Process of Categorization</b>	<i>Later, concepts such as “switching” happened continuously in the stage of data collection. Possessing, acclimatizing, rectifying, receiving and adjusting were the sub-categories of “switching”. Categorizing grouped the concepts together.</i>	↓ <b>Data Collection</b> ↓(2) <b>Data Analysis</b>	↓ <i>Interconnect categories.</i>
Once the open and axial coding processes were completed, data cleaning procedures took place. Each category’s quotations were reviewed for context and appropriateness to the category. Codes and categories that were not used in a noted series of interviews resulted in a transcript review to ensure that relevant information had not been overlooked. Further, memos were used to track initial ideas across interviews for the categories.		↓ <b>Data Collection</b> ↓(3) <b>Data Analysis</b>	<i>Prove or disprove the hypothesis of categorization by collecting more data.</i>
<b>Core Category:</b>	<i>Diversified Adaptation</i>	↓ <b>Etc.</b>	↓
Different categories are integrated to form the core category, which explains the whole phenomenon of the professional lives of PSPETs.		↓ <b>Theoretical Saturation</b>	<i>Build story of how categories relate.</i>



**3.4.7.5 Theoretical Sensitivity.** Grounded theorists must be sensitive enough to understand the participants' own perceptions, experiences and meanings of events. They also have to be aware of literature or materials useful to the study. The awareness of the correctness of the meanings of the data and their ability to enhance theory development generates accurate and representative theoretical constructions. In this study, theoretical sensitivity was emphasized through the review of literature and personal experience as well as the rigor of the analytic process. The researcher's sensitivity about the topic in general increased with the progress of the study and thus sensitivity may invade the issues influencing the generation of theory. In this regard, the researcher kept himself theoretically sensitive by continually reflecting on his professional and personal experiences of the professional lives of physical education teachers, interacting with data and being well-grounded in the literature on the professional lives of physical education teachers.

**3.4.7.6 Selective Coding.** In selective coding, the relationships among central themes derived in the axial coding process are the focus. Selective coding is the process of selecting a core category, systemically relating it to other categories and verifying their relationships. All data are sorted into an event chronology for the writing of a research narrative. It is the final stage of the analysis that involves linking substantive categories into a theoretical framework, and selecting a core category, which underpins all the other categories and accounts for the underlying 'story line' of the theory. A grounded theory of "Diversified Adaptation" was developed to describe the professional lives and experiences of PSPETs in Hong Kong (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A sample of the theoretical coding note written during the selective coding is located in Figure 3.8 as follows:

**Figure 3.8 – Sample of Selective Coding – Theoretical Memo**

<p>Processes and sub-processes of the categories</p> <p><b>Core category: Diversified Adaptation</b></p> <p>The core category consists of four dovetailing categories that emerged and were related specifically to the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs: (1) <i>switching</i>, (2) <i>interplaying</i>, (3) <i>diversifying</i>, and (4) <i>assimilating</i>. This memo explains the core categories.</p>
<p><b><i>Switching</i></b> is the first category in which participants perceive the scope of their work, and feelings about their typical daily work lives. PSPETs are experienced from prompting one position to others as teachers, administrators or clerical personnel in their daily work lives.</p> <p><b><i>Interplaying</i></b> is the second category that describes PSPETs' personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve. Their bonding with colleagues and students, how they construct their status, the aspects of expertise in their school, and their negotiation ability all play as key concepts and interplay with their professional and personal identities.</p> <p><b><i>Diversifying</i></b> is the third category that describes PSPETs not being marginalized in spite of their versatile roles. Rather, PSPETs played major roles working as 1) teachers of various subjects such as English, Mathematics, Chinese, and Information Technology; 2) disciplinary teachers; 3) coaches; 4) administrators; and 5) managers of various sport teams all at the same time, which enabled them to be organizational and professional socialized diversely.</p> <p><b><i>Assimilating</i></b> is the fourth category that describes PSPETs in the Hong Kong educational environment and its culture based on the Confucian heritage. Their assimilation into their careers is influenced by the characteristics of the organization, their self-orientation towards their career, other obligations and career aspirations.</p>

### **3.5 Establishing Trustworthiness**

As signified by Freebody (2003), researchers are essentially, and should self-consciously and cautiously be, the agents of social and educational change. Therefore, multi-disciplinary approaches and multi data sources to provide some triangulation were implemented in this study (Freebody, 2003). Participants' diaries were examined for triangulating of the received data.

To assist qualitative researchers to establish that their results are trustworthy, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and generalizability as relevant techniques. These criteria were implemented in this study, and what follows is a discussion of how this was achieved.

### **3.5.1      *Credibility***

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe various techniques that assist the researcher to produce findings and interpretations which may increase the possibility of establishing credibility and one of these is member check, which is applicable to interviewing. In this study, member checks were conducted by emailing interview transcripts and the analyzed data to the participants. Participants were asked to correct errors or inaccuracies in the transcripts and analyzed data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a member check is the process of asking respondents to test and react to the data and interpretation of the findings arrived at during interviews. It also provides participants with an opportunity to give feedback. Another technique the researcher used was the request that a colleague from the same field read, review and check for possible biased findings and interpretations in the study. To ensure that the findings in this study were congruent with the questions being asked, the researcher also utilized various interview techniques during data collection, data (interview transcripts and diaries) and theoretical triangulation; adequate references are provided at the end of the thesis. Furthermore, the authority of researcher throughout the research process was established.

### **3.5.2      *Transferability***

In this study, ample opportunities were given to PSPETs in the interviews to express how they managed their professional lives. Theoretical sampling was adopted, which seeks to maximize differences such as PSPETs' personal characteristics, roles and experience and theoretically relevant concepts were employed in different coding stages. Thickness of description was pursued to help raise the degree of transferability of the qualitative research. The diversity of the respondents and emerging concepts helped to add density to the theory. Since this study was culturally focused, the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings is limited. In addition, the aim of this study was to develop a theory that explored the concepts underpinning the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs rather than to generalize its finding for the population. These permitted readers to recognize

parallels with their own situations.

### **3.5.3      *Dependability***

The dependability of a qualitative study involves evaluating the overall research design. As Freebody (2003) has suggested, multi-disciplinary approaches and multi data sources provide some triangulation and were implemented in this study. The data sources from the interviews and the diaries were suitable for triangulation. As a means of enhancing the perceived dependability of the study, the researcher wrote memos to record suggested questions, thoughts, hypotheses and relationships, and diagrams were drawn to track back through the emerging theory. These memos formed the basis of the final written report. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that memos can serve as reminders or sources of information during the process of data collection and investigation. Since grounded theory employs several coding levels that are designed to make a study conceptually sound and dependable, these coding levels were strictly followed in this study.

### **3.5.4      *Confirmability***

The confirmability of this study is evidenced by clear explication of the research process and findings. It is the extent to which the findings are product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the bias of researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Criteria followed in this study were the keeping of an audit trail, triangulation (stated in the previous section), reflexivity and researcher subjectivity.

Consistency of the research findings is of central importance and can be addressed and ensured by using a clear and systematic record or audit trail of the investigation (Kvale, 1996). In this study, the researcher attempted to ensure confirmability of the research through systematic record-keeping and ongoing evaluation of theories and findings as they emerged. To reinforce reflexivity, qualitative researchers must address their subjectivities in addition to setting aside prior knowledge of the phenomena. The member check used in this study

diminishes researcher bias because it allows participants to react to inaccuracies, if any, in the transcripts and analyze data derived from the data collection process. This was a key process in combating any insider research bias.

To maintain the objectivity of this study, the researcher tries to eliminate any personal bias and strove to report in a balanced way (Patton, 1990, p. 58). The researcher kept his “openness” and “willingness” to listen and “give voice” to respondents in order to gain accurate findings and to corroborate them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, the researcher interviewed some of his former students who may have wanted to “please” him as their former teacher or may have wanted to distort their experiences of their professional lives. Hence, it was important to probe their responses to obtain as much detail as possible.

Nevertheless, given the relationship between the researcher and the study environment the possibility of some bias could not be completely eliminated. While the researcher’s background and practical experience may have been beneficial from a substantial perspective, it could possibly have become biased and detrimental if the researcher had restricted the data gathering and analysis to a limited number of themes, theories or like-minded respondents. As a method of trustworthiness, the researcher invited his own supervisor and other individuals in the field to review the data and research information throughout the analysis process to comment on and confirm the findings.

### **3.5.5      *Generalizability***

Janesick (1994) argues that “the traditional view of generalizability limits the ability of the researcher to reconceptualize the role of social science in education.....the value of case study is its uniqueness; consequently, reliability in the traditional sense of replicability is pointless here” (p. 217). Hence, the aim of this study was not to generalize its findings to a population but to develop a theory that explores PSPETs’ professional lives in Hong Kong. Those themes, meanings and experiences that emerge from the interpretation by the researcher of the data may show patterns suggestive of trends characterizing a wider PSPET

population. In addition, it is common for qualitative researchers to describe the findings in detail and quote verbatim in their research report leading to a generalizable theory. The researcher's sensitivity to this particular context is crucial and might have an influence on the data generated. The researcher has tried to provide rich contextual information about the setting, the participants and the issues. Having done so, it is for others to ask whether the conditions are replicable in other similar settings, or indeed, the extent to which they differ. This process may enable others to draw conclusions about the generalizability of the findings in this case study. Thus generalization in case study takes the form of a kind of "retrospective generalization" that can allow readers to understand PSPETs' past and/or future experiences in a new way (Eisner, 1991, p. 205).

As this research employed a qualitative interpretivist approach using the symbolic interaction framework in the analysis, it was fitting that qualitative, instead of positivistic criteria were used in accounting for its trustworthiness. Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and generalizability are used as corresponding standards in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **3.6 Ethics**

This study's methodological framework was reviewed and approved by the Doctor of Education Programme Board of the University of Leicester and met the "Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research" of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004).

In accordance with the "revised ethical guidelines for educational research" (BERA, 2004), the following important points were observed and all participants received clear, simple and specific explanations of the terms:

- Participation was strictly voluntary and in no way affected the PSPETs.
- "Participants understood and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the

research getting underway” (BERA, 2004, p. 6).

- If participants experienced temporary discomfort when discussing current or past feelings and thoughts associated with their professional experiences, the researcher desisted immediately from any actions that cause emotional or other harm.
- As participants were occasionally tired during or after the interview sessions, the interviews were held at monthly intervals until data saturation occurred.
- Confidentiality of study information was assured. Participants were identified alphabetically in all written records, including the interview transcripts and research reports.
- Participants could refuse to answer any question(s) and / or could request that the interview session be terminated at any time for any or no reason.
- Participants could discuss their concerns about the study with the investigator at any time.
- Participants could withdraw from the study at any time for any or no reason. Any decision to persuade participants to re-engage would only be taken with due care.
- The dual role of the researcher (teacher educator and researcher) was addressed in which explicit tensions may arise in areas such as confidentiality.

Written consent forms that outlined the above points were signed. These consent forms, together with the audio taped interviews and the list that identified the participants’ pseudonyms and their identities were stored in a locked file with access restricted to the researcher only. In addition, all participants were debriefed at the conclusion of the research and were given the right to see all published results of the study.

### ***3.7 Summary and Conclusion***

This chapter has provided the justification for the adoption of the interpretivist paradigm. The arguments for adopting a qualitative design methodology using symbolic interactionism

as a theoretical perspective were also explained. Both are consistent with the adopted research approach for data collection and analysis – namely, grounded theory. The aim throughout was to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs. Applications and justifications of the methods of data collection and analysis have been discussed. In the data analysis, an explanation of open, axial and selective coding - involving the constant comparative method of categorization and theoretical sensitivity - has been provided. Finally, the chapter has given an account of how trustworthiness and ethics (the protection of human rights) were addressed.

Since grounded theory and its techniques are widely used today, the potential for it gaining impetus and becoming prominent in physical education and other forms of educational inquiry are clear. Grounded theory not only provides physical educators with an alternative approach to more traditional methods of investigation, such as quantitative methods, but also offers a feasible way for practitioners to generate theory grounded in the realities of their daily work.

A grounded theory approach was used in this study to examine the professional lives of PSPETs. The purpose of a grounded theory approach was the construction of theory from primary data. Use of the strategies outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) enabled the researcher to explore the richness and complexity of the professional lives of PSPETs through describing their experiences and exploring the meanings they had for the teachers.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the theory of “Diversified Adaptation” and describe the findings and the resulting categories and their linkages that form the theoretical framework for understanding the professional lives and experiences of PSPETs in Hong Kong.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE THEORY OF “DIVERSIFIED ADAPTATION” – AN OVERVIEW

#### *4.1 Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to investigate the professional lives of primary school physical education teachers (PSPETs) in Hong Kong. It was carried out through the inductive development of a theory, based on grounded theory methods, of how Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives. The sample included 11 PSPETs with between two and thirty years of professional experience in Hong Kong primary schools. The respondents were six males and five females between the ages of 25 and 59. Data were collected during interviews with these teachers and were simultaneously analyzed using the constant comparison method of the inductive approach to generate a grounded theory of the “Diversified Adaptation” of PSPETS in Hong Kong.

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. How do PSPETs describe their work and how do they feel about their typical daily work lives?
2. How do PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve?
3. How do PSPETs describe their socialization and professional experiences?
4. What are PSPETs’ career aims and how do they describe and conceptualize their career trajectories?

This chapter describes how the theory is constructed in the course of the investigation. This chapter consists of five sections: (1) the participants and their characteristics; (2) the emergence of the theory; (3) the process by which the theory was developed; (4) the story of “diversified adaptation”; and (5) the main proposition of the theory. The detailed analysis and findings are presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

## **4.2 The Participants and Their Characteristics**

This section describes the size and characteristics of the sample used for this study. Eleven PSPETs participated in this study and were selected by the process described in Chapter 3. Each PSPET was given a pseudonym to preserve their anonymity. Because of the nature of grounded theory and of qualitative research, it is important to obtain the fullest information possible about each of the sample members. In the following section brief vignettes on the six male and five female PSPETs are presented, and a brief summary of this information is shown in table 3.1.

### **4.2.1 Winnie (Respondent 1, R1)**

Winnie is a marathon enthusiast who loves to teach physical education and is constantly seeking for opportunities to further her professional development. She has been teaching in her current school ever since graduating from university and for 18 years has served as the physical education panel head. It can be seen from her diary that she reads a lot of books, articles and journals related to her profession during her leisure time. She is very proactive in performing her administrative duties in school. From the researcher's observation it seems that she is ambitious and is well liked by the senior management of the school where she works. She confidently states that:

*I would say I am proud of having such colleagues as a team in this school. The Principal seldom opposes what we propose and he tries his best to accommodate our requests. Regarding my career as a P.E. teacher in this school, I am very contented because so far I have been given the autonomy to do what I want.*

### **4.2.2 John (Respondent 2, R2)**

John is a former football player and recently has spent much of his time providing coaching work as a community service in addition to his busy working life. The researcher feels that John is a self-disciplined physical education teacher working at an old primary school near a public estate in the New Territories. He works as the head of the discipline

committee and every student in the school shows respect for this former athlete. The researcher is also convinced that he is a role model for the qualities that a physical education teacher needs. Interestingly, as can be seen from his comments below, he feels that the value of his professional life is highly focused on his community service:

*My sense of fulfilment does not come entirely from the school. Since I have also done a lot in the football association, I believe what I have done over the past ten or more years has won approval from many people. Indeed, many of the new teachers were my students in the football association before.*

#### **4.2.3 Toby (Respondent 3, R3)**

Toby has had nine years of experience of teaching physical education in primary schools since his graduation from university. But he soon shifted his professional focus from physical education to information technology because of the opportunities and needs in his school. In addition to physical education he was asked to teach English, Mathematics, Bible Studies and General Science. He is also responsible for coaching the football, badminton and swimming teams. He complains that:

*Most of my time is dedicated to teaching subjects other than PE, which is my major preference. I was asked to teach subjects such as English, Bible Studies and Mathematics. In other words, I wasn't teaching the subjects that I was strong at....I had to accept this or I would have had to quit. In several respects I do think the school has a wrong allocation of human resources. People are not appointed to the position where they can serve the school the best. This is a common practice in Hong Kong schools; we all have to accept it.*

Toby has considered quitting this most recent job and is planning to join the curriculum development office of the physical education section of the Education Bureau, using his dual professional strength in physical education and information technology. He has a strong sense of mission to develop a better physical education curriculum through the use of information technology.

#### **4.2.4      *Chunk (Respondent 4, R4)***

Chunk is a young man with quite a *laissez faire* approach. He is very confident in his role and contribution to the school he works for. He works in quite a slow way and enjoys the relationship with the students more than anything. When the data collection (interview) was completed, Chunk showed the researcher the way out of the school, and on the way he deliberately led the researcher to the staff room complaining that:

*You see - it is only 4:30pm, just half an hour after school hours. All of the teachers are gone. The only teachers who stay late at this hopeless school are from our section, and they are training students in the playground, the gymnasium and the badminton courts. I wonder how the other teachers see us ...*

In spite of this, Chunk is very positive about his profession even though the school has not provided any opportunities for him or his section.

#### **4.2.5      *Rose (Respondent 5, R5)***

A traditional house wife with 29 years of experience of teaching physical education, Rose dressed well for the interview and was accompanied by her husband. Almost all of the information she gave during the interview concerned her family. She has been in her present school for less than one year. When her husband was transferred to a school which was a long way from the school where she had been teaching for more than 20 years she moved to a school which is closer to her husband's school. Looking back to her "halcyon days", she described her feelings:

*... I came here just two months ago, and they don't know yet whether I am a good teacher or not. In my previous school they did value my contribution. A PE panel member retired and the Principal asked me to take his place as he knew that I know a lot about PE. That panel member had been a PSM, which is the highest position for a primary school teacher. He had been working on the panel for more than 20 years. Once he retired, I was asked to take his place. I accepted the promotion and I handled all of the PE work, like the sports day and administration work. I was happy at that time. I could bring my talents into full play and I could feel that my role was important.*

Rose enjoys gardening and cooking at home and is planning to retire whenever her husband agrees to make the same decision together with her.

#### **4.2.6 Holly (Respondent 6, R6)**

Holly had refused to be promoted to a higher rank and is now seeking to leave her current school. She constantly mentioned her current Principal during the interview, and the researcher received the impression that the Principal had a serious effect on her working life and emotions, as shown by her remarks that:

*The Principal says that we are given plenty of freedom to develop, and claims that he welcomes our suggestions and ideas. But in fact he always rejects our suggestions. The result is that I am not motivated to put forward any more new ideas and I prefer to remain at my present level.*

She cannot fully achieve her goals as she considers that there are too many physical education teachers in the school. She cannot ask for more PE classes, but if the school had fewer physical education teachers, she would be able to give more PE lessons. She is also hindered by the attitude of some stubborn colleagues. The thing that makes her feel frustrated is that she cannot achieve what she wants to in the PE lessons.

#### **4.2.7 Justin (Respondent 7, R7)**

Justin is Vice Principal of a primary school who gave up his professional community service as an international basketball referee after being promoted to his current rank. In spite of this, and to provide a good role model for his colleagues, he uses his spare time to give extra guidance to his students about their academic achievements. He had instituted remedial classes on Saturdays for students who need further tutoring, and that has affected his personal life as well as that of his colleagues.

*As I am at the middle level of the school management, I see the problems we are facing and the need for us to work harder. Therefore I have had to think of better solutions to the problems.*

He felt that he might give a playful impression to his colleagues, and that this might possibly

create barriers when he was carrying out his responsibilities as Vice Principal:

*Sometimes I make jokes during work, and other colleagues may think that I am not serious enough.*

Justin was the only respondent who requested that the interview take place in his home, and not in his working environment.

#### **4.2.8      *Jeddi (Respondent 8, R8)***

Jeddi was formerly an elite athlete in Judo who represented Hong Kong in many international competitions. Unlike the other PSPETs, she started her teaching career only at the age of 30 because she was fully occupied with her elite training while she was in her twenties. The researcher has an impression that she is responsible and strives to keep a balance between being a housewife and being a PSPET. She was concerned that urgent meetings in school messed up her schedule and her working life. She also regretted that it was no longer possible for her to follow a regular exercise programme such as she had followed previously. The researcher feels that she is a very diligent employee even though she feels that she is not well appreciated by her boss. She twice phoned the researcher to change the appointment for the data collection (interview), explaining that urgent meetings clashed with the scheduled interview. She is concerned that she is the only one who seeks to construct and develop the physical education section and also the only one who would close down existing programmes because of low student enrolment in the coming years.

