

SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN EUROPE - RHETORIC AND REALITY: CURRENT AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

In the 1970s, Council of Europe and UNESCO Charters established the principle of access to physical education and sport as a basic human right with access facilitated by governmental and non-governmental agencies and supported by qualified personnel and multi-sector planning and provision of facilities and equipment. Today, in many countries legal requirements for physical education and sport in schools do seem to be in place, however, evidence from surveys, reports and research literature suggest that actual implementation does not meet with statutory obligations or expectations. Thus, the rhetoric of statutory principle and policy is belied by the reality of gaps between official statements and regulations and actual implemented practice. The overall purpose of this paper is i) to highlight some key issues in school physical education and sport through a summary review and ii) to suggest some strategic initiatives to serve the mutual best interests of physical education and sport in, out-of and beyond school settings.

To establish the case for the theme of rhetoric and reality in European school physical education and sport, I draw from data generated by several international (Wilcox, 1996, published 1998; and EUPEA, Loopstra & Van der Gugten, 1997), national (National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) England and Wales, 1999; Speednet, Primary Schools in England, 1999; and Deutscher Sportlehrerverband, Helmke & Umbach, Germany, 2000) and regional (Sollerhed, southern Sweden, 1999; and Fairclough and Stratton, North West England Primary Schools, 2000) surveys, an extensive long-term literature review (governmental and non-governmental reports, international and national academic and professional journal articles, institutional and individual statements, web network sites etc.) and from a current doctoral research study into school physical education in European Union countries. More specifically, how-

ever, findings referred to are drawn mainly from the three most recent international surveys: Worldwide (Hardman & Marshall, 2000), CDDS, Council of Europe (Hardman, 2002) and European Union (Hardman & Marshall, 2002).

Physical education curriculum status and implementation

Within the compulsory general education system, a high proportion of European countries have statutory requirements with legal prescriptive or guideline expectations for physical education and sport for both boys and girls for at least some part of the compulsory schooling years. However, there is evidence to suggest that implementation does not meet with prescriptions or expectations and that physical education is often dropped to make way for other subjects or at best there is minimal provision. Generally in the international surveys' findings, pervasive factors contributing to the evident gap between statutory policy and actual delivery are seen in devolvement of responsibilities for curriculum implementation, loss of time allocation, lower importance of school physical education in general, lack of official assessment, financial constraints, diversion of resources elsewhere, inadequate material resources, deficiencies in numbers of properly qualified personnel and attitudes of significant individuals such as head teachers. The discrepancies between requirement and implementation are geographically widespread:

- In *Cyprus*: physical education's "place, design and delivery in schools contrasts with the (its) official recognition attached by the authorities. PE lessons are abandoned when time is required for reading and mathematics or for revision purposes and academic work tests (Cypriot PE researcher)

- In *Finland*: "... Legal status is the same, but in practice not." The freedom of curriculum planning at schools has led to situations where

implementation of physical education is not done according to the regulations concerning the weekly lessons...“ (University professor)

- In *Ireland* “... Many primary schools do not offer the required time for PE. (and the) level of implementation is not uniform. (A) majority of senior students in secondary schools receive little or no PE... PE is not given equal time or resources with other subjects” (Senior Inspector of PE)

Since 1990 in *Germany*, there have been reductions as high as 25% in timetable allocation for physical education at all class stages (except class 11) (Helmke & Umbach, 2000). In *England*, one third of primary schools suffered reductions in physical education in the year 1998-1999 to make time for literacy and numeracy work; of these, half lost 30 minutes of physical education each week (representing around a 33% reduction), whilst a further 20% of schools lost 60 minutes (a reduction of around 66%) (Speednet, 1999). Even in *Sweden* with its strong historical traditions there have been substantial reductions in physical education time allocation during the last decade (Sollerhed, 1999).

