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Ethics in the evaluation of problems related to insufficient physical activity of most of the population in relation to sport and the adoption of intellectual knowledge in the field of education

ABSTRACT:

The biggest problem of modern lifestyle is the lack of physical activity of most people, which is in an inferior position compared to the problems of sport and the adoption of intellectual knowledge in the field of education. Sports results imposed primary objectives by the media as, have led to various anomalies that are associated with use of illicit stimulants, injuries that result from major physical effort, enormous profits of individual athletes, violence in and around sports grounds. However, such irregularities are not present to the extent that they should provoke as much anxiety as problems concerning the lack of physical activity that is far more present as researches show, and with far greater consequences for human health, as explained in this paper. Informing by the media has created an impression that the true values of sport as well as the true values of recreational sport and physical education are concealed, which is particularly reflected in the field of education, where a greater importance is given to mental activity. Research related to the benefit of physical exercise indicated the necessity of paying greater attention to the body. Only by balanced evaluation of the mind and body we can talk about the complete development, and in that aspect, about the proper way of life of modern man.

Key words: sports, physical exercise, lack of physical activity, mental activity

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Introduction

In addition to many advantages brought by the progress of human civilization, the modern world has also brought many disadvantages. Globalization processes are marked with the values of success and material gain which lead to an intense race for money, profit and success. A period of sudden changes and then of a better material status of families is often accompanied with an overall disintegration of morality and very often with irrational relationship between certain segments in society. Such irregular relationship has also reflected itself on the value system in the field of sport and recreational sport, as well as in valuing intellectual, physical and educational values in the field of education. Fields of sport, physical and health education and recreational sport, which have some common ground, are valued in different ways depending on the situation and the area where they work. Greater attention in the media is given to sport with emphasis on achieving results, and thus putting into subordinate position physical exercise with its primary goal of developing anthropological status, prevention and treatment of different diseases. Problems related to sport such as doping, violence, injuries, etc., are stressed more than problems connected with insufficient physical activity in the majority of the population, which are related to increase in obesity, cardiovascular disease, spinal deformities and other modern-day illnesses.

On the other hand, parental concerns, most often about the material status of their children in the future, imposes intellectual education and, in some cases, achievement of sport results, as a priority, while other important needs are neglected. Such a lifestyle is translated into the entire education system so that some vitally important areas are assigned a secondary role. The necessity of acquiring extensive knowledge is often connected with the assumption of a better position in society and thus more success. For these goals to be attained, very often more attention is given to education, while not dedicating sufficient time to the basic life needs: upbringing as an integral part of any pedagogical process, physical activity as a fundamental biotic human need, proper diet as an integral part of a proper lifestyle, etc. Mental activities, which are relatively insufficiently present and discussed in the media when compared to sports in the contemporary society, are favored in the field of education and in families when compared to Physical Education and recreational sport. This way, physical exercise for the purpose of preserving and improving health, takes on a secondary importance in the media, families, regular and higher education.

It is our opinion that such disbalance in valuing physical exercise, which is a basic necessity of the modern man in the newly created conditions of sedentary lifestyle, compared to the importance given to achieving sports results in society and adopting intel-

lectual knowledge in the field of education, is not ethically correct. We shall attempt to create a thesis that will prove the importance of paying more attention to the body, in relation to the current condition in the majority of the population as well as the necessary equilibrium of the mentioned segments in the life of a modern man.