#### **4.2.9      *Kenny (Respondent 9, R9)***

Kenny is the oldest participant in this study. He has 30 years of teaching experience of which twenty were served in a primary school and ten in a secondary school before taking up his post in his present primary school. He has one more year to go before retirement. He is very independent. He clearly stated that he is more of an activity manager than a physical education teacher or a coach. In the interview, he made only a few references to his role as a physical education teacher and how he conducted physical education lessons. He did not want

to talk about Chinese, a subject that he also has to teach. He preferred to describe how he spent most of his time on establishing and operating a successful extra curricular activity – swimming for all levels of students. Since this endeavour is a master piece and is greatly appreciated by both the parents and the senior management of the school, he devotes all his time to this, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. even though this school is still on the old half day (p.m.) school time system.

#### **4.2.10    *Thornley (Respondent 10, R10)***

Like most of the other PSPETs, Thornley had followed a conventional route through a teacher education programme and then moved straight into teaching. Apart from the teaching profession, he devotes most of his leisure time to community service and to his professional development. He had recently represented Hong Kong in regional and international competitions as a rope skipping player and coach. He had been requested by his school to further his professional development in the area of mathematics though he thought that this was a waste of time.

#### **4.2.11    *Eagle (Respondent 11, R11)***

Eagle graduated with a diploma in sociology and furthered her professional development in physical education by attending evening courses before starting her career in her present school. She has no other professional development certificates, for instance for coaching or judging in particular sports, which are often used by physical education teachers to further develop themselves or to justify their professional competence in the eyes of the senior management or potential employers. She teaches physical education, Chinese, Information Technology and General Studies and had become the panel member for General Studies half a year previously. She has been teaching in the current school for 15 years but is thinking of quitting or retiring because of family considerations. She is not motivated to seek promotion or to change her career as she claims that:

*...there have been chances, but I have no desire to fight for promotion...I just do the work I am expected to do. I think the main factor affecting my choice is my character. Also, I don't like administrative work.*

#### **4.3 Emergence of the Theory**

The core theme that emerged as the main concern for PSPETs as they strove to manage their professional lives can be conceptualized as “*Diversified Adaptation*”. The emergence of this theory is based on the ideas, values and habits possessed by an individual, which result from the interaction of their personal dispositions and the external environment or organizational ecology. Individuals have different backgrounds and so they will adapt to organizational change in diverse ways and have a greater or lesser need to adjust to new conditions as their environment and organizational policy change. In this vein, the emergence of this theory may also accord with Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of “habitus”, suggesting that the impact of individuals on an organization depends upon a combination of their position within that organizational culture, their dispositions towards that culture and the various types of capital that they possess. PSPETs may be able to intentionally influence the nature of the culture within which they participate, through striving to change and/or preserve certain characteristics or practices. This means that their capacity for adaptation acts as the core factor in exploring the PSPETs’ working lives, their identities, socialization and professional experiences and ultimately their career trajectories. Four dovetailing categories emerge that are related specifically to the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs. These are (1) *switching*, (2) *interplaying*, (3) *diversifying*, and (4) *assimilating*. Although data can be grouped into these categories, there are many interrelationships between the elements of each category that can only be understood when the evidence is viewed as a composite picture. In addition, the study also reveals that “*diversified adaptation*” is made up of a typology



consisting of “*engager*”, “*adherer*” and “*dissenter*” in relation to how the individuals manage their professional lives.

#### ***4.4 Steps in Arriving at the Theory***

In conducting this study, the researcher utilized five criteria for trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, confirmability, dependability and generalizability) to ensure the reliability of the results. The researcher followed a study protocol related to a grounded theory methodology, which contained the instrument as well as the procedures for obtaining answers to the research questions. The information and analysis resulted from the interviews conducted by the researcher and were supplemented by the diary records of the PSPETS in the sample.

This study sought an understanding of the professional lives of PSPETs as seen from their own perspectives. This was enabled by the researcher giving the PSPETs the opportunity to talk about their everyday experiences and to express their own points of view. Theoretical saturation is reached and sampling ceases when no new information emerges in the relevant categories and adequate information exists for each relevant category to conduct in-depth analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using these principles to determine the appropriate sample size for the initial interviews, the analysis began with the first interview in a line-by-line coding method, by which new codes were created for every concept or idea presented. As each new code was created the code definition and date of creation were also recorded. To describe the process of arriving at the theory, the three stages of data analysis are presented below:

##### ***4.4.1 Open coding***

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61). Each word, line and

paragraph is examined thoroughly to discover and label the phenomena being described.

Gerund words ending in “ing” were used to indicate processes and the feelings of change of the respondents (Glaser, 1978).

In this study, line-by-line coding was used during the open coding process for all 11 interviews. This process evolved into simultaneously searching for new concepts and creating the appropriate codes while at the same time observing the development of those concepts in the data. As the list of codes grew, it became necessary to consider the relationships between the emerging codes and to refine the code list accordingly.

#### ***4.4.1.1 Adaptation types***

The adaptation processes of PSPETs’ work lives were identified during the open coding stage. More than 120 labels were generated in open coding. For instance, some of these labels were termed – “responding”, “devoting”, “inspiring”, “delegating”, “puzzling”, “resisting”, “surviving” and “escaping” – and they were attached to the PSPETs in capturing their accounts of their work lives and socialization experiences. The labels were then grouped under the categories of work lives, identity, socialization and professionalization, and career trajectory.

#### ***4.4.1.2 Adaptation dimensions***

The following dimensions were identified for four adaptation types noted above:

- (1) Work life adaptation: scope of work; personal lives; subjects taught; and organization culture/atmosphere.
- (2) Identity adaptation: social status; personal characteristics; competence; and relationship between colleagues, students and school.
- (3) Socialization and professional adaptation: roles; gender; professional status; satisfaction; and impact of education reforms.
- (4) Career trajectory adaptation: organization characteristics; aspirations; self-orientation; and other obligations.

#### **4.4.1.3    *Adaptation properties***

After identifying the adaptation dimensions, five concepts that described different facets of adaptation properties were also identified. These properties were - focus, breadth, clarity, commitment and consistency. In brief, focus refers to the degree of concentration on their work lives shown by PSPET's; breadth is the embracing of different aspects of adaptive work life; clarity reflects the degree to which PSPET's made adaptation a priority; commitment indicates the PSPET's dedication; and, finally, consistency refers to the congruity in the application of adaptation in similar situations.

#### **4.4.2        *Axial Coding***

Axial coding focuses on the relationships between categories and their subcategories. Procedurally, axial coding also involves "identifying the variety of conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences associated with a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 126).

Taking a PSPET as an example, Thornley (R9) cannot fully achieve his goals as he cannot ask for more PE classes (phenomenon). The thing that makes him feel frustrated is that his principal requested him to choose mathematics for his further professional development, which was not his preference (causal condition). In this case, a dimension of professionalization adaptation (being a physical education teacher or other subject teacher) created a phenomenon. The properties to be considered were (i) the area of focus on his work lives; (ii) his degree of commitment as a professional physical education teacher; (iii) the clarity of his goals; (iv) the consistency of his decision; and (v) the strategies he employed to tackle this phenomenon. The interaction strategy that Thornley (R9) made was to accept the request. He picked mathematics and studied master programme majoring in mathematics in university. As a consequence of the implementation of this strategy, he was able to sustain his teaching profession in his school and possess teaching skills in different subjects to survive. It became apparent after the line-by-line coding of the first 9 interviews, that the same ideas

were being described by many of the PSPETs, and that fewer new codes were being developed with each new interview.

Because of this repetition of themes as well as the volume and depth of the data in the first nine interviews, the decision was made to use the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> interviews as test cases for data saturation or informational redundancy. Analysis of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> interviews proceeded in the same manner as the first nine interviews, with line-by-line analysis to reveal any new ideas and any further development of the current ideas. Documentation specific to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> interviews was retained to serve as test cases.

The analysis of the line-by-line coding of these two interviews revealed that while there was some slight variation within categories, no new categories emerged. No additional codes were created during the coding of these interviews.

Unlike the other ten respondents, the PSPET participating in interview 11 exhibited a variation on the issue of external influences on the career trajectory. She had been waiting for more than ten years to migrate to the United States of America with her family once the green card had been granted. She ‘adhered’ to the school she worked for, but was ready to leave at any time.

Propositions were created with respect to these relationships and these propositions were subsequently tested using existing and new data. For instance, the grouping of the categories was re-arranged. By sorting the PSPETs into three types, according to the adaptation categories into which they fell. These three types were: type 1 Engagers; type 2 Adherers; and type 3 Dissenters.

#### **4.4.3      *Selective coding***

Selective coding is the process of selecting a core category, systemically relating it to other categories and verifying their relationships. All data are sorted into an event chronology for the writing of a research narrative. The final stage of the analysis involves linking the substantive categories into a theoretical framework, and selecting a core category, which

underpins all the other categories and accounts for the underlying “story line” of the theory. Through theoretical sampling and the constant comparison of the conceptual codes, a core category was discovered for the PSPETs in this study. The core category that emerged reflected the way that PSPETs strive to manage their professional lives; an appropriate core concept of “*diversified adaptation*” was thus conjured to reflect such. After interviewing all 11 PSPETs about their professional lives, four dovetailing categories emerged that were related specifically to the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs: (1) *switching*, (2) *interplaying*, (3) *diversifying*, and (4) *assimilating*. Using these categories, each PSPET is classified as an “*engager*”, “*adherer*” or “*dissenter*” in relation to how they manage their professional lives.

#### **4.5 The Story of Diversified Adaptation**

The final stage of the analysis involves linking the substantive categories into a theoretical framework, and selecting a core category that underpins all the other categories and accounts for the underlying “storyline” of the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was accomplished by telling the story in a general, descriptive way before analyzing it conceptually.

“*Diversified adaptation*” is made up of a typology consisting of three types of PSPETs: (1) *engagers*, (2) *adherers* and (3) *dissenters*. The three types of PSPETs share four common categories; even though how each type “utilizes” the categories, differs. The four common categories are (1) *switching (work lives)*; (2) *interplaying (identity)*; (3) *diversifying (professionalism)*; and (4) *assimilating (career trajectory)*.

Despite the fact that PSPETs shared similarities and differences through their socialization and professionalization processes, the findings emphasize that PSPETs “*adapt*” to their work lives in “*diversified*” ways. In order to understand human behaviour, the qualitative researcher needs a good understanding of the interpretative processes that shape an individual’s

behaviour. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the social theory of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1967), which underpins this study, focuses on the interactive processes that exist between individuals in groups and social settings, rather than on social structures.

The following “storyline” presentation gives a brief account of the relationships between the categories, processes and concepts that comprise the theory of “diversified adaptation”.

### Diversified Adaptation – The Storyline

*PSPETs study to be physical education teachers as a major in their pre-service training in Hong Kong. However, PSPETs are normally expected to teach 3-5 subjects in their schools in accordance with government (Education Bureau) policy. Primary school teachers (including physical education teachers) in Hong Kong are not regarded as “subject specialists”. In this regard, the core category of this story of “diversified adaptation” is how these PSPETs make sense of, and view, their adaptations, and how they use the process of adaptation to manage their professional lives. The present study finds that there are four sub-categories in the core category of adaptation: switching, interplaying, diversifying, and assimilating.*

*The first category, switching, comprises the “**adaptation**” processes used by PSPETs to manage their work lives. “**Switching**” refers to how PSPETs must equip themselves with infra-structural abilities in order to tackle their everyday challenges and routines. PSPETs have to “**reconcile**” themselves to a broad scope of work that has “**multiple levels of job specifications**” and that demands possession of “**multi-dimensional knowledge**”. “**Irregular work hours and workloads**” also have a great influence on the working lives of PSPETs. To “**acclimatize**” to the ever-changing organizational environment, from time to time, PSPETs must “**switch**” their scope of work effectively and efficiently.*

*The second category, interplaying, comprises the “**adaptation**” processes used by PSPETs to “**interplay**” their multiple identities. “**Interplaying**” relates to the “**personal characteristics**”*

of PSPETs, which are reciprocally influenced by how PSPETs perceive their identities in the school in which they serve. Their “**bonding**” with colleagues and students, how they “**construct**” their status, “**contribute**” their expertise in and to the school, and their “**negotiation**” abilities are key concepts, all of which “**interplay**” with their professional and personal identities.

The third category, diversifying, comprises the “**adaptation**” processes used by PSPETs in their socialization and professional experiences. PSPETs need to be “**sensitive**” to the organization itself, and to the people within the organization (their needs, expectations, and viewpoints). These experiences include satisfaction with their students, and the work norms and practices of the school they work for (“**sources of satisfaction**”). From the process of socialization, “**critical incidents and influential personnel**” also help PSPETs to create and sustain a professional foundation for experiencing their work lives. The marginalization of the subject—physical education—may not affect the “**professional status**” of the PSPETs in the sense that PSPETs are carrying “**diversified**” identities and roles. In other words, PSPETs, in their professional roles, are not marginalized largely because of the “**versatility of their roles**”, particularly in the organizational culture of Hong Kong primary schools. In addition, the PSPETs in this study repeatedly stressed the impact that education reforms had on their work lives. The external environment (“**education reform as a trend**”) affects the socialization process of PSPETs as a whole, because PSPETs view their professional experience as an adaptation process required by the school and the government. PSPETs perceived that change is the trend, and generally they had positive attitudes towards the education reforms and showed support for further change.

The fourth category, assimilating, comprises the “**adaptation**” processes used by PSPETs to guide their career trajectory. PSPETs “**adapt**” their career paths, which are influenced by the “**characteristics of their organization**”, their “**self-orientation**” towards their careers, the prioritization of their “**other obligations**” and their “**career aspirations**”. PSPETs also have a deeply internalized sense of traditional Confucian values and culture, which often manifests

*itself in their lack of assertiveness in seeking promotion or moving vertically in the school hierarchy.*

*PSPETs generally proceed through the four sub-categories of “diversified adaptation”, but their interpretation of “diversified adaptation” varies. It is thus possible to construct a “typology” of 11 PSPETs in how they manage their work lives. Their capacity for “adaptation” acts as the core factor in exploring their working lives, their identities, their socialization and professional experiences and ultimately their career trajectory. These divergent patterns form a typology of the PSPETs in Hong Kong presented in this study, represented by three types of PSPETs: “engager”, “adherer” and “dissenter”.*

*These three types have adapted to organizational change and adjusted to new conditions in diverse ways, in order to manage their work lives. PSPETs classified as “engagers” are heavily involved in their daily work lives and are deeply committed to both their profession, the school and their professional lives. PSPETs classified as “adherers” are loyal to the school that they work for and dutifully follow the organization’s expectations. PSPETs classified as “dissenters” tend to be out of accord with the prevailing culture and values of their schools, and often disagree with their colleagues and the organization as a whole.*

The categories and processes contained in the “storyline” presentation of “diversified adaptation” will be described and explained in detail in Chapter Five. The typology contained in the “storyline” presentation of “diversified adaptation” will be described and explained in detail in Chapter Six.

#### **4.6 The Main Propositions of Diversified Adaptation**

This section presents the theory of “diversified adaptation” together with different sets of inter-related propositions. The first proposition discusses the Theory of Diversified Adaptation. The second set of propositions relates to the categories and major processes of the



theory. A third set of propositions concerns the context of PSPETs' work lives, identity, socialization experience, and career trajectory. Finally, a fourth proposition relates to the typology of PSPETs.

#### ***4.6.1 Propositions of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation***

The complex processes of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation of PSPETs are basically social, and, as such, have both variations and uniformities. The workload of teachers in Hong Kong schools is increasing because of the education and curriculum reforms advocated by the government and by scholars. Every school or organization has its own particular circumstances and unique culture, and the PSPETs in this study are mostly diligent and assiduous professionals who are willing to accept and adapt to changes, as “*engagers*”, “*adherers*” or “*dissenters*”. Each of these three groups, however, react differently to change in the workplace. In order to gain a clear understanding of the processes involved in the adaptation of each group, we need to understand their similarities and differences and the conditions in which they work. The word “*diversified*” was chosen because the PSPETs adjusted and reacted to the changes in diverse ways that reflected their personal characteristics, preferences, opportunities, and necessities. The word “*adaptation*” was used because PSPETs were required to conform to, and familiarize themselves with, an ever-changing educational environment.

#### ***4.6.2 Proposition of the Processes of “Diversified Adaptation”***

The theory of diversified adaptation emerges from four dovetailing categories, namely (1) *switching*, (2) *interplaying*, (3) *diversifying*, and (4) *assimilating*. These are discussed in detail below.

Firstly, the category of “switching” refers to a series of processes through which the PSPETs equip themselves with infra-structural abilities in order to “adapt” to their everyday challenges and routines. This category – switching - consists of five inter-related concepts of

how PSPETs describe their work and their feelings about their typical daily work lives (refer to Specific Research Question 1). These concepts are (1) multi-dimensional knowledge; (2) acclimatization to the organization; (3) reconcilable scope of work; (4) multi-level job specification; and (5) irregular work hours and workloads.

Secondly, through the processes of “interplaying”, PSPETs are reciprocally influenced by how they perceive their professional and personal identities in the school in which they serve. This category – interplaying - consists of five inter-related concepts of how PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve (refer to Specific Research Question 2). These concepts are (1) contribution of expertise; (2) status construction; (3) negotiation; (4) bonding; and (5) personal characteristics.

Thirdly, the category of “diversifying” refers to the processes through which PSPETs “adapt” to their ever-changing work lives using their diverse professional and socialization experiences. This category – diversifying -consists of six inter-related concepts of how PSPETs describe their socialization and professional experience (refer to Specific Research Question 3). These concepts are (1) organizational sensitivity; (2) sources of satisfaction; (3) dealing with influential persons or critical incidents; (4) status of the profession; (5) educational reform as a trend; and (6) versatile roles.

Finally, through the process of “assimilating”, PSPETs “adapt” to the “diverse” nature of their job and “assimilate” closely into the Confucian culture and context of the organization, which affect the PSPETs’ career trajectory. This category – assimilating -consists of four inter-related concepts used to explore the PSPETs’ career aims and how they describe and conceptualize their career trajectories (refer to Specific Research Question 4). These concepts are (1) characteristics of the organization; (2) self-orientation of career; (3) other obligations; and (4) career aspirations.

A detailed discussion, supplemented by data showing how the categories were constructed, is presented in Chapter 5.

#### **4.6.3 Propositions of the Context of PSPETs' Working Life, Identity, Socialization Experience and Career Trajectory**

The four categories of “diversified adaptation” fit together, although PSPETs act out different degrees of diversified adaptation as the background and context of their schools differ. These differences take into account the four distinct categories. For example, while PSPETs “adapt” their work lives by “switching” (first category) their “reconcilable scope of work”, they “interplay” (second category) their identities through the “contribution of their expertise”. The degree of “organization sensitivity” induces “diversified” (third category) socialization and professional experiences. In addition, PSPETs are “assimilated” (fourth category) into the context and culture of the schools with “self-orientation of career”. The extent of “diversified adaptation” varies amongst PSPETs. Each PSPET adapts his/her particular work life in response to “diversifying”. While all PSPETs “adapted” aspects of their work lives, identities, socialization and professional experience, and career trajectories, they did it in diverse ways, and, as a result, their decisions, characters, opinions enabled them to be grouped to form the typology of PSPETs.

#### **4.6.4 Proposition of the Typology of the PSPETs**

As mentioned previously, PSPETs can be classified into three types: Engagers, Adherers and Dissenters. Although all types share some common properties, these properties are utilized in different proportions and have varying degrees of importance. The four common properties are *switching*, *interplaying*, *diversifying* and *assimilating*. All PSPETs have experience based on these four properties, and their experience in adapting in diverse ways as shown in the data is presented in Chapter 6. The following is a brief description of the three types of PSPETs:

“*Engagers*” are highly aware of, and committed to, the multiple roles involved in their profession and share a readiness to accept changes and reforms to the education system and curriculum. They realize and fully accept that irregular work hours and heavy workloads are

unavoidable in the trend of education reforms. They consider their private lives to be as much a part of their professional lives as their work lives. Unlike the other types of PSPETs, engagers enjoy a particularly positive and good relationship with their colleagues and students, and especially with their superiors. They are also fully aware of and exploit the importance of professional development as a way to maintain their professional status. Finally, since they are sensitive to how the organization works, they are adept at placing themselves within the organization in order to further their career path.

*“Adherers”* tend to follow the performance expectations set by the school organization, rather than strive to exceed them or risk not meeting them. They are often content to fulfill their professional obligations in a cooperative way, and their main motivation and satisfaction derives from their students’ academic and athletic achievements. In regard to their career path, they would be prepared to move if the organization required them to do so, or if an opportunity arose. Even though the nature of their work involves irregular working hours, which they dutifully accept, they strive to make the most of their personal lives outside of work.