Physical education: subject and teacher status

The World-wide, Council of Europe and EU surveys suggest that in a large majority of countries, physical education seems to have attained the same or a similar legal status as other subjects. This, however, may be misleading because of interpretations of the meaning(s) attached to “legal status”; for example ‘core’ or ‘principal’ as opposed to ‘foundation’ or ‘subsidiary’ status as in some western European countries. Furthermore, whilst physical education features pervasively alongside key subjects such as language and mathematics as a school curriculum subject, it is allocated fewer ‘hours’ or lessons hence, it and its teachers are accorded lower status. In particular, the Council of Europe survey findings on subject and physical education teacher status contrast with published literature assertions that physical education suffers low status and esteem. Data from the other surveys also suggest that the actual status of physical education in relation to other school subjects is regarded as lower than that accorded within the legal framework and hence, underscore the literature. With regard to its perceived worth as a school curriculum subject, physical education faces considerable scepticism regarding its academic value: much of the work carried out in physical education is seen to be either a “distraction”; and it is regarded as a non-productive educational activity with academic subjects commonly seen to

be the important stepping-stones to a successful future. In short, legally it has similar status but in reality it does not as illustrated in the following comments:

- *Italy*: “...Legally PE is like the other subjects, but often it is the Cinderella of the school” (PE teacher)

- *Luxembourg*: “...Theoretically equivalent status but it seems that a teacher of other subjects believes himself more important, PE comes always after academic lessons... When teachers have problems to finish the programmes of French for example they cut PE lessons (PE teacher)

- In *Belgium Flanders* “... Many people give more value to academic subjects. PE lessons could be seen as pursuing only recreational objectives by pupils, parents and sometimes by school authorities and PE teachers” (PE Professor).

The World-wide questionnaire survey sought data on attitudes of ‘significant others’ (head teachers, other subject teachers and parents) towards physical education. Whilst there were expressions amongst the three groups varying from supportive through indifference to non-supportive, data revealed that attitudes towards physical education were broadly speaking not supportive of the subject and often demonstratively anti-pathetic towards it. Physical education was accorded lower subject status, value and importance than other curriculum subjects. One example for each group illustrates the common perceptions.

Amongst head teachers there were pervasive perceptions that physical education is a non-academic subject with an orientation to recreational rather than educational activity:

- *Norway*: Head teachers see physical education “OK as recreation, but not really necessary” (Primary School teacher)

Similar negative attitudes are found amongst other subject teachers. Physical education is regarded as a lower status, peripheral subject, as non-constructive and vocationally non-productive, as non-academic lacking in educational value and merely as a compensatory recreational activity:

- *France*: “... a lot of them (to) think that PE is not important, except for students ‘to let off steam’ after or before intellectual classes” (PE teacher)

These prevailing features are also evident in perceptions on attitudes of parents. They are believed to lack interest in physical education, view it as non-productive beyond school years and to be predisposed to favouring academic subjects with time spent on physical education being seen to be a threat to academic achievement and/or examination performance:

- *Germany*: “Public protests (especially from parents) are expected to be not so strong as if ‘academic’ subjects were cancelled” (PE lecturer). This theme is also addressed by a PE teacher in *Lower Saxony*: “... There is absolutely no protest from parents, when PE lessons are cancelled. There is always a protest if lessons in e.g. maths, German, English, etc. are cancelled. Occasionally parents demand that PE lessons are ‘converted’ to maths etc.”

Physical education’s practical orientation is not appreciated for its potential to contribute to the educational experience of children; it is regarded as trivial and superfluous when compared with the theoretical nature of academic subjects.

One variable indicator of subject status is frequency of cancellation of lessons. In the Council of Europe survey, over 75% of the countries indicated that physical education lessons are not cancelled any more frequently than other subjects. However, evidence from the other international, and supported by the national and regional, surveys brings another reality. It seems that the attributed low status and esteem of the subject are detrimental to its position because in many countries physical education lessons are cancelled more often than so called ‘academic subjects’. Other reasons given for the cancellation of physical education include the use of dedicated physical education areas for examinations, concerts, and as dining areas:

- *Malta*: “... when hall space is required for prize-day practices, Christmas concerts, spiritual exercises during Easter, PE classes are not allowed in certain areas. Thank God we have good weather! (Maltese PE lecturer)

- In *Scotland* lessons are cancelled “... Particularly during exam time”; “... During exam times our programme is adversely affected when we lose two-thirds of our indoor teaching area; “... the games hall is used for exams and prize giving which can disrupt PE programmes” (Several PE teachers).