Issue of sport, physical inactivity and adopting intellectual knowledge

Sport, which nowadays enjoys a high position in society, and which is in daily life also connected with the subject of Physical Education as well as recreational sport, represents a very complex educational activity which can influence the development and formation of many character traits as well as abilities, including also values adopted through upbringing, of any individual and especially of the young population. However, and unfortunately, sport is also accompanied with certain modern day controversies especially when it comes to moral principles of work, and this has reflected on the educational system as well. As stated in the introduction that success is primary in achieving certain life goals, work in sport has also adapted to that trend. In the media and different literature we often see the highlighting of sports results, but also the accompanying negative occurrences which follow the objective of attaining those results. Use of illicit stimulants, athletes' injuries caused by intense physical exertion, violence in sports grounds, are some of the problems that follow top sports. Forcing of young people to do sport just to achieve top results on the part of some parents, coaches and clubs are the result of a propaganda focused on achieving success in sports. These are some of the reasons which lead us to start considering whether many educated people see sport in a negative context and why most people do not do physical exercise which is synonymous to sport. If we compare this with physically passive lifestyle, we can actually believe in the proposition that physical exercise has a frustrating effect on many persons. We are witnesses of a greater number of discussions in the public about the aforementioned problems in sport as compared to the ones related to insufficient physical activity of the majority of population.¹ The question arises about the ethical fairness of assigning more importance to the problems present in sport when they are in fact concerned with a small number of individuals. During the last two Olympic Games, according to the highly rigorous criteria that have been applied lately, it was determined that out of

¹ http://www.zjzpgz.hr/nzl/14/nzl_2_2002.php, Narodni zdravstveni list (February April 2002) "Preliminary data from a study by the World Health Organization on risk factors indicate that inactivity or sedentary lifestyle is one of ten leading causes of death and disability. Over two million deaths annually are connected with physical inactivity. In countries throughout the world between 60% and 85% of adults are not sufficiently active, to the extent they ought to be for health reasons."

the total number of athletes, illicit stimulants were taken by 0.2% of athletes in Athens in 2004² and 0.1% of athletes in Beijing in 2008.³ However, an impression has been created in the public that the majority of top athletes take illicit stimulants for achieving results, while on the other hand, a comfortable and physically passive lifestyle does not create an impression of an irregular way of living of most of the inhabitants of our planet. Overemphasizing negativities in sport which are based on a proportionally small number of people, in the situation where the public is not sufficiently informed about the problems and consequences of inactivity of most of the population, leads to the situation where the true values of sport and physical exercise in general are concealed. According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics data from 2006, in Croatia there are only 6% of active athletes in the total population, while physically inactive are 83% of men and 95% of women, 48% of men and 34% of women are overweight, 55% of men and 50% of women have high cholesterol, and 32% of men and 24% of women have high blood pressure. There is a high percentage of people with health issues which are connected with hypokinesia – lack of physical activity.⁴

The previously mentioned propaganda focused on sport with the primary goal of achieving results leads to generating a misconception about greater importance of competitive sport compared to the need for mass physical exercise of most of the population, and the result of such information is that the consequences of physical inactivity are not recognized enough.⁵ That is, of course, where, in addition to

² http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olimpijske_igre (11 March 2011)

³ <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3580803,00.html> (20 August 2008)

http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/XXIX._Olimpijske_igre_-_Peking_2008. (19 February 2011)

⁴ Mirela Vidović, Sonja Njunjić, <http://www.mojdoktor.hr/default.aspx?page=197&article=1866> (March 2007): "Supporting evidence is found in some researches which have proven that it is possible to avoid for example up to 90% of coronary heart disease cases and 90% of cases of type 2 diabetes and one third of cancerous diseases by controlling body weight and reducing obesity just by eating a healthier diet and increasing physical activity, and by giving up smoking.", source: BOOK OF ABSTRACTS of 2nd Croatian Obesity Congress With International Participation, Opatija (07-09 April 2006) "according to the data of a world research (I.O.T. International Obesity Taskforce): over a billion of people is overweight, out of which 300 million are clinically obese" ...annually 12 million people die of heart attack and stroke in the world, and another 4 million of high blood pressure and heart disease; ...in Croatia, every other death a year is a consequence of cardiovascular disease (in 2004 in Croatia almost 25,000 persons died of heart attack as a consequence of cardiovascular disease!! The trend is on the rise!!!!)... biggest risks for cardiovascular disease are: physical inactivity, overweight, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes"