*“Dissenters”* on the other hand, disagree with many of the organization’s policies and initiatives. However, they still work diligently in order to safeguard their family income and because of the satisfaction they derive from their students. In contrast to the other types of PSPETs, dissenters are more satisfied with their personal or professional commitments outside of their current school work, as they are often able to find professional status in activities outside of the school that give them more satisfaction. Though all PSPETs work irregular hours, dissenters place their focus more on personal or professional commitments outside of their current job. Whether cause or effect, this focus tends to adversely affect their career paths. In addition, they have a degree of self-regulation and independence in their work, and this keeps them working in the field.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter has described the emergence of a theory that best describes the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong, named “Theory of Diversified Adaptation”. The chapter has described the participants and their characteristics, the emergence of the theory, the steps taken to arrive at the theory, the story of “*diversified adaptation*” and the main propositions of the theory. The chapter describes the three stages of open, axial, and selective coding used to define the concepts and categories which led to the grounded theory of diversified adaptation. Various labels and categories were discussed for each of these stages. The detailed analysis and findings are presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCEPTS AND CATEGORIES OF THE THEORY OF “DIVERSIFIED ADAPTATION”

#### ***5.1 Introduction***

The aim of this study is to investigate the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong. This chapter contains the findings for the four research questions that have guided this study. They are: 1) How do PSPETs describe their work, and how do they feel about their typical daily work lives? 2) How do PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve? 3) How do PSPETs describe their socialization and professional experiences? 4) What are the PSPETs’ career aims and how do they describe and conceptualize their career trajectories?

This chapter provides an overview of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation along with a detailed discussion of its categories and subcategories. The PSPETs’ typical work lives, their perceptions of their personal and professional identities, their descriptions of their socialization and professional experiences and finally, the PSPETs’ career aims and descriptions of their career trajectories are the focal themes of this chapter. The researcher will address each of these themes in turn, using interview data and supporting literature.

#### ***5.2 The Main Propositions of the Theory***

The grounded Theory of Diversified Adaptation discovered in this study is first presented as several theoretical propositions. The propositions are then supported by evidence and presented in sections, each of which corresponds to twenty base concepts that form the theory:

1) multi-dimensional knowledge, 2) acclimatization to the organization, 3) reconcilable scope of work, 4) multi-level job specification, 5) irregular work hours and workloads, 6)

contribution of expertise, 7) status construction, 8) negotiation, 9) bonding, 10) personal characteristics, 11) organizational sensitivity, 12) sources of satisfaction, 13) dealing with influential persons or critical incidents, 14) status of the profession, 15) education reform as a trend, 16) versatile roles, 17) characteristics of the organization, 18) self-orientation of career, 19) other obligations, and 20) career aspirations. These concepts have been analyzed and clustered into four categories; however, there are many interrelationships between them that can only be explained by viewing the data as a whole. Four dovetailing categories emerge that are related specifically to the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs. These are (1) *switching*, (2) *interplaying*, (3) *diversifying*, and (4) *assimilating*. The categories, concepts and processes are presented in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: The Categories, Concepts and Processes of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Description of processes</b>
Switching (Work Lives)	Multi-dimensional knowledge	PSPETs' knowledge of different subjects in their work lives.
	Acclimatization to the organization	How PSPETs acclimatize themselves to the school.
	Reconcilable scope of work	How PSPETs reconcile their scope of work through the influence of their organization and colleagues.
	Multi-level job specification	PSPETs' various levels of job specification.
	Irregular work hours and workloads	PSPETs' irregular work hours and workloads.
Interplaying (Identity)	Contribution of expertise	How the PSPETs' professional knowledge contributes to the school, and how their knowledge is received by colleagues and by the school.
	Status construction	How PSPETs construct their status and identity in their work lives.
	Negotiation	How PSPETs deal with their colleagues and senior management.
	Bonding	The affinity that develops between the PSPETs and their colleagues, their students, and their schools.
	Personal characteristics	How PSPETs' personal characteristics affect their identities in school.
Diversifying	Organizational	PSPETs' awareness of the decisions and actions

(Professionalism)	sensitivity	of the organization, and the impact on their socialization process.
	Sources of satisfaction	PSPETs' sources of satisfaction, from student achievement and recognition by the school.
	Dealing with influential persons and critical incidents	How influential persons and critical incidents provide PSPETs with support and reflection.
	Status of the profession	How the PSPETs' positions and standing fail to affect the status of their subject — PE, but will affect their personal professional status in the school.
	Education reform as a trend	How education reform policy affects the professionalization of PSPETs.
	Versatile roles	How PSPETs maximize and stretch their multiple and simultaneous roles in school.
Assimilating (Career Trajectory)	Characteristics of the organization	How PSPETs perceive characteristics of the organization and their influences on their careers.
	Self-orientation of career	How PSPETs position themselves and their careers within their organizations, and within their organization's understanding.
	Other obligations	How PSPETs prioritize their obligations, and as a result, affect their career paths.
	Career aspirations	PSPETs' plans and ambitions to further contribute to their profession.

### 5.3 Concepts and Categories

#### 5.3.1 Switching (Work Lives)

The “Switching (Work Lives)” category consists of five concepts: (1) multi-dimensional knowledge, (2) acclimatization to the organization, (3) reconcilable scope of work, (4) multi-level job specification, and (5) irregular work hours and workloads.

Switching (work lives) refers to how PSPETs must equip themselves with infra-structural abilities in order to tackle their everyday challenges and routines. PSPETs have to adjust to a broad scope of work that has multiple levels of job specifications and that demands possession of multi-dimensional knowledge. Irregular work hours and workloads also have a great influence on their working lives. To acclimatize to the ever-changing organizational environment, from time to time, PSPETs must “switch” their scope of work effectively and



efficiently.

***Multi-dimensional knowledge*** refers to the fact that PSPETs must be knowledgeable in various subjects, so as to teach up to five different subjects at a primary school level. In addition, they have to continuously update their knowledge of these subjects, as required by the school management.

***Acclimatization to the organization*** relates to an organization's atmosphere and culture, which greatly influences the working lives of PSPETs. PSPETs adapt to the culture and changing atmosphere of their organization.

***Reconcilable scope of work*** relates to how PSPETs adjust the scope of their work so as to fit into the ever-changing working environment. Although the scope-of-work job outlines provided to the teachers range from well-written to unintelligible accounts, PSPETs, as professionals, regulate their genuine workload using their professional judgment.

***Multi-level job specification*** refers to how PSPETs have to manage jobs at different organizational levels. These levels vary from senior management level, such as planning and decision making, to front-line level, such as teaching, document filing and typing.

***Irregular work hours and workloads*** refer to the erratic work hours of PSPETs. The actual workload of teaching PE as a subject is not that heavy. The irregularity mostly consists of coaching duties and/or the demands of other subjects taught.

#### ***5.3.1.1 Multi-dimensional Knowledge***

PSPETs may be asked to teach up to five subjects including physical education in their schools. Each of them thus needs to have some command of different disciplines in order to sustain their primary school teaching. In particular, PSPETs teach English and/or Chinese in Hong Kong's primary schools. They must pass benchmark examinations certifying their language teaching proficiency. Rose's (R5) case is typical of a PSPET assigned to be a language teacher. She stated:

I got many certificates when I was a pre-service teacher. Later on, I joined some exercise courses and summer schools for boxing and dancing. I would immediately teach the students what I had

learned. When the EB (Education Bureau) asked the teachers to take benchmark test ... I had to take the English test.

Apart from teaching physical education, Toby (R3) claimed:

I am now responsible for the IT curriculum and I have to arrange the details and development of IT work so as to improve the overall environment of IT in the school.

Throughout the data collection process, PSPETs compared their work lives with those of secondary school teachers. Secondary school physical education teachers are assigned to teach one or at most two subjects in Hong Kong.

### ***5.3.1.2 Acclimatizing to the Organization***

Every school or organization has its own particular and unique culture. The work lives of PSPETs are affected in subtle ways by an organization's history, culture and atmosphere. Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "habitus", namely, that culture exists in and through practices, interaction and communication – captures this notion. Eagle (R11), for instance, had to adapt to a change in the school's teaching system. She claimed:

The school has three programmes: morning, afternoon and full-day. I have been teaching in the afternoon section for the past 14 years. This year I am responsible for the full-day section. Full-day teaching is adopted in Primary One and Primary Two. I am working on tons of administrative work, which is completely different from the past. My workload is steadily increasing. The work requirements have become higher. In the past, we worked in a simple and easy way. Now we have diversified tasks. We have to work on administrative areas too.

Preparation for teaching is an essential element for a teacher as a professional. However, one particular policy change led PSPETs to shift their individual teaching preparation to "collective class preparation" and submit evidence of their preparation and its teaching effectiveness, as required by the Education Department (EDB):

I need to work on class preparation, as the school requires "collective class preparation". Teachers teaching the same level must prepare together. Sometimes we even have to produce records regarding "collective class preparation" to the EDB. (Thornley, R10)

The influence of the workplace plays a key role in shaping and reshaping teachers'

understanding of teaching and in constructing their professional identities (Flores & Day 2006). PSPETs' sensitivity to their organizations in relation to education reform will be discussed in detail in a later section (5.3.3 Diversifying (Professionalism)).

### **5.3.1.3 *Reconcilable Scope of Work***

PSPETs as professionals may expect a high level of autonomy in their daily work lives. However with regard to the scope of their work, PSPETs' experiences differed widely. Rose (R5) reflected on this situation:

Well, I see a big difference between the primary schools in Hong Kong. Some colleagues told me that they are not provided with any guidelines, but some of them are given a whole set of operational manuals. They know what their responsibilities are by referring to the manual. Some are given guidelines according to different subjects.

Features distinguishing the scope of work expected by managers tend to reflect their different management styles, as evidenced below:

Perhaps this is the style of our principal. We all get the information ourselves, like asking our college classmates for the progress of other schools. We only know which subjects we are responsible for, and we have to choose to handle one administration position. I chose "student activities". There were only 15 teachers. I had to prepare the content myself. Some teachers who were from other schools and had experience preparing student activities taught me the way to handle it. (Jeddi, R8)

A similar experience was added by Eagle (R11):

I had no idea as to the scope of my work. I asked my colleagues about the content. I could only understand my scope of work by asking others. I learned by myself, and I solved the problems by myself too. I would ask other teachers if I encountered a few difficulties.

Researchers (Schempp, 1989; Lawson, 1983; & Templin, 1989) believe that the beginning stage of socialization is vital to the overall socialization process. Fortunately, Holly (R6) received directives outlining her scope of work. These related to her overall work duties, rather than just addressing the subject of physical education. She said:

It is a simple list of what should be handed in. This is not a specific guideline for PE teachers. PE teachers have to follow a working plan called SBM (school-based management). It is a working plan report and it lists the activities to be held in each month.

In addition, it is quite normal for PSPETs to manage their scope of work:

... if I found something that I can perform better or it could be ignored, I would try to communicate with the seniors and to compromise. (Chunk, R4)

When PSPETs are faced with fitting the scope of their work into the ever changing working environment, the findings are congruent with Lacy's (1977) term to "strategically comply". PSPETs employ the adjustment mechanism of "strategic redefinition" to deal with their scope of work.

#### ***5.3.1.4 Multi-level Job Specification***

From the managerial level to the clerical level, and from teaching and counseling to payment collection, merchandising and traffic control, PSPETs have to acquire various job competencies in order to deal with daily routines and challenges. Some jobs are inspiring; some are frustrating. The following experience by Rose (R5) reflects the situation:

Yesterday my English panel asked me to type an awards list for a calligraphy competition. This was supposed to be the work of clerical staff and as an English teacher I was given the work. I finished it quickly but I wondered why it is part of a teacher's responsibility.

Winnie (R1) remarked on similar situations:

We need to lead them (the students) to cross the street after school and ... when I am shopping; I need to buy things when I find them good for school use.

Winnie's (R1) was also explicit about the different aspects of her job, considered necessary in sustaining her profession. She added:

Another thing is that we have applied for a millennium campus (this means that school facilities comply with the standards as set out by the Education and Manpower Bureau in the year 2000) grant three times, but are still unsuccessful. I have a key role in writing the proposal too.

Winnie (R1) was one of the PSPETs who worked at both the managerial and front-line levels. She was also assigned as a class teacher and fulfilled all aspects of that role, such as student counseling, academic monitoring, and handling tuition payment.

Various job specifications extended to different organizational cultures.

For example, Holly (R6) reflected that:

Yes. Others might think that PE teachers do not need to spend time correcting assignments and they think we have more spare time ... but we have to file records and prepare ... in-school competitions, all documents, brochures, guest invitations, programme rundown, equipment and all sorts of things.

Jeddi shared these remarks about a similar situation (R8):

When going to a picnic, I have to arrange the bus, the date and the notice. I have to prepare them for the principal's reference ... I have been filing more and more documents. I had to prepare for the Christmas party and variety show. This kept me busy, and I took a rest afterwards. My work depends on the school schedule. Sometimes I am quite busy. Afterwards I will try to take some rest and then have to start another project.

In another example, Kenny (R9) described himself as a serviceable man who manages trivial areas in his daily work life. He claimed:

I need to lead the teams to go to church. I am one of the members of the Parent-Teacher Association. I am also responsible for the activities held; everyone associates me with the students' activities. I am the only one who can carry out activities, just as described. I work on many trivial things too. It is like I am a handy man.

The "labor process" (Apple, 1986) of PSPETs' teaching roles is "being fragmented both vertically and horizontally" as "lower order" teaching roles are increasingly undertaken by clerical assistants, traffic controllers ... and so on. The situation in Hong Kong is similar to that of England and Wales, where as Stevenson and Carter (2007) argue, schoolteachers are increasingly taking on ancillary roles as reform policies and school re-structuring have become the direct focus of change.

### ***5.3.1.5 Irregular Work Hours and Workloads***

It is clear from previous sources that physical education teachers in Hong Kong are overworked (Ng, 2002). All the PSPETs in this study were found to be experiencing irregular and overloaded work hours and workloads, as represented by Justin (R7) below:

I have less personal time. I spend most of my time and effort on the school. The school closes at about 6:30pm and my colleagues have to go. So we have to take our work home to finish it.

Due to their busy schedules, PSPETs receive less and less time to exercise, which may eventually affect their health. Jeddi (R8) expressed:

I work long hours from 7 in the morning to 11 at night. In the past two weeks I went to bed around 2. I have to correct the assignments. I used to wake up at 6 and go jogging. But now I want to sleep more because my blood pressure is getting higher.

Like other PSPETs, Jeddi (R8) called herself a “seven-eleven” worker, which reflected that she works much longer than her colleagues. “Seven-eleven” means that primary school teachers often work from seven o’clock in the morning to eleven o’clock at night. Other than workload and work duration, the configurations of the PSPETs’ work have shifted so as to fit the changes in the external environment. Holly (R6) elaborated on some of the unexpected duties, which affected her personal life:

We have to connect with kindergartens to promote our school. We organize several activities on Saturdays. We have to work on this because competition is getting keen. Students from kindergartens come to our school to experience life as a primary school student. We have to come back to school on Saturdays; not all Saturdays, but we work according to a shifting system. I have to work on Saturday many times in an academic year. I did not expect these duties.

The nature of the duties of a PSPET makes it a very time-consuming and energy demanding profession (Ng, 2002). It is normal practice for PSPETs to be teachers in school time and team managers and coaches after school or during holidays. Kenny (R9) even claimed that he does not have much time for long holidays:

I am in charge of many activities too. P.M. school often has activities in the mornings and at nights. We have to keep an eye

on them, and so we spend much time at school. .... But I do not have long holidays. I need to work during summer holiday too, as I am in charge of some of the summer activities like the swimming class. I have to organize the class and find the right swimming association. I have to pay attention to quality control and safety issues.

Chunk addressed similar concerns (R4):

After school, other teachers can leave after finishing their work. I have to train the students from 4 o'clock to 6 o'clock after supplementary lessons. ...I have to stay after school to coach the team.

#### **5.3.1.6 Summary of the Switching (Work Lives) Category**

The concepts of (1) multi-dimensional knowledge, (2) acclimatization to the organization, (3) reconcilable scope of work, (4) multi-level job specification, and (5) irregular work hours and workloads are clustered into the Switching (Work Lives) category, which describes the PSPETs' work and their feelings toward their daily lives. The findings relate to the first specific research question: How do PSPETs describe their work, and how do they feel about their typical daily work lives? With respect to this specific research question, the data can be summarized as follows:

- Nine out of a total of 11 PSPETs' job descriptions and scope of work were seen as reconcilable by the respondents, no matter how varied and diverse
- There were great differences between the formal job descriptions as advertised and the actual work that the PSPETs did in school.
- All PSPETs indicated that their personal lives were affected by their work lives. Eight out of a total of 11 PSPETs took their unfinished work home and administrative work took up their school holidays.
- All PSPETs perceived that there were tremendous differences in their work lives compared to those of "other subject" teachers. The PSPETs, like other subject teachers, had to correct homework and assignments. In addition, they had to coach and organize different sports activities in and out of school.

- Nine of a total of 11 PSPETs were undertaking work that they expected to do.

However, 2 PSPETs stated that they would prefer more work in relation to their profession, such as teaching more lessons in physical education or developing sports activities in school.

This discussion has shown PSPETs are experienced at switching from one role to another, filling the role of teacher, administrator, coach, event organizer, facility manager or clerical personnel. In the face of external challenges, such as education reform and a decline in the number of students enrolled in Hong Kong primary schools, PSPETs adjust their scope of work and working duration; they “diversify and adapt” to their ever changing work lives. This supports O’Sullivan’s (2004) comments that professionals in primary schools, specifically physical education teachers, are presented with unique challenges. In fact, it also reflects that PSPETs work in ways that blur the distinction between private-personal and professional lives (Macdonald & Kirk, 1996). Understandably, PSPETs feel overwhelmed by the intense work in their schools and believe that the job that they were trained to do — teach children — has changed dramatically. In addition, PSPETs have a sense of autonomy in their schools and their practice can be characterized as private, rather than collective. Additionally, PSPETs are attracted to the field by a love of the subject content, the dynamics of working in sport and physical education settings, and the opportunity to work with young people (O’Bryant et al., 2000).

To conclude, the “switching” aspect of PSPETs’ worklives may be further explained by the concept of “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977). While Bourdieu (1993) outlines habitus as “the basics from which lifestyles are generated” (p. 127) and as respecting “the immediate determination of ‘situation’” (p. 87), PSPETs switch their scope of work effectively and efficiently from time to time by acclimatizing to the ever-changing organizational environment.

### **5.3.2     *Interplaying (Identity)***

The previous section, Switching (Work Lives), emphasized the general picture of the



PSPETs' work lives, specifically in Hong Kong. This section examines how PSPETs perceive their identities, which in turn, influences their professional lives. The Interplaying (Identity) category consists of five concepts, each of which defines PSPETs' perceived identities. These concepts are (1) contribution of expertise, (2) status construction, (3) negotiation, (4) bonding, and (5) personal characteristics.

Whereas Thornley (R10) states that "the title of 'teacher' is quite impressive in the society" as a whole, "Interplaying" relates to the "personal characteristics" of PSPETs, which are reciprocally influenced by how PSPETs perceive their identities in the school in which they serve. Their bonding with colleagues and students, how they construct their status, their expertise in the school, and their negotiation ability are key concepts, all of which interplay with their professional and personal identities.

***Contribution of Expertise*** relates to the PSPETs' skills and knowledge, which are distinguishable from other staff members in school.

***Status Construction*** relates to how PSPETs construct their ideal of honour, or attach influence to their positions in school.

***Negotiation*** relates to the behaviour and attitudes that PSPETs use to resolve disturbances or bargain outcomes to satisfy their various concerns.

***Bonding*** relates to the affinity that develops between the PSPETs and their colleagues, students and the schools they work for.

***Personal Characteristics*** relate to the PSPETs' acts and behaviours, which are based on the maturity of their character and personality. Each person's unique set of qualities, distinctive style and disposition makes them dissimilar from others.

#### ***5.3.2.1 Contribution of Expertise***

All PSPETs have to be involved in sports activities at the intramural and inter-school level. The basic teacher education training provides PSPETs with administrative abilities for sports activities. Winnie (R1) was content to say:

We organized a sports day and our non-P.E. colleagues followed strictly our instructions on what to do. I think they fully respect

our professionalism. They would defer to us on things like students' injuries, because they know we could better handle such matters.

Eagle (R11) had similar experiences; she claimed:

I feel some difference between me and other subject teachers during special occasions, such as sports day. I have to be responsible for the arrangement. Other teachers don't know much about what I am actually doing. They have no idea as to the rationale behind picking athletes.