Resources for physical education

a) Finance

In a world of increasing demands by a range of social institutions and services for a slice of the limited national financial cake, government policies are inevitably prioritised and physical education is not usually high on the political agenda. Funding of physical education with its initial high capital costs of facilities and recurrent maintenance, apparatus and equipment costs is a contentious issue in many schools in many countries. In times of financial

constraints on government spending, 75% of countries in the Council of Europe survey indicate that physical education is not usually likely to suffer from budget cuts or reductions. Those countries indicating cuts, or that reductions would be likely, cited a number of consequential variable impacts on school physical education and sport. From the World-wide and EU surveys, an overall different continental and regional picture is evident: over half of European countries indicate cuts or reductions in physical education; in southern Europe 71% and central and eastern Europe 42%, with over 60% of the latter region’s countries indicating a situation of declining financial support in recent years. A widely reported impact of funding limitations is on swimming. The considerable financial investment of maintaining, or gaining access to swimming facilities exposes this important component of physical education to cancellation of lessons or even omission from curricula in many countries.

Financial considerations have had a number of other impacts on physical education in Europe:

- *Germany (Lower Saxony)*: Financial support to PE is “... Lousy. Below average. Most of the school budget goes to ruddy computers. Parents strongly support computer lessons, believing that in doing so they will improve their children’s chances of getting a job after school. Parents interested in sport believe that their children get enough sports in their sports clubs” (PE teacher)

- *Poland*: “... There is an essential lack of money for the improvement of already existing equipment and places as well as for the purchasing of new equipment, necessary for proper work” (PE lecturer)

- *Slovakia*: “Problems with lack of finances for maintenance sports facilities and for reconstruction and acquisition of new sports materials” (Lecturer in PE).

b) Facilities and equipment

There is a clearly discernable consensus over all of the surveys that across Europe physical education is commonly faced with the challenge of inadequate facilities and equipment as well as poor maintenance of existing teaching sites; but there are marked sub-regional differences. There is an east-west divide between largely central and eastern and to a lesser extent in southern European countries and the rest of Europe in facility provision. Generally in northern, western and some regions in southern European countries, quality and quantity of facilities and equipment are regarded as at least adequate and in some instances excellent. In central and eastern European countries

as well as in southern Italy, Malta and Portugal, there are reports of inadequacies in both quality and quantity of facilities and equipment. Because of the challenges of inadequate facilities and their poor maintenance, the actual implementation of physical education classes is made difficult and the quality of the lessons provided is less than adequate. Former 'socialist bloc' countries have shown signs of depleted and deteriorating provision.

- *Bulgaria*: There is a particular shortage of "gym apparatus" and "balls for basketball, volleyball, handball, football" (Professor of PE)

Whilst it could be reasonably argued that there are higher expectations over levels and standards of facilities and equipment in economically developed countries, the problem appears to stretch beyond the traditional divides of developed and developing nations as one example from *England and Wales* demonstrates:

- "The levels of sports provision in many English and Welsh schools is grossly inadequate and... playing fields suffer from low levels of maintenance and drainage problems. The consequence of sharing the school hall for assemblies, dining areas, school concerts and examinations means that a quarter of primary schools cannot provide adequate time for physical education (Hart, 1999).

c) Qualified teaching personnel

In many countries, the adequacy of teacher preparation for physical education is arguable and initial teacher training can present a problem regardless of level of economic development. In some countries, the generalist teacher in primary schools is often inadequately or inappropriately prepared to teach physical education and *initial* teacher training presents a problem:

- *Austria*: "In primary schools teachers are not trained well – they often just go for a walk or do German or mathematics instead of PE" (PE teacher)

- *England*: Some primary trainee teachers have less than 8 hours training in how to teach PE. "On average post-graduate trainees do 23 hours and undergraduates 32 hours. But some do as little as seven-and-a-half" (THES, 1999, p.2).