⁵ http://www.medicina.hr/clanci/07_travnja_svjetski_dan_zdravlja.htm (20 August 2002.) "Lack of physical activity is the main, often covert, risk factor and cause of many deaths, diseases and disabilities. According to the World Health Organization estimates, the risk brought by the insufficient physical activity for the development of alarming diseases such as heart attack, stroke, diabetes and carcinomas, which in turn increase the risk of high blood pressure, osteoporosis and depression, are more than sufficient arguments." http://uppt.hr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=290&Itemid=44 (27 February 2007) "Prevention of obesity is definitely neglected, so what is the solution then for many obese persons and, even more tragically, for the growing number of obese children", Sonja Njunjić, Coordinator of the Association for the Prevention of Overweight

other factors, we find reasons why many people in their lives neglect their own body and give priority to acquiring knowledge and skills that will bring them certain prosperity in business and material aspects. The money race has additionally stirred the consciousness of citizens, and in relation to that also the large profits made by some athletes. All these facts have also caused a competitive reaction of people who, just like athletes, dedicate years of their lives for achieving a certain objective in the field of intellectual education, which brings them status and survival in the society. Such individuals and groups of people, wanting to assign importance to their field, lock themselves into their profession considering it the most important.⁶ Sport, as very influential in the media and society, has become a "sore spot" for many people, since significant funds are allocated for it from budgets and sponsors. We can believe that many working people who barely make ends meet perceive this as spending money on entertainment, so sport evidently inspires indignation in intellectual and other circles.

Therefore, physical exercise as a substitute for insufficient physical activity, which in satisfying the necessities of a modern lifestyle represents an important factor in meeting biotic needs for movement⁷, in lives of the majority of the population does not carry sufficient weight. Taking into account the quantity of published texts and programs in the media, as well as many years of authors' experience in sport, we can state with great certainty that the media have unintentionally influenced a large part of the population to identify physical exercise exclusively with talent and achieving sports results. Physical exercise in this sedentary lifestyle is necessary for everyone, regardless of their abilities, and nobody is forced to apply negative means and methods in order to achieve positive health status. Constant highlighting of negativities in sport is used by many as a "front" to cover behind it the passive lifestyle, which does not require physical exertion. The abovementioned reasons that lead to physical passivity can also be put into the context of ethics, if they generate in people aversion to sport and, consequently, to physical exercise. However, since there is a

⁶ John Cheffers, "Nastavni plan i program Tjelesnog odgoja za 21. stoljeće", (U) *Kineziologija* no 31; Zagreb 1999., p. 86: "...we have created small realms, each with its own specialty (mathematics, natural sciences, music, literature, etc), which are mutually fighting for integrity, in order to preserve, to the last breath, concentration and influence for themselves. This has fragmented school education and studies into unreal departments, often completely artificial "boxes" or "compartments". If we want to raise a man as a complete individual, as a well-formed being that functions well in life, we will have to bring our compartments together again."

⁷ Vladimir Findak, Dušan Metikoš, Miloš Mraković, "Civilizacijski trendovi i biotički opstanak čovjeka", *Napredak* 135(4/1994), p. 447: "...we might speak of a growing disproportion between satisfying biotic and so-called civilizational needs, actually between genetically conditioned and requirements imposed by civilization, and this, of course, at the expense of the former"; p. 448: "It is a well known fact that some fundamental biotic needs, such as primarily the need for oxygen, fluids, food, sleep and, of course, muscle activity, have been challenged to the extent that lately there has been talk of considerable potential harm and threat to the man of planetary proportions."

large mass of population that is physically inactive, it is necessary to constantly point to these issues, because they have been perceived as secondary compared to problems of sport which are in fact far less present in practice. A positive example of promoting sport at a national level comes from Switzerland, where the main goal of justifying sport lies in creating favorable incentives and circumstances so that the majority of the population would do sports and be physically active for the purpose of beneficial health effects.⁸

Great displeasure in contemporary scientific and humanistic circles was created by the position taken by the majority of population in economically developed countries, and that is based on higher importance of the mind and adoption of intellectual knowledge compared to the body. The body and, consequently, physical exercise, are put into a position of lower rank. Such attitudes are the result of the modern age mechanistic assumption of the duality of the body and mind which resulted in many critiques in those circles, which are based on the unbreakable link between the mind, body and emotions.⁹