Since identity refers to how a teacher's "self" is constructed and reconstructed through the social interactions that he/she has in a particular socio-cultural, historical and institutional context (Zembylas, 2003), it is apparent that these PSPETs' professional knowledge and distinct aspects of expertise are usually well received by their colleagues and the senior management of their schools. Rose (R4) states that if her contribution is valued by her school, her feeling of identification with the school is positively reinforced:

It depends on whether they appreciate and identify with me. I am teaching morning exercise set. If they are aware of this and tried to promote it to other classes, or even the whole school, I would feel a sense of value.

Professional identity is a combination of all the PSPETs' distinct aspects of expertise.

Professional identity is also the individuals' sense of worth and value based on how they are viewed by colleagues and how they see themselves in their work situation (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Zembylas (2003) argues that teacher identity is constantly embedded in power relations, ideology, and culture. Identity, therefore, empowers PSPETs through decision-making processes; a key factor in dynamic schools (Fejgin & Hanegby, 1999). Chunk's (R4) experience echoes the above argument:

The school shows a positive attitude that we are given freedom to add or to cut a school team.

Another noteworthy finding from the data exhibited by Justin (R7) is that:

In the present system, all PE teachers should have taken professional training. We can teach other subjects without specific subject training, but conversely, other subject teachers cannot teach PE without PE training. So, not everyone can teach

PE, and it sounds comparatively more professional.

Despite the fact that PSPETs are responsible for teaching a variety of subjects, their expertise seems only to be recognized within the field of physical education and sport. Thornley (R10) stated:

They (colleagues) respect me in regard to sport. This is dependent on my expertise in this particular subject. My opinion towards Chinese is less valued. But they respect my contribution to PE. They believe in my professional opinion.

#### **5.3.2.2      *Status Construction***

Although Mercer (1990) states that identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, this study finds that the PSPETs' construction of their status is crucial to the positive interplay of their personal and professional identities. Winnie (R1) always shares her views and values with her principal. It shows that her status in school is reaffirmed through frequent communication with her seniors and colleagues. She explained:

I talk to the principal first and see if he shares the same view. We then normally start with informal dialogue, checking if other people, normally the relevant parties, would like guidance and counseling in this case, or share the same view on the content and target the responsible people. When things get more serious, we will initiate formal executive meetings.

John (R2) demonstrates his status by leading colleagues in school curriculum reform. He recalled:

When I first started the curriculum reform, it was very smooth. We created a showcase for other subject teachers as well, into which we put a lot of effort into improving the curriculum.

John (R2) further elaborated:

I understand that there are some structural matters that we cannot alter, but I can influence my colleagues positively on a more personal front, both emotionally and in how they tackle their subjects.

The prestige of the school for which PSPETs work is also an influence on their professional status. Chunk (R4) considered his colleagues' opinions of his professional abilities didn't matter, but the reputation and popularity of his school truly affected his status construction.

First it is not a famous school and maybe others haven't heard of it before. If I am teaching in a prestigious school, others will know which school I am in. Secondly, the general working atmosphere is not very good after classes were downsized.

Rose (R5) realized her importance when asked to take up a key position. She stated:

I was asked to take his (vice-principal) place. I accepted the promotion, handling both PE (like sports day) and administrative duties. I was happy at that time. I could bring my talent into full play and I felt important.

However, Rose (R5) chose to leave her school and join a new school and she had to reconstruct her status. She explained:

At present, even the suggestion of buying a few more shuttlecocks would be banned. As I do not know much about the students, they (colleagues) would not ask for my opinions about choosing students to join track and field training. I do not feel important here.

Another construction of status is exemplified by Kenny (R9):

I think they understand my character as they've known about me for a long time. They value my contribution in arranging students' activities. They highly regard my working performance and my devotion. I expend all my effort in the school. The parents can see my contributions. Some teachers can see my work. Not all of them are against my work...I have established many new activities and they are quite successful. Students and parents accept my work too. The result is recognized. I feel very satisfied because I've done this on my own.

It seems that the longer PSPETs work in a school, the easier it is to construct their status, which gives their positions in school greater influence. For example, John (R2) frankly claimed that his leading status is valued by his colleagues:

Well, most colleagues conceive me as a responsible teacher. They respect my views and in some meetings I can voice out some opinions that they might want to raise but do not dare do so. Therefore, I think I am valued.

Since physical education is perceived as a low status subject (Stroot et al., 1994; & Sparkes & Templin, 1990) and rests firmly on the bottom of the subject-matter status ladder (Schempp, 1989), the establishment of status in an educational setting has long been an elusive goal for

the physical education profession (Amour & Jones, 1998). It is, however, worth noting that these PSPETs are not solely using their role as physical education teachers to build up their status. They make good use of their versatile roles as teachers of other subjects, event organizers or sports coaches to establish their status. Versatile roles, as one of the concepts of this study, will be discussed in the following section (5.3.3.6).

### **5.3.2.3      *Negotiation***

The ways in which identities interplay take place in the process of negotiation. Identity is constantly changing and refining itself through social relationships with others. PSPETs refine and develop their values and beliefs in their work lives by means of their relationship with others – as argued by symbolic interactionists. Toby's (R3) experience in dealing with colleagues demonstrates this:

Indeed I hope to have more physical education classes so as to teach the students what I have learnt at university. But the reality is that there are so many concerns that we can hardly have a perfect solution. ....Every teacher has his own ideal. One of my university classmates and I work in this school and we have similar ideals, but teachers from other universities have different thoughts. For me, it is far more difficult to promote sports in primary school than I originally planned.

As pointed out by Goodson and Numan (2002), the daily work of teachers is politically and socially constructed; Toby (R3) added:

I think the main difference is that we have different mindsets. Our workload is slightly different. But I would say the mindsets make more difference than the amount of workload.

Standing together with colleagues in order to negotiate with the authority (Education Bureau), Winnie (R1) had experience in working closely with her colleagues:

I think the greatest disappointment is that my colleagues and I have worked very hard but despite that, our efforts are not recognized by the EDB. This is reflected in the external assessment. I don't think any of us is idle, but perhaps hard work does not guarantee quality after all, and people may not be satisfied with the quality of some of our colleagues. I am not very satisfied with the report. I think we have already done our

best but still we were not given approval on the new campus issue.

Kenny (R9) is the key person in organizing extra-curricular activities at his school. He realizes that every professional has his/her viewpoints. He possesses a strong personal identity and is also concerned about his colleagues' professional identities. Kenny expressed this opinion:

There are restrictions since we have different viewpoints. We have different professional ideals. Not all of the teachers can spare time on specific aspects. This is impossible.

According to Mead (1934) and Stryker (1967), identity negotiation may arise from the learning of social roles through personal experience. Chunk's (R4) personal identity affects him deeply. When justifying and taking into account his dedication to his school, Chunk claimed:

Some teachers are doing this in our school as there are many lazy and slothful teachers. They are just doing that to meet a quota. I do not want to be that kind of teachers

In dealing with the senior management, Chunk (R4) had built up his professional identity to the point where the principal allowed him to attend coaching courses, which clashed with his other engagements in school. The following is Chunk's elaboration:

I care more about self-satisfaction. If we want to have these chances, the school could provide us with resources. I remember that once during the Easter holiday we were asked to give supplementary maths lessons but I registered for a coaching course and the schedule clashed. I discussed it with my principal. I could attend the course as he asked another teacher to substitute for me. The school would not restrict my study plan.

It is apparent that the identity negotiation process takes place within colleague interaction on a horizontal level, as well as between PSPETs and senior management, that is, on a vertical level. By choosing some and rejecting other possibilities in various fields of choice, PSPETs affirm affiliations and make distinctions that constitute an important part of their professional identity (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Furthermore, teacher identity may be enhanced through proper negotiation and communication in the "Confucian dynamism" (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) and "Confucian-heritage cultures" (Ho, 1991) of Hong Kong schools.

According to Hofstede and Bond's (1998) explanation on "Confucian Dynamism", Chinese people are perseverant and tenacious in pursuing goals. Once something has been decided as requiring action, they will work through difficult problems in order to reach the desired position.

#### **5.3.2.4 Bonding**

At the beginning of a PSPET's career, it is crucial to have significant mentoring during the socialization process. Winnie (R1) recalled her early socialization experience, which secured her sense of belonging to the school:

My vice-principal talked to me a lot and taught me a lot as he is a lot more senior than me. He was in his 40s when I was only in my 20s. He explained to me a lot of the administrative affairs in the school and why they were carried out. He even taught me why one thing is preferred over the others, and management tactics as well. He surely has influenced how I think and reason to a large extent.

The work in the physical education section seemed easier because, as John (R2) argued, his colleagues demonstrated good practices. John was proud to say:

I tend to be satisfied with my communication with the colleagues and so on. Most of my P.E. colleagues are very positive and considerate.

Chunk (R5) further emphasizes the importance of colleagues who made him want to stay in his current post. He highly treasures team spirit and the deep connection between colleagues.

Chunk felt pride and stated that:

I think my inter-personal relationship with my colleagues is the most impressive. We have a strong team spirit and we want to have better performance when we have to compete. This is the thing that impresses me most. My colleagues make me want to stay. The most important thing is that I feel a connection with my colleagues.

However, promotion may serve as a barrier in working closely with colleagues. Toby (R3) encountered co-operation problems after his promotion. He stated:

After the promotion, some of my colleagues were happy for me but some of them could not make promotion and therefore, I

encountered some co-operation problems with a few of my colleagues.

PSPETs have a strong sense of community in schools. Bonding in a community, means that a collection of individuals are bound together by a set of shared values (Sergiovanni, 1994).

#### **5.3.2.5      *Personal Characteristics***

The present study reveals that PSPETs' identities are highly related to their personalities and characters. In line with Zembylas' (2003) clarification of identity formation, the dynamic process of identity formation emphasizes personal character. Identity connects people's thoughts, judgments and beliefs. How people act and behave is based on their developed character and personality. A PSPET's particular set of qualities, distinctive style and disposition make him/her dissimilar from other workers. Winnie (R1) has a clear personal character and objectives in her work life. She expressed this opinion:

To me, I think it is more important that I ought to have recognition for myself first, and this is more critical ... When I find that the principal acknowledges my work performance or when he agrees with me on what I do, I think this is a kind of recognition or affirmation.

How individuals manage their attitudes and behaviours towards their career and profession is crucial in developing their professional identity. Justin (R7) reflects on his interaction with colleagues as follows:

We have different backgrounds and personalities. This is what makes me most disappointed when we work together, and we do not share the same ideals. If one is not mature enough, one picks on you regarding the person himself but not the subject. He criticizes everything you suggest. Then you would be hindered on what you want to do, and even criticized by others afterwards.

Templin et al. (1982) suggested that socio-cultural as well as personality factors contribute to influence or facilitate individuals to identify themselves in a given field. John's (R2) character is predisposed to love children and he very much enjoys spending time with youngsters. He believes that he is doing something good for them.

More importantly however, PSPETs' identities interplay and are firmly embedded with their



personality and character in everyday interactions within school. The identification between a school and its PSPETs is also a consideration. Chunk (R4) has the following description:

Generally the PE group has self-identification. Different teachers have their own approaches towards school-identification. Other subject teachers won't feel proud if we (PE teachers) are performing well. Generally my character is that I don't mind how other colleagues see me. I have self-confidence.

In general, PSPETs have been forced to become more strategic and political in defending their professional identity against the “countervailing inroads” of the teacher social identity (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). Additionally, findings reflect that a PSPET's identity is not primarily the property of a person, but rather of interactional processes, which are inherently unstable (Cote, 2006).

#### **5.3.2.6      *Summary of the Interplaying (Identity) Category***

The concepts of (1) contribution of expertise, (2) status construction, (3) negotiation, (4) bonding, and (5) personal characteristics are clustered into the Interplaying (Identity) category. These concepts describe the perception of the PSPETs' personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve. The findings relate to the second specific research question: How do PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve? With respect to this specific research question, the data can be summarized as follows:

- Eight out of a total of 11 PSPETs felt that they had a sense of belonging to the school, and they felt proud of being a physical education teacher.
- In most cases, PSPETs thought that the principal and other teachers valued their contribution to the school. Their ideas were also respected.
- Eight out of a total of 11 PSPETs felt that they could exert an influence on other colleagues and the school as a result of their status and experience in their school. Only 3 PSPETs felt that senior members and the school's organizational atmosphere made things difficult.
- Three out of a total of 11 PSPETs were proud of the title of “teacher”, as they

believed it had high societal status. However, 5 out of a total of 11 PSPETs were satisfied with the role of coach as they found students and colleagues lauded them with more respect when good competition results were achieved.

This discussion has shown how PSPETs perceive their identities, which in turn, influences their professional lives. Personal characteristics of PSPETs are reciprocally influenced by how PSPETs perceive their identities in the school in which they serve. Their bonding with colleagues and students, how they construct their status, their aspects of expertise in the school, and their negotiation ability are key concepts, which “*interplay*” with their professional and personal identities. In fact, there is very little empirical research available about physical education teachers in general, or on how they develop their personal and professional identities.

### **5.3.3      *Diversifying (Professionalism)***

Justin (R7) initially brought up the key concept of Diversifying (Professionalism) during the data collection interview. He stated that:

In fact each PE teacher is “diversified” in this current situation and has more than one position to work with. They are at the same time a subject teacher of Chinese or English. Normally we have to take up 3 to 4 subjects. We cannot be only professional PE teachers because we have multiple roles and responsibilities and thus identifications... We have to take up lots of minor responsibilities. Sometimes we have to be responsible for 5 professional sectors, and we have to look after everything within these.

With the ever switching work lives and interplaying identities embedded into the PSPETs’ profession and their socialization experiences, the category: Diversifying (Professionalism) was introduced into this study. The category of Diversifying (Professionalism) consists of six concepts which are labeled as (1) organizational sensitivity, (2) sources of satisfaction, (3) dealing with influential persons or critical incidents, (4) status of the profession, (5) educational reform as a trend, and (6) versatile roles.

**Organizational sensitivity** discusses how aware PSPETs are of the needs of the organization as well as the needs, expectations, or viewpoints of others in the organization.

**Sources of satisfaction** refer to PSPETs' satisfaction with their students, and the work norms and practices of the school they work for.

**Dealing with influential persons or critical incidents** refers to the process of socialization in which different incidents and significant personnel help to create a professional foundation for PSPETs' work lives.

**Status of the profession** refers to the marginalization of the subject — physical education. This marginalization may not affect the professional status of the PSPETs in the sense that PSPETs are carrying diversified identities and roles.

**Education reform as a trend** refers to how the external environment affects the socialization process of PSPETs.

**Versatile roles** relate to the roles that PSPETs play in their personal and professional lives. They often mix different roles simultaneously and have to perform those roles effectively. They work and jump with ease from one thing to another, readily applying their skills to a new task.

#### **5.3.3.1 Organizational Sensitivity**

PSPETs need to be aware of how the decisions and actions of one section affect the rest of the organization. They must be aware of both the goals of other sections of the organization, and of the school as a whole, and make decisions or requests for resources accordingly. Holly (R6) is very sensitive to the decisions and actual behaviour of the senior management. She remarked that:

The principal is quite autocratic and he sets rules that are not proclaimed in writing. I face more stress as he has a hand in trivial matters. We are not allowed to take the lift as he asks us to take care of the students around school, so we have to walk upstairs and downstairs while carrying lots of things. He claimed in a meeting that he would send teachers from the administration group to guard the lift. But why are such regulations applied to adults?

This dimension of organizational sensitivity deals with being aware of the needs of the community as well as the needs, expectations, or viewpoints of others. Regarding professional development outside school and regular teaching tasks, Kenny's (R9) experience reflects PSPETs' organizational sensitivity:

They (Kenny's seniors) are positive towards the practice (continuing education course). This depends on whether the teacher wants to engage in these courses. If the timetable clashes with teaching periods, the school would let us go earlier. Not necessarily PE courses only, if you are teaching other subjects and you participate in these courses, I am sure that the school will approve too.

#### **5.3.3.2 Sources of Satisfaction**

Teachers' sense of positive professional identity is associated with job satisfaction and is a key factor in their effectiveness (Day, 2008). According to Sathe's (1983) interpretation, organizational culture and job satisfaction are directly and closely related. The source of satisfaction is conceptualized by Smith et al. (1969) as an "affective response to [a] perceived difference between what is expected and what is actual". From the data analysis, the PSPETs' sources of satisfaction basically derive from the achievement of their students, and the knowledge that these achievements were obtained through their (the PSPETs') influences and nurturing. Chunk (R4), who was satisfied with the achievement of his sport team, said:

I can feel it when I lead a team and it wins a competition. And I can feel it when a student falls in love with a sport because of my influence, or he wants more training, or he visits me after graduation. Also it is because he likes sports. If the atmosphere is good, every student would want to join the team when they see how well their schoolmates are doing. I can feel a sense of satisfaction from the atmosphere and the students' response.

Like Chunk (R4), Justin's (R7) satisfaction also came from students:

I was really satisfied with the achievement of leading school teams and the results of the students, no matter if we are winning awards or not. I think the sense of co-operation and friendship is the most important.

The concept of diversifying (professionalism) relates to the fact that PSPETs are satisfied with

the process of socialization and professionalization in diverse ways. Despite the fact that Toby (R3) was professionally trained in physical education, he accepted a decision from his senior management to take up the position of information technology section head in order to continue his career.

I'm happy but this is not my ideal development. I am not the head of PE in the school. The situation differs from my ideal as I wanted to promote sports in primary school when I graduated. I can say I am happy but not proud. Or say, I am happy about my job, but I am proud of being a PE teacher. (Toby, R3)

In this sense, the diversified professionalism discovered in this study is a means for PSPETs to be professionally socialized as well as organizationally socialized. This discovery corresponds to previous literature, which states that in the socialization of professionals, an individual engages in learning a professional role by combining component knowledge with skills, attitudes and values, so as to be able and motivated to perform this role in a professionally and socially acceptable way (Merton, 1982). Furthermore, this discovery corresponds to the literature that claims organizational socialization is a process in which an individual not only learns how to work in a particular organization, but also comes to accept and behave in ways that are appropriate to that organization (Fisher, 1986).

#### ***5.3.3.3 Dealing with Influential Persons and Critical Incidents***

In the present study, critical incidents were found to have helped ground the professional foundation of PSPETs' work lives. Also, people influential to the socialization process of PSPETs included principals or colleagues keen to provide them with support and encouragement. Regarding critical incidents, Winnie (R1) who has gone through the ups and downs of a school's development, complained:

Perhaps there is a critical incident for the school, rather than to me personally...we applied for designation as millennium campus three times but are still unsuccessful ... surely this is frustrating for my colleague and also me. I thought about leaving due to this failure once, since we cannot change to a full-day school.

In Chunk's (R4) description of an influential person, the head of PE was his role model in his

work life. Similar to Winnie's (R1) remarks about a mentor, Chunk also had a remarkable mentor at the beginning of his career. He described the mentor's influence thus:

The head of PE does his best to help us and to improve the system, which makes it easier to follow the work and we are doing our best too. He influenced me to do better in my scope of work. He is the person who affected me most and was most impressive. Even now he still works very hard.

Indeed, data indicated that these influential persons and critical incidents helped PSPETs develop their careers and remain teaching physical education. The PSPETs were attracted to the field by positive experiences with significant mentors and by their subjective reasons for believing in the importance of physical education (Lawson, 1983; & Templin et al., 1982). Though formal mentoring with physical education is far less prevalent in the literature, Tannehill and Coffin (1996) report that informal mentoring occurs at many levels within physical education but is rare in any formal capacity.

#### **5.3.3.4 *Status of the Profession***

Being a Key Learning Area (KLA), physical education teachers would claim it plays an important role in providing a broad and balanced curriculum for students. Ironically, as described by Johns and Dimmock (1999), physical education is a marginalized, yet core, school subject in Hong Kong. Physical education is "accorded with low status and minimal curricular time, a situation which departs markedly from the aims of education as expressed in Government documents." (Johns & Dimmock, 1999, p. 363) Due to the marginalization of the subject, PSPETs are facing severe challenges and struggles. The following experience of a PSPET reflects the situation:

I am not satisfied as the school does not see its (PE) importance.  
It regards PE as a minor subject. It pays more attention on  
Chinese, English and Maths. It finds PE a just-for-fun subject.  
The school does not see a PE teacher as a professional one.  
Every teacher takes up several subjects and we are distinguished  
according to our subjects. I am regarded as a "maths person"  
rather than a PE teacher. (Thornley, R10)

Though physical education is regarded as a minor subject in most of the PSPETs' observations,

this point of view is based on how they perceive the subject according to the diversified subjects of the profession. The profession itself is actually not marginalized on account of the PSPETs, who often possess multiple talents and can cope with tasks that other colleagues cannot. Thornley (R10) was always proud of his subject, as he saw himself as a key person in sport related projects:

When I am the chief coordinator of a project, they see me as the most critical person in charge. I am in charge of the “Game Fair” this year and I have to take up all duties. I can see my own importance too.