A consistent feature of all the surveys on the issue of further professional development of teachers involved in physical education teaching is that all four European regions indicate a need for in-service training and a recognition that in some countries, in-service and resource materials have been minimal and have been exacerbated by a

marked decline in physical education advisory service numbers.

The physical education curriculum: content and delivery

From analysis of survey data, there is a clear orientation towards sports-dominated programmes, in which competitive games have a significant role and in which track and field athletics are generally present. Team games (sports) are a pervasive activity area within the physical education and sport curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. A 'performance discourse' appears to prevail over a 'participation discourse'; it is a discourse that is contrary to trends and tendencies in out-of-school settings amongst young people. However, as in other parts of the world, physical education curricula in some countries and regions appear to be undergoing change with signs that its purpose and function are being redefined to accommodate other and/or broader educational outcomes. Developments linking physical education with health education and with personal and social development are occurring in some countries. The Nordic group for example has agreed a united commitment to a health focus in physical education programmes. Nonetheless, in spite of these recent physical education curriculum-related developments, all the international surveys point to a sustained broad-spread pre-disposition towards games and development of competitive sports skills.

The issue of quality of, and in, school physical education is the subject of regionally persistent debate, one illustration of which emanates from *England*, where a frequent observer of school practice decries

"... The lack of meaningful activity in the physical education lesson... (with)... primary school pupils standing or sitting around" during physical education lessons; minimal activity is complemented by "very few children (being able) to catch, throw or strike a small ball effectively" (Oxley, 1998, pp. 55-56).

It remains to be seen whether curriculum developments and other reform initiatives will result in a secure future for the subject in schools. For the majority of young people, schools remain the main provider and often the only access to quality instruction in a broad range of physical activities. Thus, the nature and quality of delivery of the physical education curriculum is fundamentally important to the future of the subject.

School Physical Education and Sport: Future Directions

The decrease of numbers of participants from school-based and post-school sports-related activity is either indicative of a failure of school physical education to deliver relevant messages, or is one issue that national and local sports policies and strategies have failed to address, or both. The fundamental question is what should be done to secure a sustainable future for school physical education and sport? One answer is to accept the situation and suffer the consequences; the other is to confront the situation and address available options to help resolve some of the problems. Whatever the direction for resolution, there is little point in 'fiddling' whilst physical education in particular 'burns'. As a comparativist, I am acutely aware of the dangers of generalising and making specific suggestions and/or prescriptions for universal applicability because whilst globally we might be able to see trends and tendencies and unquestionably there are similarities, there are also differences and variations and, policy and practice, more often than not, are subject to localisation and/or local interpretations; what might be relevant here in Croatia may not be relevant in England or Sweden. Nevertheless, wherever and whatever the situation and trends, there are mutual goals to be shared, for which there are 'universalities' to be considered for 'local' application. The emphasis has to be on advocacy and action to meet with the challenges at different and various levels. Essentially the challenges embrace a number of strategic initiatives at school, local community, national and international levels, which can have trans-national or cross-cultural applicability as long as they are suitably adapted to meet with 'local' socio-cultural, economic, politico-ideological etc. circumstances.

1. Role and Reconstruction of Quality Physical Education

In an era of individualisation and search for self-identity, personal orientation and goals and gaining independence, children can be typified by disengagement and fleetingness. For these children, the traditional content of physical education and sport has little relevance to their life-style context. Generally, changes in movement culture have not really influenced physical education programmes and there are considerable discrepancies between what occurs in lessons in school and what is going on in the movement culture outside the school (Crum, 1998). It is worth remembering that it is not the activity, but the reason for taking part that sustains participation. The reasons for participation

have to be personally meaningful and socially valued. Thus, not only is the relevance of activities (and how they are delivered) to young people important but also the ambience of the activity setting has to be attractive and appealing.