The abovementioned positions, which indicate an important and neglected problem of the lack of physical exercise which is responsible for many consequences related to human health, are continuously presented in scientific and professional papers from kinesiology and related fields, but do not have much of an impact in the public. The status of Physical Education is also in a subordinate position which is obvious from the fact that many decisions related to PE are made without previous consultations with people from the field of kinesiology. The profession has been for years persuading the community that two hours of PE classes a week are not enough in the new specific conditions of living.¹⁰ Weekly number of PE classes in Croatian vocational high schools have been reduced, and cancelled in senior years of high schools for future medical professionals. Gigantic sports facilities are being constructed for important competitions, even though the actual holding of the competitions is later uncertain, in the situation when most Croatian high schools and universities do not have sports facilities for doing classes and sport activities that involve a large mass of young people. In Great Britain and other countries reforms are being adopted that marginalize PE and sport by reducing the number of PE hours in the curriculum and selling schools sports grounds (Skembler 2005).

⁸ Ivo Robbiani, "Strukture i organizacijske formule u sportu u svjetlu obrazovanja i odgoja kroz kretanje", in the Collection of Papers of the 6th conference on Sport Alps - Adriatic, Opatija, 2005, p. 49

⁹ Chandra Qeen, sociologist, <http://www.building-body.com/Um-tijelo-i-emocije.html> (2 June 2008)

¹⁰ Vladimir Findak, "Društveni status tjelesne i zdravstvene kulture, sporta i sportske rekreacije", *Napredak*, 137(3/1996), p. 318.

Data and research related to the consequences of insufficient physical activity

Insufficient physical activity is the subject of a series of scientific studies that have confirmed that regular physical activity, as well as exercise, are one of the necessary measures for the prevention of developing chronic cardio-vascular and metabolic diseases¹¹. Lack of movement which is connected with reduced burning of energy has an impact on increasing obesity (Hill et al. 1994, in Duraković, Mišigoj-Duraković 2009). Obese children move far less than children who are not obese (Duraković, Mišigoj-Duraković 2009). Unfortunately, many researches show a trend of growing obesity in children.¹² According to a research by the Zdrav život monthly and PLIVA zdravlje Internet portal (January 2009), body mass index has risen in Croatia, which means that there are 10.9 % of obese and 27.2% of overweight persons. It has also been determined that body mass index increases with age, but increases after the age of 65. According to the data by the Croatian Association for the Study of Obesity (March 2010), the number of overweight people has risen over the past 4 years by 50% in men and 20% in women. According to latest statistics, 61% of the total Croatian population has a disproportionately high body weight.¹³ Data are correlated with insufficient physical activity of the majority of population in Croatia, which is confirmed by many researches that state that over 80% of the population is insufficiently physically active (Relac, 2006, Bartolucci et al. 2008, in Berčić, Donlić 2009). The situation in the world is not much better either. In 1980 in England there were (in the whole population) 8% of obese women and 6% of men, while the percentages for 1998 are nearly doubled at 21% of female and 17% of male population (Skempler 2007). It is claimed that this is the

¹¹ Marjeta Mišigoj-Duraković, Zijad Duraković "Povezanost tjelesne spremnosti i rizika za razvoj srčano žilnih bolesti" in the Collection of Papers of the 19th Summer School for Kinesiologists of the Republic of Croatia, Poreč, 2010, p. 61

¹² <http://www.plivazdravlje.hr/aktualno/clanak/8292/Pretilost-epidemija-modernog-doba.html> (14 December 2005). "Data by the American Center for Disease Control and Prevention have shown that the incidence of obesity in children aged 6-19 has risen by 4-5% in the period from 1963 to 1970, and by 15% in the period from 1999-2000. Data for 21 European countries for the period from 1992-2000 were obtained by using similar methods and it was found that the incidence varies between 10 and 36%, where Italy, Malta, Greece and Croatia are the countries with highest numbers of obese children." "Recent researches indicate that the number of the obese has been growing by the year, especially in children and the young, which is particularly alarming given the fact that around 70% of obese adolescents remain obese later in life."