Similarly, Thornley (R10) gained his professional status in school by coaching and leading his team successfully. He expressed:

Sports performance at the school was quite poor and it did not win any prizes. After I joined the school we won one or two bronze medals in track and field. They were already very grateful, as they hadn’t won any prizes before. They felt there was an improvement as they underwent my new training. This made me identify more with my professional position.

Exceptional concerns of PSPETs are at the micro-political level of the school. In some circumstances, PSPETs suffer from the prejudice of their organization’s culture and their senior management’s discernment. Jeddi’s (R8) experience is typical in this respect:

I am discouraged by my boss ... He ignores me but not the subject.  
(Sigh) I don’t think he values what I have done. He doesn’t care who is going to take up the job.

Chunk (R4) gives a more remarkable example of how a PSPET’s professional status can be influenced by hierarchical structure and micro-politics:

Basically I think my principal supports the development of PE. But the PE group is under the control of the ECA group of which the vice-principal is the person-in-charge. The vice-principal dislikes the PE panel and I think he is a bit mean. He criticizes the person instead of the incident. He only focuses on the failure of the PE panel but does not realize that my panel is working sincerely and from the bottom of their hearts.

From the findings, the status of the profession is truly affected by how PSPETs see their “contribution of expertise”, which was discussed in an earlier section (5.3.2.1). It seems that

when technical matters and skills are involved, such as organizing sport-related activities, a higher status that comes from being a physical education teacher, is conferred. Conversely, when attention comes from a hierarchical structure — involving micro-politics — and focuses on teaching physical education — a lower status of physical education teacher is disclosed.

#### **5.3.3.5 *Education Reform as a Trend***

PSPETs view their professionalization experience as an adaptation process required by the school and the government, and both are regarded as part of an unsupportive education system. Toby (R3) elaborated upon this experience:

I was assigned to teach English as there were not enough English teachers at that time. There was a lack of proper arrangement at the managerial level... I did not expect to teach English but the school arranged for me to do so... With a basic education background, anyone can teach the course. But my ideal was to teach students what I know best. English is not my best subject so I did not feel happy at the beginning ... Later on, the new qualification system was launched. I was found to be not qualified by way of the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers. I didn't even pass the speaking part.

Apart from their personal interest in professionalization, PSPETs also considered their schools as a whole. Chunk (R4) was thinking about the state of the school and his principal in the climate of education reform more than his personal development, when he said:

In my opinion, if the school could take advantage of various opportunities, classes might not be cut. Our principal is always depressed. When I first worked in this school, he left his job temporarily for a year.

Thornley's (R10) professionalization process was also affected adversely by education reform. He complained:

The EB (Education Department) requires us to spend lots of time writing reviews, but no one looks at these reviews... The school is working on these things that do not benefit students. But we have to finish them. The EB requires TSA (Territory-wide System Assessment) in primary schools, and the school has to strive for good results. However, I think it over-trains the students. It makes the primary one students learn the math



syllabus of primary two. It forces us to amend the format of test papers several times so as to cope with the TSA syllabus.

All PSPETs repeatedly stressed the impact that education reforms had on their work lives. Day et al. (2005) found that teachers often mobilize “occasional identities” in response to new challenges and changing circumstances. There is no doubt that teachers are nowadays being challenged to constantly adapt to ever changing government policies and that this significantly impacts on their identities, socialization processes and career prospects. This is consistent with Hargreaves (1994), who stresses that the consequence of education reforms has been an intensification of teachers’ workloads, which fundamentally alters the nature of teaching. Education reforms as external forces add enormous pressure to the professional lives of PSPETs. However, all PSPETs perceived that change is the trend, and generally they had positive attitudes to the reforms and showed further support for change (Ha et al., 2004).

#### **5.3.3.6 *Versatile Roles***

In this present study, all the PSPETs responded that their professional lives clashed with their personal lives, role and identities. They play the conventional roles of housewife (female) or husband (male), athlete, coach, professional judge and volunteer for community service in their personal lives; they play the roles of teacher (physical education, English, Chinese, mathematics, information technology, general studies ...), sport activities coordinator, sport team manager, school team coach, mentor to new teachers, class master/mistress, school promotion organizer, parent teacher association (PTA) representative and administrator in different levels of the organizational structure of the school - in their professional lives. Since all PSPETs stated that they have to teach up to three subjects and coach teams, what Toby (R3) expresses here can be considered typical:

Of course I have to teach PE. I must also teach English, maths, religious studies and humanities. I assist the football team too. In my second year at the school, I also organized a swimming gala, as I am interested in swimming. I wanted to try some new sports, so I organized badminton classes with the help of a trainer. I also had to take up the responsibilities of the football team, swimming team and badminton team in the past three years.

Despite the fact that Toby's roles were considerably diversified within his professional area, the following comments were also typical of PSPETs with regard to their education environment:

I need to pay visits to kindergarten principals as this is related to future student recruitment. I still will do it even though I may not like it. We visit all kindergartens in the Northern district and look for opportunities for cooperation, which is some sort of marketing technique. (Winnie, R1)

Seven out of a total of 11 PSPETs were required to promote their schools to kindergartens.

While all PSPETs have to maximize and stretch their versatile roles in school, 4 out of a total of 11 PSPETs were also needed to represent their school at meetings of the Parent, Teacher Association (PTA). From an excerpt in Wendy's (R1) diary, it is clear that she is a key member of the PTA. She had to organize the PTA's annual activities and act as mistress of the ceremonies. Within these versatile roles, PSPETs somehow prioritize organizing sports activities as the most important. Kenny (R9) expressed:

I think my skills in subjects other than PE are lessened, since I spend most of my time and effort on sports. All my planning regards ways students can further engage in playing sports. On the other hand, in other subjects I spend little time on preparing Chinese lessons as most of the time I work on PE. Somehow I neglect other subjects.

Thornely (R10), unlike other PSPETs, preferred his role as a physical education teacher more than as a coach. He explained:

I prefer being a PE teacher. Coaches can be hired from outside but a teacher enjoys a higher position at school. We have different titles. Teachers teach not only skills, but also other forms of knowledge and principles. A coach only focuses on a skill. A teacher has more responsibility in teaching students.

The above evidence disagrees with the claim made by Sisley et al. (1987) that physical education teachers considered coaching success more important than teaching success. It is also inconsistent with Lawson's (1983) model, which observed that physical education teachers wished to become physical education teachers mainly because they wanted to coach

sports teams. As expressed and experienced by practicing physical education teachers, PSPETs are “fulfilling the simultaneous roles of teacher, coach and sports participant; they can be viewed as the embodiment of the sport, education and physical education relationship” (Armour & Jones, 1998, p. 3). Since PSPETs play versatile roles in school, their performance is diversely evaluated. They are not evaluated just as coach and teacher. The importance and satisfaction of coaching in a Hong Kong context is far less significant than in many previous studies conducted in Western countries (Stroot et al., 1994; Templin, 1989; & Macdonald & Kirk, 1996). The findings of this study provide additional evidence consistent with the findings of Lui et al. (2003), which stated that professionalism from the socialization perspective — that is the values, goals and role expectations learned by an individual - is crucial for fulfilling his or her work role. In addition, it is important to facilitate construction of professional knowledge that enables a balanced and coherent view of the professional role.

#### **5.3.3.7 *Summary of Diversifying (Professionalism) Category***

The concepts of (1) organizational sensitivity, (2) sources of satisfaction, (3) dealing with influential persons or critical incidents, (4) status of the profession, (5) educational reform as a trend, and (6) versatile roles are clustered into the Diversifying (Professionalism) category. These concepts describe PSPETs’ socialization and professional experiences. The findings relate to the third specific research question: How do PSPETs describe their socialization and professional experiences? With respect to this specific research question, the data can be summarized as follows:

- Nine out of a total of 11 PSPETs stated that their principals or vice-principals were key persons who affected their work lives and careers. Only 2 PSPETs claimed that students were key persons who affected their work lives and careers.
- As for critical incidents, 10 out of a total of 11 PSPETs expressed the view that education reforms could not be discounted or ignored in their work lives and careers.

- The diversified roles of PSPETs boosted feelings of professionalism in primary school, though most of the respondents felt that the subject - physical education - was marginalized when compared with other subjects. Ten out of a total of 11 PSPETs declared that they saw themselves functioning as professionals within their versatile roles.
- As mentioned, the PSPETs felt satisfied and rewarded because their colleagues respected them for their students' achievements. PSPETs only felt disappointed and frustrated about the never-ending and ever-increasing administrative workload as a result of education reform policies.
- Ten out of a total of 11 PSPETs gained their status through teaching other subjects and playing other more diverse roles outside physical education.
- Encouragingly, in this study, elements of the PSPETs' experiences such as "status" of the profession and versatile "roles" have a positive impact on their professionalization process; whereas, previous research indicated that there are overwhelming negative forces regarding the professionalization of physical education teachers – such as lack of "support" and lack of "respect" (Sparkes et al., 1993), and remaining "alone" in their professional decisions (Stroot et al., 1994).
- This discussion has shown how the PSPETs' experiences both organizational socialization working in particular schools and professional socialization as members of the teaching profession. As Merton (1982) notes, socialization refers to "the acquisition of the attitudes values, skills, and knowledge needed to fulfill social roles or to modify them effectively" in a society, and 'defects in this process are a prominent source of disorganization" (p. 69). PSPETs are diversely professionalized with regard to the concepts of organizational sensitivity, sources of satisfaction, dealing with influential persons and critical incidents, status of the profession, educational reform as a trend, and versatile roles.

This study reveals that PSPETs, in their professional roles, are not marginalized largely

because of the versatility of their roles, particularly in the organizational culture of Hong Kong primary schools. More importantly, unlike secondary school teachers, primary school teachers (including physical education teachers) in Hong Kong are not regarded as “subject specialists”. They are normally expected to teach 3-5 subjects in their schools in accordance to government (education bureau) policy. On the contrary, PSPETs play such a variety of major roles working as 1) teachers in courses such as English, Mathematics, Chinese, and Information Technology, 2) disciplinary teachers, 3) coaches, 4) administrators, and 5) managers of various sports teams. It is indeed true that some PSPETs are more willing to take on more roles than just those subjects they teach. All of these roles enable PSPETs to be organizationally and professionally diversified. In consequence, almost all PSPETs gain their status through teaching other subjects and playing other more diverse roles outside physical education. Although Diversifying (Professionalism) is an intrinsic part of a PSPETs’ life, certain concepts within this diversification category (professional status, sources of satisfaction and versatile roles) could cause PSPETs to suffer “professional amnesia” (Guedes, 2007) and forget that physical education is the basis of their professional lives.

#### **5.3.4     *Assimilating (Career Trajectory)***

The above three categories are key influences on the PSPETs’ career trajectories. The Assimilating category consists of four concepts that best describe the aims, descriptions and conceptualizations of the PSPETs’ career trajectories. They are (1) characteristics of the organization, (2) self-orientation of career, (3) other obligations, and (4) career aspirations.

***Characteristics of organization*** relates to how PSPETs feel they need to thoroughly understand the genuine culture, history and background of the organization, which affect their careers as a whole.

***Self-orientation of career*** relates to how PSPETs position themselves and their careers within their organizations, and with their organization’s understanding.

***Other obligations*** refer to how PSPETs adjust and alternate their obligations, and as a result,

shape their career paths.

***Career aspiration*** refers to PSPETs' plans and ambitions to further contribute to their profession.

#### ***5.3.4.1 Characteristics of Organization***

PSPETs' careers are greatly influenced by the characteristics of the organization that they work for. The culture, history, religion and background of the organization are key concerns for PSPETs during their entire career trajectory. The first and most essential concern is brought up by Toby (R3) whose school was affiliated to a religious institution. This affiliation affected his career prospects. He claimed:

Further promotion would not make a big difference. The next position would be the vice-principal and then the principal. But in this school I cannot be promoted to the position of principal as I am not a Christian...May be this hinders my development of qualities needed in a principal. But I think I should equip myself first, so that I can take up the same position in another organization.

Every school has its own culture and uniqueness. Chunk's (R4) school size caused a large exodus of professional teachers from the school.

In the first three years ... there were four classes. Then the number of classes was cut down to two. This situation has remained the same for 4 years and once there was only one class. Now we have two classes ... many teachers searched for a new job, especially those that had the ability to transfer ... Although I am in a permanent post, the rule is that the latecomers have to leave first.

The above evidence is found to be consistent with Pang's (2004) comments that "teachers' feelings about school life were largely and significantly affected by school characteristics" (p. 78). Particularly, a school's religious affiliation and culture have major implications for a PSPET's career.

#### ***5.3.4.2 Self-orientation of Career***

If PSPETs remain only within "the practical context of teaching physical education, their career opportunities are severely limited" (Armour & Jones, 1998, p. 18). PSPETs may be

faced with decisions, effectively relocating them in administrative roles or other subject roles (Moreira et al., 1995), as they progress through their careers. For instance, Thornley's (R10) principal requested him to choose mathematics for his further professional development, which was not his preference. Later, he was persuaded to accept this position, influenced by the school's decision and direction.

The principal asked me to make a choice between Mathematics and Chinese, I picked Mathematics. I am now studying a Mathematics course at XXX University. I made different choices in my career path and it changed me a lot. (Thornley, R10)

Thornley (R10) continued:

I would be a bit disappointed if I had to teach several subjects in the following years. I studied SSPE (physical education) because I am interested in it. The present situation is not something I want. On the other hand, I don't think it would be positive to teach only PE. I have to possess teaching skills in different subjects to survive. I hope that I could have more PE lessons rather than having them as only a small part of my teaching schedule. I would be satisfied if PE could take up half of my teaching life.

As predicted by Lawson (1983), PSPETs enter a workplace determined to "do a good job" but they are also well aware that this might be difficult. Despite the fact that PSPETs have gone through different stages in their career in terms of promotion, their career orientation is still vulnerable to influence. Justin (R7) did not have a career plan when he first started working ten years ago. He started planning when he was promoted to a panel chair, as he was studying at that time. He was quite energetic and motivated. He lost his direction when promoted to the post of vice-principal. The fact is echoed by Sikes et al. (1985) who view mid-career teachers in particular as more prone to becoming stuck in the profession. Justin (R7) explained that:

Maybe I am tired. I do not want to be promoted further. I haven't thought of changing my career either. Perhaps I am stuck. Also I am quite busy and I do not have much time to think about my career plan.

Winnie (R1) planned every step of her career beforehand. She knew which position best suited her interest and ability:

Actually when the position of curriculum development officer opened up, I was the activity officer at the time, but I found myself interested in that post and ended up becoming the curriculum development officer. Now that our vice principal is retiring soon and I know the principal has considered some other possibilities for me long before this, like whether I can be a successor to the vice-principal.

Conversely, Eagle (R11) realized that she was not interested in administrative duties. She shifted her focus to teaching. She added:

I always ask myself, “What do you really want to be?” ... I like helping people. That makes me happy. I like answering students’ questions. Indeed I am just working whenever necessary ... I think the main factor affecting my choice is my character. I don’t like administrative work.

Thornley (R10) expressed a different view. He has no intention of being promoted either, as he perceives this as:

... paying much effort with little result. By earning more money, but more work and less personal time, I don’t think it is the way we should live. I prefer more personal time and life. After all, I am working for myself.

#### **5.3.4.3 Other Obligations**

Unlike other subject teachers, PSPETs have a wider range of expertise in practicing their profession by actively participating in sporting and coaching activities. John (R2) enjoyed his coaching job as an outside practice in the Hong Kong Football Association after normal school hours. John played a key role in the association and believed that:

The fulfillment does not completely come from the school. Since I have also done a lot in the football association, I believe what I have done over the past ten or more years have won approval from many people. Indeed, a lot of the new teachers were my students in the soccer association before.

Not surprisingly, Winnie (R1), Rose (R5), Jeddi (R8) and Eagle (R11) have more obligations — they are also housewives — apart from their professions. This echoes the view that female teachers typically seek to integrate their domestic and professional responsibilities and identities into their work lives (Lightfoot, 1983).



Thornley (R10) was a former athlete in rope skipping and contributed most of his personal time to developing and coaching rope skipping at the elite level, apart from his work responsibilities. Similarly, Jeddi (R8) uses her professional skills in her personal life by serving regularly as an international judge of Judo as a way of making a contribution to society. She claims:

The school does not support me for acting as a judge; I have to take my own personal leave for competitions in Hong Kong and other countries.

Justin (R7) had a different experience. He also served as an international judge at basketball competitions in Hong Kong and other countries. He exclaimed:

I once represented Hong Kong as an international judge. I found it easier to get approval in the past...but when I was promoted to this post (vice-principal) ... I realized that this may affect my career path.

It is a common truth that coaching and officiating outside of their work lives are activities that PSPETs can find satisfying, and that these activities can contribute to their professions.

However, in reality, PSPETs' obligations regarding these activities may eventually affect their career prospects. In congruence with Lawson's (1983) theoretical work on occupational socialization, PSPETs have participated extensively in sporting activities outside school in which aiding others has considerable emphasis.

#### **5.3.4.4 Career Aspirations**

Even though, as Johns and Dimmock (1999) state, Hong Kong's society is deeply rooted within Confucian social values, and academic achievements have long been highly valued, PSPETs' career aspirations depend highly on whether their positions are tenured or contract posts. Thornley (R10) spoke on this issue from an experience he had at the beginning of his career:

A tenured post is more secure and stable. A person in a contract post can be fired without much explanation. I think a permanent post is more secure. I would be brave enough to speak up about my own opinion. Contract staff would have more misgivings as they must consider the job as their first priority.

In the Chinese Confucian culture, PSPETs felt more comfortable and safe if they obtained a tenured post in their career. However, another obstacle which blocks PSPETs from aspiring to higher career positions may be akin to John's (R2) explanation:

I have not pursued further degrees and that perhaps is why I am not willing to advance further.

Mid-career PSPETs see things differently; John (R2) further explained his situation:

There are so many policies that have consumed the energy of teachers with much non-teaching work. We must do it despite our unwillingness and that is discouraging... If I considered changing my career... Perhaps I would do business.

It has become increasingly difficult for PSPETs to face up to a situation in which their career aspirations are "blocked" (Sparkes & Templin, 1990). A PSPET's career aspiration can, however, take a very conservative approach. Take Winnie (R1) as an example. She did not have a definite time plan for herself, nor a plan about which level she should or would attain. She only thought about whether or not she could fulfill the job requirements well. This may relate back to Lawson's (1988) statement that physical education teachers are quite conservative, and the causes for this may be traced to their professional and occupational socialization. Rose (R5), as a traditional housewife, prioritizes her family's needs. Her career comes second. She stated that:

I do not have the motivation to work on a panel. I like teaching but I don't like handling administration work. I bring up my children and both of them are well-behaved. That is my life's happiest achievement.

In addition, Holly (R6) considered the relationship between colleagues an important factor with regard to her career aspirations. She claimed that promotion might create rivalry and hurt the relationships between her and her colleagues. Similarly, John (R2) claimed that:

Promotion is done more privately than publicly. I personally don't think praising someone's achievement's publicly is appropriate, because it may upset some other staff members.

This can be regarded as the key concept of "good relationships of neighborhood"《睦鄰》 that is unswervingly found in Chinese Confucian culture (Brown, 2004). When career prospects

come to a matter for consideration, relationships and cultural assimilation are more pertinent to an individual's choice of self-representation in an organization.

In addition to the results of this study, out of 11 PSPETs, 3 PSPETs worked as vice-principals and 5 PSPETs worked as panel heads or in functional posts, such as head of the disciplinary committee. This reflects that findings from international research, claiming that physical education teachers are in a “no-win situation” and suffer from a lack of representation in a school’s senior management (Armour & Jones, 1998; & Sparkes & Templin, 1990), may not speak to the Hong Kong situation. It seems that PSPETs acclimatize well to the characteristics of their organizations and have a clear self-orientation of career. However, it is undoubtedly the case that PSPETs’ career development is mainly by diversifying outside, and in addition to, their subject – physical education. There are always chances for PSPETs to move along and up, career-wise.

#### **5.3.4.5 *Summary of Assimilating (Career Trajectory)***

The concepts of (1) characteristics of the organization, (2) self-orientation of career, (3) other obligations, and (4) career aspirations - are clustered under a category called “Assimilating”. This category forms part of the Theory of “Diversified Adaptation” which consists of three other distinct categories. These concepts describe PSPETs’ career aims and conceptualization of their career trajectory. The findings relate to the fourth specific research question: What are PSPETs’ career aims and how do they describe and conceptualize their career trajectories? With respect to this specific research question, the data can be summarized as follows:

- Though 6 out of a total of 11 PSPETs were already in a high ranking position, such as vice- principal or panel head, 4 out of these 6 PSPETs stated that religion was a barrier to the further advancement of their careers.
- All PSPETs do not have a clear short-term, medium-term, or even long-term career plan. Interestingly, 5 of the total of 6 male PSPETs in this study responded that if

they considered changing their occupation, the setting up of their own business would be their preferred option.