In those countries where traditional forms of school physical education prevail, they consistently fail to provide many young people with opportunities for significant and valuable learning. Worse than this, they are actually convincing these young people that a physically active lifestyle is not for them. The issue here is we have too much of this kind of physical education. The school physical education curriculum is in need of re-appraisal in regard both to its fundamental purposes and to the pedagogic processes that might best bring this about; there is a need to create new, quality forms of physical education. Physical educators need to put their own house in order, using the research and scholarly skills as well as the craft knowledge available and follow up by formulating and advocating vigorously for forms of physical education that are specific to the local contexts, needs and wants of young people and their communities. If positive attitudes are valued and are to be fostered by society, then provision of a higher quality of experience than hitherto is required. This requires long term strategies, since it involves creating new beliefs and evaluations for many individuals rather than building on existing ones. Any reshaping, however, should incorporate strategies to foster *body/self concepts* (to be seen in a multi-dimensional context, in which social values and cultural sub-groups have some part), *healthy well-being* and *moral education*. Together these will contribute to the creation of the '*physically educated person*' and the *enrichment of quality of life*. The formulation of quality programmes will assist in attracting young people to the joy and pleasure of physical activity and so foster an 'active life-style' philosophy with a focus on relevance and understanding as well as reflection through life-style management skills that keep them acting upon their needs for activity. Additionally, pedagogical strategies linked with giving a voice to children, whereby the teacher enhances opportunities for meaningful and relevant experiences need to be developed. A central construct in students' interpretations of physical education is whether it is 'relevant to me and my life': "...are they competent to engage with the world, have they understood what they have learned, why they learned it and how it is relevant in a lifelong context" (Fisher, 2001). Initial and in-service training should properly address these pedagogical developments.

2. Inclusion

Policy should aim to extend and expand opportunities for participation for, and by, all. Such inclusion policies imply that physical education and sport, if to be pursued as educational and a socio-cultural activity as well as for any intrinsic values such as fun and enjoyment, will have to adapt to people (in the language of the commercial world of consumerism they have to be 'customer oriented' and 'customer friendly') and adapt to the needs of sub-groups such as children, families, the unemployed, senior citizens, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

Multi-sector support should be mobilised to lobby for clear government statements of policy to foster inclusion in and through physical education. Physical education should be recognised as the foundation base of the inclusive participation continuum. If traditions of equal opportunities to participate in physical activity during childhood and youth are developed in schools, children will be more likely to participate in sport in out-of-school and post-school settings. Given the pivotal role of schools in empowering young people in physical activity participation experiences and providing human resources training, the physical education practitioner, supported by wider community human, physical and financial resources, has a key role here.

3. Physical Education and Sport in Partnership

Partnership is the key word for future directions in the mutual best interests of physical education and sport in and out of schools. However, partnerships come with a number of challenges. One of the important issues in developing long term, productive partnerships is finding a common language and purpose. If the core business of each partner is not inextricably linked, the long-term viability of the partnership will be questionable. Any partnership must be based on equity with a common agenda. A difficulty in forging partnerships has been mistrust of each other's agendas. This task is made more difficult when agencies become involved in physical education whose interests and agendas are first and foremost their own and not the educational, health and social needs of all young people in specific locales. Consequently, physical education organisations need to be careful and vigilant in entering into partnerships with both profit and non-profit organisations whose self-interests significantly influence their conceptions of quality physical education. A challenge is to develop catalysts, which protect the integrity of all partners

(Campbell, 1998). True partnership should embrace sharing of values and agreement on roles and responsibilities. A variety of agencies can and do provide opportunities for young people to engage in sport. These should be co-ordinated and guided to the benefit of people through the notion of 'Active Schools' associated with 'Active Communities', for which it is essential to identify and develop pathways for young people to continue participating in sport after, outside and beyond school, to form partnerships with the sporting community to extend and improve the opportunities available for young people to remain active through sport, to consider the needs and interests of young people in planning activities and to ensure that information is available to young people within school on the sporting opportunities available in the local community.

The notion of partnership should be extended to include institutional collaborative initiatives at international level. At present, there are positive signs that such collaboration is occurring between a host of world bodies. Other vested interest organisations should join with other relevant international single sport and multi-sport federations and with professional and academic agencies to take concerted international action to safeguard the fundamental human right to physical education and sport articulated in the 1978 UNESCO Charter of Physical Education and Sport as well as to lobby governments to ensure the rightful place for physical education and sport in various life curricular community settings. But collaborative partnerships at regional, national, regional and city or municipal levels are at least equally important.