Marjeta Mišigoj-Duraković, Zijad Duraković, "Zdravstveni aspekti korištenja kompjutera, gledanja TV i videa u školske djece i mladeži" in the Collection of Papers of the 15th Summer School for Kinesiologists of the Republic of Croatia, Rovinj, 2006, p. 50: "According to our data the quantity of fat tissue estimated by the thickness of skin folds in pre-school children in Zagreb has increased considerably over the past five years (Horvat et al. 2005). According to a survey done by Kuzman et al. (2005) 11% of boys and 5% of girls have overweight mass at the age of 13, and 15% of boys and 6% of girls at the age of 15."

¹³ <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/pratimo-trendove-vise-od-60-posto-hrvata-pretilo/481132.aspx> (16 March 2010)

consequence of the reduction of physical activity in English schools in the last generations by 70% (Parkinson 2003*). Two thirds of teachers employed in state schools in England feel that the rate of sport activities of children has gone down in the past five years (Townsend, 2003*). In the USA, 30% of adult population is obese (Crossley, 2004*). According to the World Health Organization data it is estimated that physical inactivity in the countries members of the European Region causes around 600,000 deaths annually (about 6% of total mortality), and obesity and overweight cause over a million more deaths.¹⁴

In America, one of the most developed countries in the world, only 8–20 % of the population regularly does physical activity, 30–50 % of the population leads a sedentary life, and 50% of individuals who take up a physical activity give it up within 6 months (Staff 1992*).

American Heart Association states lack of physical exercise, after smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, as the fourth risk factor for developing heart disease (Cox 2005), and physical inactivity ranks in the 5th position of causes of the overall mortality in the world (WHO 2005).¹⁵

According to the conclusions by the scientists from the University of Otago, a research that comprised 4,400 adult persons in New Zealand has shown that the subjects with the lowest level of physical fitness had a double risk of death within the next 9 years compared to the subjects who were physically fit.¹⁶

Physiological and psychological benefits of physical exercise

Adequate cardiorespiratory capacity is connected with daily physical activity, and the two of them together significantly contribute to the risk of developing carcinoma, especially lung carcinoma (Leukkonen et al., 2001, in M. Mišigoj-Duraković and Z. Duraković, 2010), as well as obesity, risky distribution of body fat, arterial hypertension, high blood cholesterol (Talbot et al., 2009; Carnethona et al. 2003; Rheume et al., 2009; Hamer and Steptoe, 2009; Lee et al. 2009; Kodama et al., 2009; Steene-Johannessen et al, 2009.; Jurca at al., 2004, in M. Mišigoj-Duraković

¹⁴ http://www.udrugazora.hr/files/Detaljno_Izvjescje_za_2008.godinu.pdf (23 February 2009) "Insufficient physical activity can also be credited for 5.3 million of lost years of life due to premature death or years of productive life lost due to disability each year".

¹⁵ Dragan Kinkela, Veno Đonlić, Viktor Moretti, "Cjeloživotno tjelesno vježbanje za održivi razvoj" in the Collection of Papers of the International Conference: *Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development*, Plitvice, 2008, p. 284

¹⁶ <http://www.plivazdravlje.hr/vijesti/clanak/17063/I-umjerena-tjelesna-aktivnost-produzuje-zivot.html> (23 August 2009)

and Z. Duraković, 2010). Regular physical exercise contributes to the reduction of cholesterol, reduces body fat percentage, alleviates consequences of diabetes, reduces weight, blood pressure and blood fat, and has a positive effect on the increased body mass index (Pafenbarger, 1994; Pate et al., 1995, Berg et al. 1994, in Mišigoj-Duraković and Duraković, 2000). A study on the effects of physical exercise on women that had previously lead a sedentary life, has shown that daily activity of speed walking for 40–45 minutes in 12–15 weeks reduces the number and duration of cold symptoms in relation to the increased activity of natural killer cells (Nieman et al., 1993; 1998; 1990, in Duraković, Mišigoj-Duraković 2004).