- The PSPETs' career development is mainly by diversifying outside or in addition to their subject – physical education.
- When considering retirement, most PSPETs wished to sustain their career as a professional teacher until the official retirement age of 60. However, two female PSPETs planned to quit before that stage, at an undisclosed time in the future, for family reasons.
- All the PSPETs felt satisfied that their present school was a good place to work. One female PSPET kept looking for a better place to work, from the viewpoint of the professional teacher; however, she finally chose to stay in her present school as she claimed that every school has its flaws.

This discussion has shown how the PSPETs adapt their career paths, influenced by the characteristics of their organization, their self-orientation towards their careers, the prioritization of their other obligations and their career aspirations. The necessities of PSPETs' adaptation to new and unforeseen situations may bring about durable transformation of the "habitus" on which "the 'assimilatory' capacity of the habitus is power of adaptation" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 87). PSPETs choice to enter the teaching of physical education as a profession began with a youthful interest in, and enthusiasm for, sport. The influences and relationships that they perceived — the organization's characteristics, self-orientation towards their career, obligations and career aspirations — were clearly implicated in their career choice and path.

Although Evans and Williams (1989) argue that institutionalized patterns of disadvantage for physical education teachers exist, based on the subject's lack of academic status, the PSPETs in this study reveal that such disadvantage can be overcome. Indeed, professionalism in the Hong Kong school system can be enhanced along with status, but usually by physical education teachers diversifying their roles and responsibilities out of PE. Furthermore, by

adapting to the diverse nature of their job and by overcoming the otherwise limited scope of their work, the PSPETs can assimilate more closely into the culture and context of the organization.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation along with a detailed discussion of its categories and subcategories. It has presented data collected through four specific research questions and has examined: (1) the PSPETs' description of their work and feelings about their typical daily work lives; (2) the PSPETs' perception of their personal and professional identities in their schools; (3) the PSPETs' socialization and professional experiences; and finally (4) the PSPETs' career aims and description of their career trajectories. The researcher has addressed each of these themes in turn, using interview data and supporting literature.

In drawing together all the evidence, despite the fact that 9 out of a total of 11 PSPETs welcome administrative work and 2 PSPETs do not, it seems reasonable to surmise that PSPETs have diversified in and adapted to all aspects of their professional lives within a continuing, evolving scenario of education reforms. The various factors revealed by the evidence are grouped into four categories. They are (1) *switching*, (2) *interplaying*, (3) *diversifying*, and (4) *assimilating*. Moreover, there are many interrelationships between the factors that can only be understood when the evidence is viewed as a composite picture. The following chapter will discuss propositions based on a typology of participants; it represents the final set of propositions that relate to the theory of "Diversified Adaptation". The conclusions, implications and recommendations of this study will be presented in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### A TYPOLOGY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN HONG KONG

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapters have discussed the process of data collection and analysis from which a theory of Diversified Adaptation has emerged. This theory can be used to answer the following research questions: (1) How do PSPETs describe their work and how do they feel about their typical daily work lives? (2) How do PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve? (3) How do PSPETs describe their socialization and professional experiences? (4) What are PSPETs' career aims and how do they describe and conceptualize their career trajectories?

The present chapter is comprised of three main sections. Following this introduction, a description of the nature of typologies will be provided. The second section discusses the typology of PSPETs as Engagers, Adherers or Dissenters and explains each type of PSPET's different reactions to the following four distinct categories: (1) switching; (2) interplaying; (3) diversifying; and (4) assimilating. The last section summarizes the generation of a typology of PSPETs that underpins the Theory of Diversified Adaptation used in this study. The following gives a brief overview of the nature of typologies and their use in studies which are based on an interpretivist methodological framework.

#### **6.2 The Nature of Typologies**

This study of the professional lives of primary school physical education teachers in Hong Kong reveals that the participant PSPETs experienced both similarities and differences in their socialization and professionalization processes, and as a result, "diversified adaptation" can be interpreted in a variety of ways among PSPETs. Their capacity to adapt

acts as the core factor when exploring PSPETs' working lives, their identities, socialization and professional experiences and ultimately their career trajectories. These divergent patterns formed a typology for PSPETs in Hong Kong that is presented in this study as “engagers”, “adherers” and “dissenters”. This typology represents three types of PSPETs who have adapted to organizational change and adjusted to new conditions and diversely managed their work lives – all in different ways.

In many qualitative studies, types are constructed in order to apprehend and explain the complex world in a meaningful way (Kluge, 2000). Every typology is the result of a grouping process: an object field is divided into a number of groups or types with the help of one or more attributes (Bailey, 1994). Every typology is “based on an attribute space which results from the combination of the selected attributes and their dimensions” (Kluge, 2000, p. 2). Previous research has produced numerous teacher typologies. Warren (1969), for example, came up with a typology for ethnographic research on the teaching experience. Through teaching experience outside the classroom, sociocultural forces and classroom teaching behaviour, Warren (1969) illustrates various dichotomies, such as “professional-bureaucratic” and “authoritarian-democratic”, reflecting and reinforcing values about teaching that teachers encountered. Dreyfus et al. (1989) examined teachers' modes of participation in school systems, culminating in a teacher typology formed around individual response to self-renewal efforts: activists; arrogant anti-leaders; conservatives; helpless fatalists; the insecure; impatient-impulsives; authentically committed; and floating indifferents. Oxford et al. (1998) constructed a variety of metaphors to describe teachers, especially language teachers, such as “Teacher as Conduit”, “Teacher as Nurturer” and “Teacher as Competitor”. Halonen (2001) constructed a set of dichotomous constructs seeing teachers who teach at college level as “sage on the stage” or “guide on the side”, describing teachers who break traditional rules of teaching effectiveness to great advantage. More recently, based on an analysis of the characteristics of teacher reflection, Luttenberg and Bergen (2008) examine the actual practice of teachers and show a clear preference for closed types of pragmatic and ethical

reflection over open or moral reflection.

The PSPET typology used in this study is descriptive and aims to develop an understanding of PSPETs' professional lives rather than to identify cause-effect relationships or promote general theories. It is also important to note that the analysis is not intended to objectively explain how PSPETs manage their professional lives and how they see their careers but, from an in-depth examination of the data and using grounded themes as a basis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), to identify the subjective and enacted meanings that emerge that may make sense of PSPETs' professional lives.

In this study, three types of PSPETs were identified: Engagers, Adherers and Dissenters. Each type will be elaborated and described separately in the coming sections. This typology is based upon PSPETs' different reactions towards four distinct categories: (1) switching, (2) interplaying, (3) diversifying and (4) assimilating.

PSPETs are professionals who are willing to accept changes as Engagers, Adherers or Dissenters. Each of these three groups is diligent and assiduous, but each reacts to change differently. PSPETs continually switch roles and job levels in their typical work lives. They also perceive how their multiple identities interplay in the schools in which they work. They have to possess multi-dimensional knowledge and are socialized and professionalized in a diversity of ways. In terms of career trajectory, this study shows that PSPETs have deeply internalized traditional Confucian values and culture which manifests itself in a lack of assertiveness when it comes to seeking promotion or moving up the hierarchy in their schools. It showed them to be patient and passive on the issue of their seniority and in relation to changing the organizational culture within their schools. The relationship between the types and categories of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation is presented in Table 6.1, which promotes an understanding of the conceptual distinction between the types.



**Table 6.1: The Relationship between the Types and Categories of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation**

Ideal Types	Categories			
	Switching	Interplaying	Diversifying	Assimilating
<b>Engager</b> <i>Winnie (R1),</i> <i>John (R2),</i> <i>Justin (R7)</i> <i>and Kenny (R9)</i>	Bring more of their personal lives into their work lives	There is an interplay between their identities and those of their organization and colleagues	Accept more diversified changes in their work lives	More positive in relation to their career development
	Label: self-rectifying, affirming, empowering and committing			
<b>Adherer</b> <i>Toby (R3),</i> <i>Holly (R6) and</i> <i>Thornley (R10)</i>	Works cooperatively to follow changes in school culture and external environment	Compromise to maintain harmonious relationships between colleagues and school	More likely to fulfill their professional and organizational duties in school	Cooperatively follow the practices and cultures within their schools and are ready to move if required
	Label: following, cooperating, fulfilling and compromising			
<b>Dissenter</b> <i>Chunk (R4),</i> <i>Rose (R5),</i> <i>Jeddi (R8) and</i> <i>Eagle (R11)</i>	More concerned about how their personal lives clash with their work lives	Perceive more conflicts in relation to their multiple identities	Feel more disappointed with changes which affect their professionalism	Consider more obligations and commitments other than their career
	Label: clashing, conflicting, disappointing and resisting			

In this study, the Theory of Diversified Adaptation is enriched and enhanced by the examination of situations and experiences in which individual PSPETs acted in ways which were both consistent and inconsistent with the type to which they had been categorized. Specific examples of these situations and experiences are presented in the following sections.

### **6.3 The Engagers [Winnie (R1), John (R2), Justin (R7) and Kenny (R9)]**

In general, the above PSPETs fall into the *engager* category, which includes such adaptive behaviour characteristics as self-rectifying, affirming, empowering and committing. PSPETs classified as Engagers are heavily involved in their daily work lives and are deeply

committed to their profession, their school and their professional development. In this study, Winnie (R1), John (R2), Justin (R7) and Kenny (R9) fall into this category. The following discusses the relationships among the types of PSPETs and the four categories that support the Theory of Diversified Adaptation.

### ***6.3.1 The relationship between Engagers and the switching category***

The properties of the switching category show how Engagers describe their work and feel about their typical daily work lives. Under the present trend of current education reforms, Engagers realize that it is inevitable that they will have to undergo irregular work hours and heavy workloads. They consider their private lives to be as much a part of their professional lives as their work lives. One example of such adaptive behaviour is Winnie (R1) switching her work and personal lives when she drives home from school at seven o'clock in the evening, still thinking about what she needs to do and teach the following day. When she is shopping, she may buy things she considers good for school. Another is Kenny (R9) who is fully committed to his work even though his school is still on the old half-day system. He volunteered to be the only teacher in charge of extra-curricular activities during the summer holidays causing him to claim that he hardly gets any time off throughout the year. PSPETs who fall into the category of Engagers are committed totally to their jobs in a variety of different ways and levels and are more likely to accept irregular working hours than other types of PSPETs.

### ***6.3.2 The relationship between Engagers and the interplaying category***

The properties of the interplaying category show how Engagers perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve. Unlike the other types of PSPETs, Engagers enjoy a particularly positive relationship with their colleagues and students, and especially with their superiors. There is also more likely to be interplay or switching between their identities in the organization. An example of such an adaptation included the

rise in status through curriculum reforms that John (R2) had experienced. He was proud to indicate that most colleagues considered him a responsive teacher whose views on the PE curriculum were well respected in staff meetings, at which he believed his contribution was valued. Justin (R7) who is considered popular with colleagues enjoys bonding with them to strengthen his status and professional identity. As a vice principal he believes that communication is essential among colleagues when it comes to reforming the way subjects are taught, so that better results are achieved and everyone is happy. PSPETs as Engagers are more affirmed by the status they have built and their contributions to their schools than are other types of PSPETs.

### **6.3.3      *The relationship between Engagers and the diversifying category***

The properties of diversifying show how Engagers describe their socialization and professional experiences. They are highly aware of, and committed to, the multiple roles involved in their professional lives and share a readiness to accept changes and reforms to the education system and curriculum. They are also fully aware of, and exploit, the importance of professional development as a way of maintaining their status within their profession. An example of such adaptation is the versatility demonstrated by Winnie (R1). She has devoted herself to being a physical education teacher and coach as well as an administrator. She is content because she has been given the autonomy to do what she wants, although she did indicate that she felt disappointed that the EB (Education Bureau) did not recognize that she and her colleagues work successfully as a team. In addition to her other roles, Winnie (R1), who has a Master of Philosophy in Sport Science, is committed to her professional development in the area of sport science - through reading newly published journals in her leisure time. John (R1) stated that he is not marginalized in school because he is a physical education teacher, but rather sees himself as having important responsibilities within the school. His reputation in coaching football is also rewarding within school and around the

Hong Kong region. PSPETs who are Engagers feel more empowered by the versatility of their roles and their professional status than other types of PSPETs.

#### **6.3.4      *The relationship between Engagers and the assimilating category***

The properties of the assimilating category show how Engagers describe and conceptualize their career trajectories. Since they are sensitive to how their organizations work, they are adept at positioning themselves within them in order to further their career paths. They also know exactly what they are looking for in career terms. Examples of adaptive behaviours include John (R6) and Kenny (R9). They are both already in middle management positions within their schools with John (R2) serving as Head of the Discipline Section and Kenny (R9) as Head of the Physical Education Section. They are thoroughly committed to their current roles and do not seek further advancement as this is not a priority for them. John (R2) is satisfied with coaching football in school and elsewhere in Hong Kong and Kenny (R9) believes that his interest lies in developing and managing swimming training as an extra-curricular activity, believing the amount of time he devotes to it is worthwhile as his career is almost at an end. Unlike John (R2) and Kenny (R9), Winnie (R1) maximizes her strengths in all aspects of her work. She positions herself within the school and thinks about how she can best fulfill her job requirements in order to realize her desired career path, despite the fact that she claims that she needs time to prepare herself for further advancement. Engager PSPETs are more committed and satisfied professionally, as a result of their self-orientation towards career and career aspirations than other types of PSPETs.

#### **6.4    *The Adherers [Toby (R3), Holly (R6) and Thornley (R10)]***

This type of PSPET particularly demonstrates the *adhering* characteristics of cooperating, fulfilling and compromising. PSPETs classified as Adherers are loyal to the schools they work in and dutifully follow the organization's expectations. In this study, Toby (R3), Holly (R6) and Thornley (R10) most closely represented the Adherer type. The following discusses

the relationships between this type of PSPET and the four categories that support the Theory of Diversified Adaptation.

#### **6.4.1      *The relationship between Adherers and the switching category***

The properties of the switching category show how Adherers describe their work and feel about their work lives. They tend to follow the performance expectations set by the school organization, rather than strive to exceed them or risk not meeting them. Even though the nature of their work involves irregular working hours, which they dutifully accept, they strive to make the most of their personal lives outside of work. They follow their work plans and guidelines which list the tasks and activities to occur in each period. Holly (R6) is an example of an adherer. She indicated that all she has to do is just follow a School Based Management (SBM) plan. Like other PSPETs, Toby (R3) manages to strike a balance between his work and family life despite his school assigning him the development of IT (information technology), while his prime job remains a physical education teacher. Although he claimed that he had not agreed to this change, he has adjusted to it well and it suits his work life. Thornley (R10) found himself in a similar situation in that he was given instructions and guidelines when he first joined the school. However, he claimed that the guidelines and instructions change from time to time, yet he sticks to the new guidelines even though they are not always to his liking. Adherer PSPETs are more likely to follow guidelines and cooperate in their work lives that involve multi-level job specifications, irregular work hours and heavy workloads, than other types of PSPETs.

#### **6.4.2      *The relationship between Adherers and the interplaying category***

The properties of the interplaying category show how Adherers perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve. Adherers tend to have more harmonious relationships with their colleagues and schools and they believe that their cooperative approach helps establish their position – than is the case with the other types. An example of this is Thornley (R10), who spends the time allocated by the school management

team on the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) even though he thinks the extensive training of students for the TSA is meaningless and a waste of time. Based on his personal characteristics, he further claimed that he is unable to exert much influence on others and that the principal is the one who makes decisions for him to follow. Toby's (R3) experience is similar in that he has worked cooperatively with others as his role has shifted from that of coach to coordinator and from physical education teacher to a teacher of other subjects. As a result of the interplay and switching between various identities, he indicated that it is his relationship with colleagues that is the key to contentment in his working life because colleagues play an important role in helping him deal with work-related stress. Holly (R6) also indicated that she has a good relationship with her colleagues. She felt that she identifies with the school because the staff is a cohesive group that will gather on a social basis even during holidays, even though she sometimes disagrees with the school's senior management. Adherer PSPETs are more cooperative and contributive in terms of their expertise than other types of PSPETs.

#### **6.4.3      *The relationship between Adherers and the diversifying category***

The properties of the diversifying category show how Adherers describe their socialization and professional experiences. They are often content to fulfill their professional obligations in a cooperative way, with their main motivation and satisfaction being derived from their students' academic and athletic achievements. Thornley (R10) is an example of an adherer. He indicated that despite the fact that he gets more satisfaction from teaching physical education and coaching sports in school, he has taken his principal's advice and has furthered his professional development in Maths. Toby's (R3) situation is similar. He has had no alternative but to choose Information Technology as a subject for professional development in accordance with the wishes of the school's senior management. He indicated that he is not able to contribute more to physical education within the school even though this is his area of expertise that would benefit the students more. As Adherers, both Thornley (R10)

and Toby (R3) are more organizationally socialized than professionally socialized because they claim they are teachers of physical education in their particular schools. In dealing with trends arising from education reforms, Holly (R6) is discouraged by not being allowed to attend courses and seminars that are held on schooldays because the school management says they cannot find substitute teachers. Because of her sensitivity to the organizational atmosphere, she has accepted their decisions and conformed to her school's guidelines claiming every organization has its flaws. Adherer PSPETs are more governed or fulfilled by the decisions they make that relate to their organizations than are other types of PSPETs.

#### **6.4.4      *The relationship between Adherers and the assimilating category***

The properties of the assimilating category show how Adherers describe and conceptualize their career trajectories. In regard to their career paths, Adherers would be prepared to move if the organization required them to do so, or they would remain in their current positions. For example, Thornley (R10) stated that he did not have a clear career objective when he entered the profession and this remains the case. He sees himself as a bread-winner who is skilled only in the teaching of physical education. At one time he thought of applying for promotion, but without considering what the post entailed his only consideration was the salary. He indicated that he was content with his current work life and that he didn't want to earn more money because this would mean more work and less family time. Holly's (R6) experience is worth noting. She claims that her career prospects are highly dependent on winning medals for her school. If the sports team was to win a gold medal, not a silver one, she may have a chance of promotion. On the other hand, she believed that promotion may spoil the good relationship she has with her colleagues. Like Thornley (R10), Holly (R6) felt satisfied with her current position and was happy to remain in it. Adherer PSPETs are less ambitious in terms of their career aspirations and have more of a tendency to be placed, and stay, in a niche regarding their careers than other types of PSPETs.

## **6.5 The Dissenters [Chunk (R4), Rose (R5), Jeddi (R8) and Eagle (R11)]**

These PSPETs display more of the characteristics of the *dissenting* category, including clashing, conflicting, disappointing and resisting – than do other types. PSPETs classified as Dissenters tend to be out of step with the prevailing culture and values of their schools, and often disagree with their colleagues and the organization as a whole. In this study, Chunk (R4), Rose (R5), Jeddi (R8) and Eagle (R11) fall into this category. The following discusses the relationships between this type of PSPET and the four categories that support the Theory of Diversified Adaptation.

### **6.5.1 The relationship between Dissenters and the switching category**

The properties of the switching category show how Dissenters describe their work and how they feel about their typical daily work lives. They disagree with many of their organizations' policies and initiatives. Eagle (R11) is an example of a dissenter. She claimed her work life clashes with her personal life because she had no idea of the scope of the work when she first joined the school, especially in terms of the administrative work she is responsible for. She had not experienced such high levels of administration in previous schools. As a result, she imputes the sickness she experiences during weekends and long holidays to her work. Jeddi (R8) also indicated that administrative responsibilities affect her personal life and that she has had to bring her son to work with her on Saturdays. She also indicated that it was common for her to go to bed around 2 a.m. and wake up at 6 a.m. Dissenter PSPETs are more likely to experience conflict between the multi-level nature of their jobs, irregular work hours and heavy workloads and their personal lives than other types of PSPETs.

### **6.5.2 The relationship between Dissenters and the interplaying category**

The properties of the interplaying category show how Dissenters perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve. Jeddi (R8) is an example of this.



She indicated that she is unable to realize her lesson plan portfolio in PE lessons because of stubborn colleagues that she is unable to work with. Jeddi's (R8) frustration is made worse by her belief that the principal does not value her and rejects her ideas, scolding her for everything she does. Rose's (R5) experience is also worth noting. She left a school that she had taught in for seventeen year and began working in a new environment. Her experience in her new school is totally different in terms of the identities that she interplays. As she is planning to retire when her husband retires, she does not identify with her new school and her relationship with her colleagues is rather superficial. In addition, as a new teacher approaching retirement, the physical education panel chairperson is unwilling to delegate much professional work to her, even though she held the same position in her previous school. Dissenter PSPETs experience more conflict in relation to their status and contribution of their expertise than other types of PSPETs.