4. Dissemination and Application of Research and Good Practice

Research is an imperative in order to provide valid and reliable data and an improved scientific knowledge base for action. The findings need to be disseminated not just through scholarly academic journals but also interpreted through professional publications available and accessible to the practitioner and in a language that can be readily understood. The messages from research and good practice have to be widely disseminated, interpreted and applied in specific national and local situations. Academic and professional associations, journals, other publications and national, regional and multiple local media channels have an important role here not only in all community contexts but also in fostering public relations' exercises in all community settings and promoting involvement of organisations within the wider community to embrace partnerships of vested interest groups.

5. Self-help Strategy for Developing Countries

In so-called 'Developing Countries', many often imperialist imposed physical education and sport programmes are neither appropriate nor relevant to populations and cultures. Many imported/imposed interpretations and applications are more often than not resource wasting. Enjoyment, sustainability, local community involvement and educational message dissemination should be at the heart of endeavours in school physical education and sport in the wider community. Aid if it is forthcoming should adopt the principle of encouraging less well-endowed European partners to help in helping themselves in a process of 'Harambee' (pulling together) in order to foster the ideal of extending equality of opportunity in physical activity.

Conclusions

The research data point to inadequate watching briefs on what is happening (or not as the case may be) in physical education across Europe and also highlight the need for more and better quality baseline data in each country. Arguably, the data provide a distorted picture of physical education in schools in Europe. Without doubt, there are examples of positively implemented programmes and good practices in physical education in most, if not all, countries across the region and it would be remiss not to acknowledge these. Equally there is evidence to generate considerable disquiet about the situation and idealistic, and sometimes politically inspired, rhetoric can, and does, mask the truth. In spite of official documentation on principles, policies and aims, actual implementation into practice exposes the realities of situations.

Many governments have committed themselves through legislation to making provision for physical education but the evidence suggests they have been either slow or reticent in translating this into implemented action, including quality of delivery. Deficiencies are apparent in curriculum time allocation, subject status, material, human and financial resources, gender and disability issues and the quality of the physical education curriculum and its delivery. Of particular concern are the considerable inadequacies in facility and equipment supply, frequently associated with under-funding, especially in central and eastern European and in some parts of countries in southern Europe (e.g. southern Italy), where economically developing nations or regions predominate. Concomitant with the perceived decline in the position of physical education in schools and its questionable quality,

there is general disquiet over the falling fitness standards of young people and high youth drop-out rates from physical/sporting activity engagement. It seems that the disquiet is exacerbated by insufficient and/or inadequate school-community co-ordination and problems of communication in some countries. In too many European countries there is a narrow and unjustifiable conception of the role of physical education merely to provide experiences, which serve to reinforce achievement-orientated competition performance sport, thus limiting participatory options rather than expanding horizons. In this context, it is unsurprising that pupil interest in physical education declines throughout the school years and young people become less active in later school years.

The trend to reduced opportunities at school for daily physical education, coupled with the continuing decline in physical activity within the home and community settings, especially in the economically developed world, are contributing to the development of sedentary lifestyle patterns that continue into adulthood and life beyond. There are perhaps more young people suffering from Repetitive Strain Injury ('mouse wrist') than 'tennis elbow', or 'soccer-knee'. The need for the promotion of active, healthy lifestyles among children and youth is great. In many countries, increasing numbers of young people are exposed to a wide variety of social ills and behaviours, which put their health and lifestyles at risk. This is evidenced by reports not only of declining activity levels, increasing obesity and increasing sedentary health risk factors, but also of poor self-image, inadequate nutrition, family problems, stress, higher drop out rates, youth violence, increases in smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse within the young population.