The International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP, 1992) based on the overview of literature, took a position on the relation between physical exercise and psychological advantages, and adopted 6 important opinions which connect physical exercise with the reduction of anxiety, level of mild to moderate depression, neurotic conditions, reduction of various stress indicators, and benefits of physical exercise for the emotional effect in both genders in all seasons (Cox 2005). Further, many researches have demonstrated a connection between intense physical exercise and improvement of the general disposition (Biddle, 1995; La Fontaine, DiLorenzo, Frensch, Stucky-Ropp, Bergman and McDonald, 1992; Leith and Taylor, 1990; Long and Van Starvel, 1995; North, McCullagh and tran, 1990; Petruzzello, Landers, Hatfield, Kubitz and Salazar, 1991 in Cox 2005).

Moderate, rhythmic and regular physical exercise has a considerable and beneficial effect on health (Waddington, 2000, in Cox 2005). Regular physical activity such as walking, running, dancing or swimming has a positive effect on both physical and mental health (Royal College of Physicians, 1991, in Cox 2005). Department for Health Education in Great Britain mentions the benefits of the mentioned activities as seen in the reduced overall mortality rate, reduced risk of developing coronary and heart disease, heart attack, hypertension and diabetes mellitus, better obesity control, prevention of some cancer types, preservation of healthy bones and potential prevention of osteoporosis, etc.

By way of conclusion

Based on all the mentioned findings and research we can state that physical inactivity of the majority of the population is a far bigger issue than the irregularities that follow top sports, which are by all means not ethical, but the exaggerated portrayal of those problems and creating of the misconception about their mass presence are also not ethical. Insufficient attention paid by the institutions and media to the problems caused by sedentary lifestyle is a matter of a distorted sense of priorities of

the modern society. In connection with that we might discuss whether it is right in such conditions to give far greater priority to mental as opposed to physical activities in the field of education. The human organism is a unique whole, and the mind and body are not separate entities (Hol and Lindzi 1957, in Kane 1972), therefore, a person must equally influence his/her intellectual, physical and emotional development (Berčić, Donlić, 2009). In the modern-day world characterized by the crisis of the value system, many people are misguided by the logic of the regime which is often dictated by money and profit. They are closely connected with the media that serve people with sensationalist information, based on which individuals create their own perception about the valuing of certain segments in society. Because of the overemphasis on the importance of results, a misconception has been created about the values of sport, and consequently, of the irresponsible individuals who abuse situations they find themselves in, using illicit means to achieve sports results. Achieving success in sport has become a daily reality that is projected to the public, and this way a single type of information is primarily sent to the public about sport and related fields. Doing sport for the purpose of creating lifelong habits of doing physical exercise, socialization, positive effect on the anthropological status of the individual, as well as health, is one of the most important factors of good quality lifestyle, which has been depicted as a factor of minor importance in doing sport in the information as provided to the public nowadays. In the field of education, an opinion has been created that so-called intellectual subjects are primary, so that automatically the subject of Physical Education in schools and universities has become less important in this situation of insufficient physical activity caused by sedentary lifestyle. In order for this situation to be avoided, negativities that accompany sport should be separated from physical exercise which is necessary for the majority of the population in contemporary society. Problems of the lack of movement should be presented more to the public, since its consequences are far more serious than problems caused by irregularities in top sport. Adoption of intellectual knowledge is a definite necessity for the modern man, but to the same extent as physical activity. Highlighting educational success in schools and universities often leads to excessive sitting in children and young persons, which in turn has negative consequences on the physical and health condition of the young.

Only when we balance out the mind and the body – the two vitally important segments of modern man, then we can speak of integral development and good lifestyle of any individual. This involves regular reporting and proper evaluation of the problems of the lack of movement generated by civilizational trends and connected with the application of modern technological means. Irregularities in the society related to sport and the need for adoption of extensive intellectual knowledge in the

field of education should also be presented and resolved promptly and effectively, but to the extent in which they are actually present, and giving priority to the problems which in fact concern the majority of the world population. Contrary to this, a misconception is created in the public about the predominance of problems which are in fact not so present in practice, as opposed to those that involve the majority of the population while not being sufficiently visible in the public. We can safely conclude that it is necessary to change this misconception in the public information system and the education process, encouraging the evolution of the society that will be adapted to the individual, respecting the emotional, social, expressive, creative, cognitive and biological dimension of each citizen.

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