### **6.5.3      *The relationship between Dissenters and the diversifying category***

The properties of the diversifying category show how Dissenters describe their socialization and professional experiences. They work diligently to safeguard their family's incomes and are driven by the satisfaction they derive from their students, especially in outside of school activities. In contrast to other types of PSPETs, Dissenters are more satisfied with their personal or professional commitments outside of school, as they are often able to establish themselves as professionals in activities outside of school that give them more satisfaction. Jeddi (R8) provided an example of such an adaptation. She thought about a career change but in the end decided to remain in her current position when she realized that in reality she would be paid far less if she changed occupation. She made a lot of mistakes in the early stage of her career that caused her superiors to be angry with her and because of this and the characteristics of the organization, she chose to develop her professional skills in Judo. She now judges in the sport in Hong Kong and internationally. Similarly, Chunk (R4) felt that his professional contribution was not appreciated by his immediate superior even though his

principal supported the development of physical education. He gets more satisfaction from coaching basketball outside of school. With regard to physical education in school, professional development is not a high priority for Chunk (R4), Rose (R5) or Jeddi (R8). They have come to realize that further advancement of this field is not required by, or likely in, their schools. Due to a lack of organizational sensitivity, dissenter PSPETs are less satisfied with their status than other types of PSPETs.

#### **6.5.4      *The relationship between Dissenters and the assimilating category***

The properties of the assimilating category show how Dissenters describe and conceptualize their career trajectories. Though all PSPETs work irregular hours, Dissenters focus more on personal or professional commitments outside of their current jobs. In addition, they have a degree of self-regulation and independence in their work, and this keeps them working in the field. Chunk (R4), who is an example of this adaptation, stated that the policy is that those recruited last have to leave first if conditions dictate. He is a permanent member of staff in his school but has never been promoted. He indicated that he regretted not being employed at the right time and that he would consider transferring to another school and working harder if his efforts were appreciated. However, he further stated that he resists working to gain promotion because he does not believe that promotion brings happiness. Similarly, two married female PSPETs, Rose (R5) and Eagle (R11), put their personal and family lives ahead of their careers, even when they work irregular hours and have heavy workloads. They would be happy to resign at anytime in accordance with their husbands' wishes and in order to meet family needs and obligations. Dissenter PSPETs are less career orientated and have fewer career aspirations than other types of PSPETs.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Within the specific context of Hong Kong primary schools, this study has generated a typology of physical education teachers. Each of the three types embodies major differences in the emphasis given by the PSPETs to conceptualizations of their professional lives and careers. To further enhance and elaborate the Theory of Diversified Adaptation, detailed discussion of how each type relates to the four categories has been addressed. The generation of a typology for PSPETs also demonstrates the overall structure of the theory which best describes how PSPETs manage their professional lives and how they see their careers. A summary and conclusion, along with implications and recommendations will be presented in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong. It was carried out using inductive methods based on grounded theory, and sought to explain how a group of Hong Kong PSPETs managed their professional lives. An in-depth qualitative study generated a conceptual and theoretical framework towards this understanding. The main objective was to find out how PSPETs are socialized and professionalized as they experience changes to their personal and professional identity in their workplaces and in society. Such changes, it was anticipated, might have positive and/or negative influences on their professional lives, and in turn might eventually affect their career trajectories. Through grounded theory methodology, the study sought to construct a theory about the work lives of participant PSPETs, a process that led to the Theory of “diversified adaptation” of PSPETs in Hong Kong.

This final chapter consists of the following sections. The first is a summary of the entire study. This involves an overview of the aims and purposes of the study, the methodology employed and the theory that emerged as a result of the investigation. The second is a set of implications from the research findings for theory and practice. The third is a number of recommendations for further study. Finally, the overall conclusion of the thesis is presented.

#### 7.2 Summary of the Study

As this research set out to investigate the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong, the aim of this section is to provide a summary of the research process. The determination to conduct this research arose from the researcher’s curiosity about how PSPETs in Hong Kong

manage their professional lives. Although previous studies were valuable and provided a focus for this study, the researcher was well aware that those perceived experiences and findings did not provide a full explanation of how physical education teachers in Hong Kong go about their professional lives, taking into account of the Chinese culture of Hong Kong. Hong Kong PSPETs bear a heavy workload derived from teaching and administrative tasks, in a turbulent climate for education involving constant waves of curriculum reforms (Curriculum Development Council, 2004; & Sum, Chan & Ha, 2004). It is also common that PSPETs have a duty not only to teach PE classes, but also to teach up to three more academic subjects. PSPETs also have to coach sports teams as an additional duty compared with the other teachers.

To aid the discovery of a grounded theory, the central research question was formulated in the following terms:

“How do Hong Kong PSPETs manage their professional lives?”

In addressing this question, four specific research questions were posed:

1. How do PSPETs describe their work and how do they feel about their daily work lives?
2. How do PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve?
3. How do PSPETs describe their socialization and professional experiences?
4. What are PSPETs' career aims and how do they describe and conceptualize their career trajectories?

In order to construct an in-depth understanding of the professional lives of PSPETs, an inductive grounded theory methodology was employed. This was based on the meta-theory of symbolic interactionism, which assumes that people make sense of their worlds through social interaction, and the sharing of meanings with others. In the context of the present study, the assumption is that primary physical education teachers in Hong Kong make sense of their professional lives through their interactions and shared meanings, *inter alia*, with other teachers and students. Data for grounded theory methods were collected, coded and related,

with the intent to develop a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, that is, how physical education teachers make sense of their professional lives. A qualitative approach was appropriate for collecting descriptive and explanatory data as it enabled the researcher to delve into the ways in which PSPETs experience their working lives. Such an approach was found to be appropriate for studying the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs.

Furthermore, this study's research topic was based on the practices and interactions of subjects in everyday life, for which Strauss and Corbin (1998) state, "qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomenon such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods" (p. 11).

Potential participants were contacted by telephone and email to ask if they would agree to take part in the study. The PSPETs selected for this study were from a varied range of backgrounds that enriched the contexts for analysis. The sample (six males and five females) was drawn from different primary schools in Hong Kong. The respondents' ages ranged from the mid twenties to late fifties.

The researcher was able to gain ready access to the teacher participants and to closely interact with them, using semi-structured interviews and weekly diary recordings. Purposive sampling was employed in the open coding stage so that PSPETs with different personal and organizational backgrounds could be included. Through snowball or chain sampling (Patton, 1990), by asking interviewed respondents to recommend other PSPETs for the study at each round of data collection, the researcher was able to generate rich data. This method allowed for differences that unfolded between participants to be maximized, and consequently for relationships between categories to be more robustly tested and verified in the construction of theory. In addition, theoretical sampling was used to maximize opportunities to enrich the theoretical development of the thesis and to tell the storyline. According to Charmaz (2000), postpositivists assume an objective, external reality and differ from positivists in that they give their research subjects a voice that used to promote accuracy, validity and reliability.

The researcher taught in primary school as a physical education teacher for a short period some twenty years ago. For the last eight years, the researcher has served as a university teacher educator, training both primary and secondary school physical education teachers in Hong Kong. The researcher, therefore, has experienced the professional lives of physical education teachers from different perspectives – primary, secondary and tertiary. He became aware of the differences among his counterparts in terms of identity, socialization, professionalization and career trajectory, and it was his research interest in these interrelated concepts that triggered this study. At the same time, the researcher was highly aware of his own opinions on relevant professional issues related to the study, and their possible impact on this research. To avoid personal bias and to aim for interpretive understanding of subjects' own perspectives (Charmaz, 2000), the researcher attempted at key points in the study, to keep an open mind, and was willing to listen, and give voice to respondents in order to gain accurate findings and to corroborate them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). His regard for a number of procedures to increase trustworthiness has been made overt and explicit, especially in data collection and analysis chapters.

To secure quality of data collection, two pilot interviews were conducted to ensure that the interview questions were appropriate and to test the duration of each interview. After piloting the study, the interview questions were refined and modified. Throughout the entire study, the researcher sought to develop the trust and rapport of the participants. He found that since the interviews focused on participants' work lives, they were most willing to engage in the study. PSPETs were eager to describe their work lives and experiences. Theoretical sensitivity enabled the researcher to focus and facilitate questioning and probing that provided cues for exploring the informants' feelings and perceptions with regard to their professional experiences and to bring focus to the research.

All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. In the open coding stage, the interview transcripts together with memos and the diaries were broken down sentence by sentence to generate codes, which in turn were clustered to form categories and sub-categories through a

process of comparing their similarities and differences. In the axial coding stage, the data were re-constructed by seeking relationships between categories and subcategories. Finally, in selective coding, a core category that formed a common theme underpinning all categories, was selected, and which thus integrated all categories to form a storyline.

In order to capture the reality and develop an authentic understanding of how PSPETs manage their professional lives, analysis and interpretation of the data was then the most engaging facet of the study. The researcher's knowledge and experience were crucial to link different participants' stories, and they enabled him to ask relevant questions of the data. In addition, a review of the literature on the professionalization of physical education teachers prior to and during the study, revealed the extensive debate on the marginalization of physical education teachers, and this influenced the researcher's view considerably. As a result, the possibilities of category identification became wider and the categories became richer. Concept linkage also started to appear in the data.

During the process of data collection and analysis, memos and field notes were written, thus helping the formation of more robust categories. With continuous data analysis and the constant comparative method, a framework underpinning the phenomenon began to emerge – PSPETs “diversely adapt” their professional lives. Data collection ceased when nothing new appeared from additional interviewees, and when enough data had been collected to build a theory. Diagrams were used in order to provide visual representations of relationships between concepts and categories. Through this process a substantive Theory of “diversified adaptation” emerged – with respect and application to the participants.

As stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theories exist to be added to and refined. Within a certain context, the truth and reality in one circumstance might not be applicable to other times and contexts, or other individuals or groups. Although only a small number of physical education teachers in Hong Kong formed the sample, maximum variation was sought between them, so as to enrich the conceptualization of the emerging theory. The limitations of the study are particularly the sample size; and the fact that the interviews were conducted in



Cantonese and subsequently transcribed into English. However, hopefully the study provides sufficient in-depth data on the participants and their contexts to enable other researchers and readers to draw some inferences about the applicability of the findings to their contexts.

The process of substantive data collection began in April 2007 and continued until February 2008. It is claimed that prolonged engagement in the field adds trustworthiness to the study. In addition, to ensure that the study was credible, member checks were conducted by emailing interview transcripts and the analyzed data to the participants, who were asked to correct errors or inaccuracies in the transcripts and analyzed data. A few terms had to be revised in accordance with participants' feedback. As triangulation was also implemented in this study, the diaries were used for validating the incoming data from the interviews. As already mentioned, the researcher wrote memos to record suggested questions, thoughts, hypotheses and relationships, and diagrams were drawn to track back through the emerging theory. Through systematic record-keeping and ongoing evaluation of theories and findings, confirmability of the research findings was an uppermost consideration.

The major outcome and contribution of the present study was the construction of a grounded theory that describes how this cohort of PSPETs manages their professional lives. This Theory of Diversified Adaptation is the sociological process that explains how PSPETs manage their work lives. Through the four specific research questions, this study of the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong revealed that they share both similarities and differences through their socialization and professionalization processes. In this sense, the meaning and interpretation of diversified adaptation varies among the PSPETs. Their capacity for adaptation acts as the core factor in exploring the PSPETs' working lives, their identities, socialization and professional experiences, and ultimately their career trajectories.

Four dovetailing main categories emerged that were related specifically to the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs: (1) switching (work lives); (2) interplaying (identity); (3) diversifying (professionalism); and (4) assimilating (career trajectory).

The concepts of (1) multi-dimensional knowledge, (2) acclimatization to the organization, (3) reconcilable scope of work, (4) multi-level job specification, and (5) irregular work hours and workloads - are clustered into the Switching (Work Lives) category, which describes the PSPETs' feelings towards their work and their daily lives. PSPETs are experienced at switching from one role to another, filling the role of teacher, administrator, coach, event organizer, facility manager or clerical personnel. They adjust their scope of work and working duration, and "diversify and adapt" to their changing work lives.

The concepts of (1) contribution of expertise, (2) status construction, (3) negotiation, (4) bonding, and (5) personal characteristics - are clustered into the Interplaying (Identity) category, which describes the PSPETs' perception of their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve. Personal characteristics of PSPETs are reciprocally influenced by how PSPETs perceive their identities in the school in which they serve. Their bonding with colleagues and students, how they construct their status, their aspects of expertise in the school, and their negotiation ability are key concepts, which "interplay" with their professional and personal identities.

The concepts of (1) organizational sensitivity, (2) sources of satisfaction, (3) dealing with influential persons or critical incidents, (4) status of the profession, (5) educational reform as a trend, and (6) versatile roles - are clustered into the Diversifying (Professionalism) category, which describes PSPETs' socialization and professional experiences. PSPETs, in their professional roles, are not marginalized, largely because of the versatility of their roles. All of these roles enable PSPETs to be organizationally and professionally diversified. In consequence, almost all PSPETs gain their status through teaching other subjects and playing other more diverse roles outside physical education teaching.

The concepts of (1) characteristics of the organization, (2) self-orientation of career, (3) other obligations, and (4) career aspirations - are clustered into the Assimilating (Career Trajectory) category, which describes PSPETs' career aims and conceptualization of their career trajectory. PSPETs' choice to enter the teaching of physical education as a profession began

with a youthful interest in, and enthusiasm for, sport. The influences and relationships that they perceived — the organization's characteristics, self-orientation towards their career, obligations and career aspirations — were clearly implicated in their career choice and path. In drawing together all the evidence, PSPETs have diversified in and adapted to all aspects of their professional lives within a continuing, evolving scenario of education reforms. Analysis of data for each of the participants across all of the main categories revealed patterns or associations that formed into three clusters or types. These gave rise to a threefold typology of participant physical education teachers in Hong Kong primary schools: the three identifiable types are labelled as: "Engagers", "Adherers" and "Dissenters". This typology represents three types of PSPETs in terms of the diverse ways in which they have managed their work lives, adapted to organizational and educational change, and adjusting to new conditions. PSPETs classified as Engagers are heavily involved in all aspects of their daily work lives and are deeply committed to their profession, their school and their professional development. PSPETs classified as Adherers are loyal to the schools they work in and dutifully follow the organization's expectations, but no more. PSPETs classified as Dissenters tend to be out of step with the prevailing culture and values of their schools, and often disagree – either tacitly or openly, with their colleagues and the organization as a whole. The major contributions and implications of this study are further elaborated in the following section.

### **7.3 Implications for Theory**

As Glaser and Strauss (1967) have emphasized, grounded theory exists to be added to and refined; what is interpreted as "truth" and "reality" in one period of time, within a certain context, may not represent the entire truth and reality in other times and contexts, or for different sets of participants. The explorations undertaken in this study expand the notions of professionalization of physical education teachers. With the aim of developing theory further,

it is hoped that the Grounded Theory of Diversified Adaptation will form the basis for further development of knowledge in the area of the professionalization of teachers of physical education.

People act on the basis of meanings which are reciprocally shared among individuals in social situations. Meanings emerge from social interaction and are continually modified through the interpretative process (Stryker, 1967). The symbolic interactionist perspective thus provides the basis of the Theory of Diversified Adaptation. Participant physical education teachers make sense of their identities, socialization experiences and career trajectories only after shared meanings with other stakeholders, mostly in the school as workplace. The questions addressed in this research are based on the symbolic interactionist perspective that differences in the professional lives of PSPETs are determined largely by their socially negotiated identities and socialization experiences which in turn affect their career trajectories. Through the mutual negotiation of meaning and the exchange of language and symbols, individuals shape one another, their social structure, and society itself. And in the end, social structure and society are always in flux, constantly engaged in mutual influence and redefinition (Blumer, 1967).

In respect of the contribution to existing knowledge, the findings of the present study could also have relevance for other bodies of theoretical literature. The Theory of Diversified Adaptation could have implications for the literature on the concept of “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977), particularly in regard to how PSPETs respond to the interaction of their personal dispositions and the external environment. This assumes that individuals develop these dispositions in response to the conditions they encounter. The social structures are then produced and reproduced through habitus. According to Bourdieu (1977), “habitus” is a battery of durable, transposable but also mutable dispositions to all aspects of life that are often sub-conscious and tacit (Bourdieu, 1977).

The findings of this study are thus presented from a sociological perspective of how PSPETs manage their professional lives. As with all grounded theory research, this study requires

further exploration of the propositions, assumptions and discoveries described. Specifically, further qualitative work in the area of the theory and concepts that were identified as well as the propositions describing the relationships among categories would further articulate and support the findings of this study.

Hence, the categories, processes and concepts which comprise the Theory of Diversified Adaptation may inform the literature on “sociological perspectives” (Green, 2000 & Green, 2002) and “life histories” (Sparkes et al., 1993) of physical education teachers. They may – to a larger or lesser degree - be applicable or transferable to other teachers as they adapt to educational and organizational change in other settings. In particular, the typology of PSPETs derived from this study might give an insight into how different types of PSPETs elsewhere manage their work lives. The findings may also serve as a launch for further research in the related areas of the professionalization and professionalism of physical education teachers. This study is therefore a contribution towards socialization studies of physical education teachers and is believed to be the first known investigation of the professional lives of PSPETs in Hong Kong.

## **7.4 Implications for Practice**

The substantive implications of this study are relevant to different stakeholders including policy-makers, teacher education institutions, school principals, and teachers. These are addressed below.

### **7.4.1 Implications for Policy-makers**

It is argued by Goodson (2003) that

“teacher professionalism is being driven by more and more government guidelines and central edicts, on issues ranging from assessment to accountability to curriculum definition. In the process, it would seem that teaching is being ‘technicized’ but not professionalized” (Goodson, 2003, pp. 126-7).

The present study found that PSPETs as professionals may expect a high level of autonomy in their daily work lives and have to acquire various job competencies in order to deal with daily routines and challenges. In accordance with the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ, 2003), policy-makers should take the initiative in promoting professional sharing among PSPETs in terms of their “switching” work lives, “interplaying” identities, “diversifying” professionalization and socialization experiences as well as “assimilating” career trajectories. Professional development programmes are needed for both PSPETs and principals to understand better the problems and solutions stemming from these phenomena found in this study. Policy makers might, for example, encourage school principals in their commitment to developing an environment which encourages the professional development of physical education teachers along with others expected to play multiple teaching roles in schools. Policy-makers also have a responsibility to stipulate and enforce the requirements for entry into the profession and career advancement at critical points of PSPETs’ professional lives (ACTEQ, 2003, p. 18).

Though researchers argue that teachers’ professionalism has been drastically reconstructed and replaced by wholly “new professionalism” (Goodson & Numan, 2002; & Robertson, 1997), professional development should be reconstructed and refocused to ensure that PSPETs’ career-long learning needs are met. The issues derived from this study, ranging from the acceptability of “education reform as a trend” to the need to maintain up-to-date knowledge of a variety of subjects, should be the focus of PSPETs’ professional development. The quality of PSPETs’ work lives appears to influence their affective states directly and those affective states, in turn, influence their motivational behaviours in school. Providers of professional development need to ensure that their CPD provision is relevant to the commitment, resilience and health needs of teachers in each of their professional life phases (Day, 2008). Policy-makers should therefore seriously consider providing employee assistance programmes for PSPETs, such as workplace concerns’ counselling or job stress management, which might help to alleviate negative experiences related to their work lives or

professional roles. In particular, the Education Bureau of Hong Kong can play a major role in advancing the professionalization process and might further promote teaching as a profession. More importantly, although PSPETs are regarded as “subject specialists”, they are asked often to teach up to five subjects, including non-specialist subjects. They may also have to act as coaches, managers and administrators to various sports teams. Therefore, policy-makers should consider reducing the number of subjects taught by PSPETs so that they can focus on their sports and physical education professionalization.

However, policy-makers might hope for straightforward findings. It is hoped that the findings of this study support policy-makers where what is called for is insightful, informed, situational and contextual specific judgments.

#### **7.4.2 Implications for Teacher Education Institutions**

The Theory of Diversified Adaptation serves to increase the understanding of the processes of professional and organizational socialization of PSPETs. This study therefore has implications for teacher education institutions responsible for providing both pre-service and in-service training to physical education teachers. This study found that multi-dimensional knowledge, multi-level job specifications, and irregular work hours and workloads have a profound impact on the problems that PSPETs encounter in their daily work lives; these in turn influence the perception of their profession and identities.

As discussed earlier, PSPETs have a wide range of expertise in practicing their profession by actively participating in sporting and coaching activities as well as other subject areas.

PSPETs gain status through teaching other subjects and playing other more diverse roles outside physical education. In order to assist PSPETs to share their experiences and discover commonalities among themselves, a Community of Practice could be formed to improve the quality of teacher education (O’Sullivan, 2007). There are two related professional bodies in Hong Kong, namely the Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union (HKPTU) and the Hong Kong Physical Education Teachers’ Society (HKPETS). The former body aims to protect

teachers' rights and provide teachers with various welfare services, whereas the latter body occasionally provides hands-on sports skills teaching workshops. However, in particular to teachers' continuing professional development in primary physical education, it is argued that more fundamental changes may be required if these professional development programmes are to be held accountable for advances in teachers' learning in primary physical education (Armour & Duncombe, 2004).

Creating and sustaining Communities of Practice among PSPETs would engage them directly and regularly in the focus and delivery of professional experience and career development in a way that is sensitive to their work lives and to learning within their organizations. (Stein et al., 1999). In addition, an online forum managed by teacher education institutions for PSPETs, would facilitate the sharing of information on their needs and concerns while they continued working in their own school environments – thus reducing feelings of isolation (Pennington et al., 2004). In fact, PSPETs want these programmes to be contextually sensitive and supportive of their working conditions. The establishment of a Community of Practice may result in PSPETs forming stronger identities as teaching professionals and sharing their own teaching and work practices, as well as questioning the appropriateness of expectations for physical education and PSPETs. The sharing of professional concerns or ambitions can create a climate for the establishment of a learning community (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 11). In addition, when teachers collaborate in such communities they are more willing to take risks, reflect on their failures, and share successful programmes and practices. As a result, "teachers develop a sense of responsibility" within the community of practice and "experience a shift in their identities as physical educators" (Deglau & O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 392). Teacher education institutions might consider establishing similar practices, or organizing a physical education teacher induction workshop and tool kits for new teachers (ACTEQ, 2003). Such induction processes should focus, according to Flores and Day (2006), on the development of teachers' identities through exploring links within supportive school cultures. As institutions, they are used to providing workshops and seminars with topics on sports pedagogy and curriculum



reforms (Ha et al., 2004); they could create and provide a more inclusive experience for both pre-service and in-service physical education teachers. To avoid the lack of coherence, and to gain relevance, challenge and progression so that the contexts can be transferred to PSPETs' schools, teacher education institutions should focus on the specific needs of PSPETs' own students and PSPETs may value both formal and informal opportunities to learn with and from other teachers (Armour & Yelling, 2007; Armour, 2006; & Guskey, 2002). It is nowadays seen as important to create opportunities for teachers to participate in programmes with intensity, multiple resources and ongoing support in order to achieve substantial changes (Patton & Griffin, 2008), the confidence and competency of physical education teachers could be improved by including seminars or workshops on such topics as 1) achieving effective coordination among teachers within an organization; 2) school-based exemplars and sharing of good practices; and 3) sharing the understanding of physical education teachers' professional lives among PSPETs.

Finally, teacher education institutions could help to raise students' (pre-service teachers) awareness of the work lives, identities, socialization experiences and career trajectories of which they are a part. As well-informed pre-service teachers, they will need encouragement to think critically about their own modes of adaptation in relation to these contexts. It is also important that physical education teacher educators should work with new PSPETs to help them manage potential gaps between the scope of work and actual practice. Such initiatives on the content of programmes should include coping with the need for adaptability of identities, socialization, professionalization and career paths of PSPETs. In particular, physical education teacher educators may be able to help PSPETs to recognize the steps they need to take to achieve the scope of work that is required and to be accountable for their performance. The findings of the present study may therefore make a contribution towards broadening the existing pre-service training agenda.

### **7.4.3 Implications for Schools and Principals**

This study has relevant implications for school management and principals in terms of recruitment of new physical education teachers and support of existing physical education teachers in relation to the main direction of the school and the work lives of PSPETs. Despite the fact that PSPETs might come to expect that they be asked to teach up to five subjects beforehand, evidence from this study indicates that most PSPETs had not had a job description to help them understand the scope of their work. However, PSPETs' professional knowledge and distinct aspects of expertise are usually well received and highly valued by their colleagues and the senior management of their schools. In addition, people influential to the socialization process of PSPETs included principals or colleagues keen to provide them with support and encouragement. Therefore, if the principal's responsibility is to ensure adequate support for teachers, they need to provide training and education, and implement a formal mentoring programme to assist novice PSPETs to understand the nature and characteristics of physical education teachers' work in particular organizational environments, structures and cultures. School managers and principals should consider developing an operations manual with clear guidelines on job specifications for PSPETs who are new to the profession and/or the environment. In addition, findings from this study showed that PSPETs are teaching subjects on which they have no specialist knowledge, and principals should therefore restructure the workload distribution and strategic placement of duties in accordance with the PSPETs' expertise. The professional growth of PSPETs is viewed by good schools and principals as an ongoing, long-term process. PSPETs, as Day (1999) points out in regard to all teachers, should feel a sense of security and personal identity that will contribute to their sense of professional worth (Day 1999).

The findings of this study on such issues as self-orientation of career, career aspirations and other obligations, can be used to alert principals to the importance of providing adequate support to PSPETs during the early part of their careers. In particular, an induction team consisting of the university faculty, mentors in school, and PSPETs could facilitate

communication and provide more understanding of the process of teachers' transformation (Stroot et al., 1993).

#### **7.4.4 Implications for Physical Education Teachers**

The present study found that the PSPETs' attributes are crucial to the positive interplay of their personal and professional identities, which in turn appear to affect the construction of their status. Though PSPETs have a strong sense of community in schools, the significant outcomes derived from this study suggest that PSPETs should reflect on and have an understanding of the types of adaptation that dominate their behaviours. PSPETs need to be encouraged in their efforts to interact with other colleagues, students and senior staff in their schools. Through these interactions, PSPETs would have a supportive network which would be valuable and indeed essential to their work lives. To achieve this, PSPETs could share their pedagogical experiences with other subject teachers and perhaps participate in joint or team teaching of other subjects. For example, a joint lesson with information technology (IT) to input data of anthropometric measures or to search sport observation checklists may enhance interactive learning.

This study might help pre-service and in-service physical education teachers to gain more assistance in their work lives and career planning because it shows how PSPETs perceive their "interplaying" identities and "diversifying" socialization and professionalization experiences. The issues identified in this study, such as continuous education reform, irregular work hours and workloads, and multi-level job specifications, may remind PSPETs that time management and continuing professional development are essential to their professional lives. An important consideration is that pre-service physical education teachers could use the results of this study as a useful reference before they enter the profession. The results of this study could therefore be incorporated into the sociology programme of the physical education profession both at the undergraduate level and the graduate level.

In addition, assisting PSPETs to articulate their work lives and socialization experiences more

explicitly may enable them to develop a clearer sense of their professional commitment and career planning. The findings of this study suggest that PSPETs need to orientate themselves as they progress through their careers and need to understand the authentic culture, history and background of their workplace, as these will affect their careers as a whole. PSPETs' career aspirations and trajectories are shaped by diversifying outside and in addition to the subject of physical education. PSPETs may refer to the findings of this study to re-orientate themselves in regard to their career plans and ambitions.

The findings of this study also have several implications for physical education teachers which lead the researcher to ask several questions about the perceptions of their profession. How do PSPETs use the chance of professional development to enhance their professional experiences? How do schools change PSPETs' expectations and support those whose perceptions are different from those of their school culture and leadership? What is the new PSPETs' socialization like in school when they face a "reality shock" (Stroot et al., 1993)?

### **7.5 Recommendations for Further Study**

The study yields results that provide important implications for further study. This study has attempted to address the gap in the literature on physical education teachers' professionalization and professionalism by developing a substantive theory about the professional lives of a group of PSPETs in Hong Kong primary schools. The limitations of this study include a sample size, the findings and suggestions are specific to this case and culturally focused, and the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings is limited. To address the transferability of this study, the aim was to develop a theory that explored the concepts underpinning the professional lives of Hong Kong PSPETs rather than to generalize its finding to a population of physical education teachers, even that in Hong Kong. The applicability of the findings to similar situations must be judged by other readers and researchers. Further studies might start at the point this study ends; that is, they might

seek further theory development by testing the Theory of Diversified Adaptation in similar and different contexts.

Examples for further investigation might include the following:

**First**, a larger sample of PSPETs could be chosen to improve the trustworthiness of the research. It would also be worth unearthing differences between physical education teachers in schools with different religious backgrounds, histories, and academic achievements or bandings.

**Second**, comparative studies between male and female PSPETs, and new and veteran PSPETs, could be conducted. It would also be interesting to compare physical education teachers in tertiary institutions and secondary schools, secondary schools and primary schools, and primary schools and tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. In addition, differences between PSPETs in direct subsidy schools, government schools and subsidized schools would be worth exploring.

**Third**, pre-service teachers in current physical education teacher programmes could be questioned and challenged about why they chose primary school physical education teaching as their profession. However, it would also be interesting to investigate those pre-service teachers who choose not to continue a career as a physical education teacher after their graduation.

**Fourth**, as there are a number of PSPETs who choose to leave in the middle of their careers, a study should be conducted to explore the reasons why they choose to leave the profession.

**Fifth**, a life history study of PSPETs would also be interesting in the area of the sociology of physical education. Fruitful stories and related experiences from experienced or retired PSPETs would be useful for pre-service teachers and physical education teacher educators.

**Sixth**, future research might foreground how contextual factors like the multi-level job specification, the irregular work hours and workloads, and sources of satisfaction play significant roles in the organization and practice of primary schools in Hong Kong.

**Seventh**, the typology proposed in this study might be considered in the context of other

contexts and the adoption of other research methodologies besides grounded theory. Further work may also be undertaken in seeking to validate or further develop the typology using alternative methodologies, and especially in looking at whether it supports empirical research on different types of PSPETs.

**Eighth**, since there has been little or no known research supporting the findings of this study that career development for PSPETs is mainly by diversifying outside or in addition to their subject, further study might focus on PSPETs' career development in exploring their status through teaching other subjects and playing other more diverse roles outside physical education.

**Ninth**, further research should also note that the adaptation experiences uncovered in this study are described by PSPETs as “non-marginalizing” their roles in school – a finding which mainly derives from their personal perceptions, character, work situations and the ever-changing environment.

**Tenth**, and finally, the Theory of Diversified Adaptation in this study has possible relevance for the study of other teachers' work lives, such as music teachers, arts teachers and other so-called marginalized professionals teaching similarly positioned subjects in school (Smilan, 2007; Abrahams, 2005; & Mahlmann, 1993). Further or similar research may use these research findings as a framework to uncover other subject teachers' work lives, identities, socialization and professionalization experiences, and their career trajectories.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

In summary, this study has generated the Theory of “diversified adaptation” to apply to the professional lives of eleven primary school physical education teachers in Hong Kong. By qualitatively exploring how and why they adapt to work situations over a period of eleven months, and by subsequent analysis of the data, a threefold typology of PSPETs emerged – Engagers, Adherers and Dissenters. Each group of PSPETs adapt to their professional work in

diversified ways. This study has revealed the work life experiences and perceptions of physical education teachers in Hong Kong. In addition, the study has generated propositions of how PSPETs manage their work lives, form professional identities, gain professional and organizational socialization experiences and so develop their career trajectories.

As a contribution to the literature on the process of the socialization of physical education teachers, the researcher suggests that teachers' work lives are suitably studied through a conceptual framework of personal and professional identities, the professional and organizational socialization process and career trajectories. In doing so, attention should be paid to the continuous process of social interaction and the context in which their work lives are embedded. This study, thus, contributes to an increased appreciation of the diversity of PSPETs' work in Hong Kong. The Theory of Diversified Adaptation might serve as a useful tool to be used by physical education professionals and other readers to reflect on their own experience.

The findings of this study should serve as a useful reference for policy-makers and stakeholders presently reviewing the improving professional status of teachers in Hong Kong as policy-makers press for registration and licensing of the profession. The findings of this study are also timely for the education arena since teacher education and the quality of teachers is currently a focus of the policy-makers and stakeholders (ACTEQ, 2003).

As suggested by Sparkes et al. (1993), the studies of physical education teachers' professional lives and socialization, particularly where individuals have been successful in transforming their places of work, "have a crucial role to play in developing our understanding of the dialectics of teacher socialization, enabling us to comprehend better how teachers experience their lives and work as a starting point for collaborative efforts to bring about change in both schools and society" (p. 398). The researcher has found using grounded theory for studying PSPETs' work lives and careers a valuable lens for reflecting on, restructuring and reforming, the teaching of physical education in Hong Kong.

It has been an enriching journey for the researcher; one that is still in its early stages. It is

hoped that this study leads to an improved understanding of the professional lives of primary physical education teachers in Hong Kong; if it has achieved that, then it has been worthwhile.



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## Appendix 1

### Interview Questions in Association with Specific Research Questions

#### Specific Research Questions (SRQ):

1. How do PSPETs describe their work and how do they feel about their typical daily work lives?
2. How do the PSPETs perceive their personal and professional identities in the schools in which they serve?
3. What do PSPETs' describe as their socialization and professional experiences?
4. What are the PSPETs career aims and how can their career trajectories best be described?

Interview Question	Specific Research Question (SRQ)
1. If you had a job description when you joined your present school, please describe it? Or, even if you did not have a job specification when you first joined this school, how did you understand your scope of work after you started working? And what is that scope of work?	SRQ 1
2. You have given a description of the job as advertised and /or as understood by you. Compare that job description to what you actually do in school today. Would you say there is a difference? If so, please describe the differences?	SRQ 1
3. Do you find that your present teaching job affects or does not affect your personal life? Do you take your work home? How many hours do you spend preparing to go to school, staying after school and traveling some per week? Does school work often take up your weekends? How about school holidays - can you enjoy a long summer holiday without working?	SRQ 1
4. Do you see any difference in work life between you and other subject teachers? If yes, how? If no, why not?	SRQ 1
5. Do you find that you are undertaking work that you did not expect to do and or was not in the job description? If so, please give examples	SRQ 1 & might lead to an exposure of SRQ3
6. Do you exercise regularly? If yes, what is the purpose of your exercise? If no, why?	SRQ 1
7. Do you involve in community service regarding your profession? If yes, what and how? If no, why?	SRQ 1 & might lead to an exposure of SRQ3
8. Do you have close friend(s) in your working environment? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?	SRQ 1 & might lead to an exposure of SRQ2
9. What/Who affects you most in your professional life in your present job? How and why?	SRQ1 & 3
10. Do you have a sense of belonging to the school that you are working for? May need to prompt here about 'belonging' and what it means eg. Do you have a sense or feeling of identifying with the school you work in? If yes, why? If no, why? Does your work as a	SRQ 2

PE teacher make you proud?	
11. Do you think that the principal and other teachers value your contribution to the school? Do they respect your values and beliefs? How do you know this?	SRQ 2
12. Do you think you are able to exert an influence on other colleagues and the school more generally that you are working for? If so, how and why. If no, why not?	SRQ 2
13. Do you think as a professional teacher and a coach you value being part of the school? Are you proud to belong to the school you teach at?	SRQ 2
14. Do you feel working in this school enables you to develop and exert the competencies and self esteem associated with being a professional teacher?	SRQ 2
15. Have there been any critical incidents that have affected your worklife or career in the present school? And in your career to date as a whole?	SRQ 3
16. Have there been any key people who have affected your worklife or career in the present school? And in your career to date as a whole?	SRQ 3
17. From your experience, do you find the job of PE teacher satisfying and rewarding, or the opposite? Please answer this question in relation to 1) the present school, and 2) the career as a whole. Do you have coaching/officiating certificates that capable for your scope of work?	SRQ 3
18. In contrast to the rewards and satisfaction that you have described, what are the disappointments, frustrations that you experience in teaching – 1) in this school, and 2) your career as a whole? Prompts - Can you explain a little more what are the rewards and frustrations with working in the present school, and in the career as a whole?	SRQ 3
19. After what you have just said, do you think that this school in which you work allows you to fulfill your own goals and objectives with regard to your own values and beliefs about what you think is important in education?	SRQ 3
20. Do you think you are professionalized or deprofessionalized/marginalized/trivialized/diversified in working in this school?	SRQ 3
21. Do you feel your daily work is routinised? If no, why not? If yes, how?	SRQ3
22. Do you feel disempowered and/or being controlled in your career? If yes, do you know the reason and how? If no, why not?	SRQ3
23. Do you feel your volume of work is increased and skill level is downgraded?	SRQ3
24. Are you a contract or tenure staff in this school? Any influence of your career prospect if you are a contract staff?	SRQ4
25. Have you ever changed your job or working school in your career? If yes, why? If no, why not?	SRQ4
26. Have you ever received promotion in your career? If yes, how many times and what is your current position? If no, do you perceive any reason or barrier as to why you have not been promoted? And what is your intention now?	SRQ 4

27. Do you or do you not have a career plan? If so, what is your career plan, in the short term, medium term and long term? If not, why do you not have such a plan? Prompt – do you plan to move schools and when? Do you plan to seek promotion positions into school leadership or the principalship? Or plan to change occupation? If so when? If not plan to seek promotion to principalship, why not?	SRQ 4
28. As a PE teacher, do you see any helping and hindering factors to realizing your career plan? Please explain.	SRQ 4
29. From what you have told me, would you say that your present school is a good or not so good place to work from the viewpoint of finding job satisfaction and self esteem as a professional teacher? Are there factors that would make it a better place to work from the viewpoint of the professional teacher?	SRQ 4
30. Do you want to retire at the official age of 60? Earlier or later? If yes, why? If no, why? And do you have plans for work after your retirement?	SRQ 4
31. Considering all previous answers, would you say that teaching is a career in which you will remain for the rest of your working life? If you considered changing career later, what might you change to?	SRQ 4

## Appendix 2

### Documentary Sources (Diaries)

#### 1. Weekly diary for research purposes

Diary of Mr. / Ms: \_\_\_\_\_ Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

(Your name is strictly confidential and will not be shown in the research report. Only your Pseudonym will be used.)

School taught: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of recording: \_\_\_\_\_ Coder: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Coded: \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Coding	Details of activities	Feelings about identity, socialization, professionalization or/and career	Themes / Aspects
6:00am				
7:00am				
8:00am				
9:00am				
10:00am				
11:00am				
12:00nn				
1:00pm				
2:00pm				
3:00pm				
4:00pm				
5:00pm				
6:00pm				
7:00pm				
8:00pm				
9:00pm				
10:00pm				
11:00pm				
12:00am				
1:00am				
2:00am				
3:00am				
4:00am				
5:00am				

Signature of participants: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Daily summary of diary for research purposes

Diary of Mr. / Ms: \_\_\_\_\_ Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

(Your name is strictly confidential and will not be shown in the research report. Only your Pseudonym will be used.)

Date of recording: \_\_\_\_\_ Coder: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Coded: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

Please us a new copy to continue, if necessary.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3

#### Informed Consent Form

Research title: The Professional Lives of Hong Kong Primary School Physical Education Teachers

Investigator: Sum Kim-wai, Raymond  
School of Education  
University of Leicester

#### Background Information

Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers (PSPETs), amid the climate of education and curriculum reforms, still bear a heavy workload derived from teaching and administration tasks. Much attention has been focused recently on the perceived need to improve the quality of teaching in primary schools in Hong Kong. While reform proposals for schools and teachers continue to be proposed, it seems appropriate to try to understand more about Hong Kong Primary School Physical Education Teachers (PSPETs) and their professional lives. With this regard, the purpose of this study is to investigate ‘the professional lives of Hong Kong primary school physical education teachers’. The findings will provide insight for development of programmes and interventions to assist PSPETs with this process. I am writing to invite you to participate in this research.

Your participation in this study will involve about one to one audio-taped interview. The interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and can be shortened if you become tired. The interviews will cover topics about your experience and life in the primary school. Some of the discussion may raise rather private or emotional issues such as the disappointments, frustrations of your experience in teaching. You may withdraw your participation in this study at any time, either temporarily or permanently.

In addition, as part of my research, before one week of the interview, it would help if you could record details of your daily activities in point form on an hourly basis and it may be that you would write a short piece reflecting your works to include:

- Work with students;
- Event, activities and relationships;
- Conversations;
- A specific time span; and
- Reflections on your work.

All information that you share is used for research purposes only and will be held in strict confidentiality. Your name or any inadvertent identifying information (such as your colleagues or students) will not be identified in the research report or any writing associated with this research. All the tapes and relevant information about your identity will be stored in a locked file with access restricted to me only.

You are free to ask any questions about this pilot study at any time. I can be contacted at 26096091/92174388.

Signature of investigator / Date

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#### **Informant's Consent**

I have read the above material and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Informant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date