If physical education is to sustain a school curricular presence, and promote and foster physical activity as a foundation for participation in sport, then issues have to be confronted. If significant others are to be persuaded of the real importance of physical education, application of political skills and argument of the case at local, through national to international levels will be required because commitment to an essential enterprise and delivery of a quality curriculum will in themselves be insufficient. Policy makers, decision takers, committees, administrators, other subject colleagues and 'clients' need to be lobbied and convinced of the educational authenticity of physical education. The will to promote physical education and sport has to be reflected in clear government statements of inclusion policies not just in

statements of ideological rhetoric to provide access opportunities to all sections of the community. To this end, perhaps the better interests of children will be served by closer and effective partnerships of schools, pupils, parents, communities and agencies of education, sport and health with relevant shared responsibilities.

The perceived threats to school physical education should also be a source of concern for all protagonists of sport participation and life-long physical activity engagement. Without the necessary foundations laid down within school physical education programmes, participation in sports-related activity is likely to suffer. For the majority of young people schools provide the main, and often the only, access to quality instruction in physical and sports-related activities. It is reasonable to suggest that physical education in conjunction with other physical activity constituency partners should have a role to play from 'cradle' to 'grave', to create the 'physically educated person'. Schools through the physical education programmes are the major way of regularly contacting and influencing a large percentage of the world's children, tomorrow's parents and senior citizens. The school is the most likely institutional agency with the potential to positively impact attitudes and behaviours of all children and youth as a captive audience regardless of sex, age, ability or disability, ethnicity, creed or socio-economic or socio-cultural status. School physical education is vital to all aspects of the normal growth and

development (physical, social and emotional) of children and youth. Additionally, it builds a natural immunising effect against many sedentary lifestyle diseases and establishes the foundation of skills for a lifetime of participation.

The promotion of the causes of physical education and sport and those responsible for their delivery is a task for *all*. The reshaping of school physical education and sport presents challenges, which can only serve to improve the present situation. Combined they will contribute to extend opportunities for engagement in physical activity to all cultural and sub-cultural groups over the full life span as well as in all institutional and wider societal communities. These are challenges that should not ignore relevant scholarly research, which, in recent years has made significant progress in unravelling some of the 'mysteries' of learning and socialisation processes in different and various cultural and cross-cultural contexts. They are also challenges which, to paraphrase the United States Surgeon General's 1996 Report on Physical Activity and Health, should be taken up to accord physical education and sport the same level of attention given to other public policies and practices that affect the population at large. The right to participate in play, physical and sporting activity may not be seen as the most important global problem, compared with starvation, poverty, disease, illiteracy and terrorism etc., nevertheless access to it can be defined at the very least as a fundamental human right.

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NASTAVA TJELESNE I ZDRAVSTVENE KULTURE I ŠKOLSKI SPORT U EUROPI – RETORIKA I STVARNOST: STANJE I PERSPEKTIVE

Sažetak

Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na neprimjerenu kontrolu i nedostatna izvješća o tome što se događa (odnosno, ne događa) u tjelesnom odgoju diljem Europe te u prvi plan postavljaju potrebu za prikupljanjem što više kvalitetnih i usklađenih temeljnih podataka o svakoj zemlji. Postojeća izvješća, nažalost, daju iskrivljenu sliku o stanju tjelesnog odgoja u europskim školama. Nema sumnje da se mogu pronaći brojni primjeri dobre primjene kvalitetnih programa i kvalitetne prakse tjelesnog odgoja u većini europskih zemalja, ako ne i u svima, i bilo bi nedopustivo kada to ne bismo prepoznali i priznali. Jednako postoje i dokazi koji izazivaju snažan nemir zbog situacije, dok idealistička, i ponekad politički inspirirana, retorika može prikriti, i prikrijeti, pravo stanje stvari. Usprkos službenim dokumentima o načelima, politici i proklamiranim ciljevima, njihova sudbina u praksi, u primjeni otkriva svu težinu situacije.

Mnoge su se vlade posvetile tomu da donošenjem zakona i propisa osiguraju osnovu za funkcioniranje tjelesnog odgoja, no dokazi govore o tome da su u primjeni propisa u praksi ili prespore ili vrlo samozatajne, osobito na području kvalitete poučavanja u nastavi. Naročito su uočljivi propusti i nedostaci koji se odnose na: 1) programom predviđeni broj sati tjelesnog odgoja, 2) status predmeta unutar škole i u širem okruženju, 3) materijalne, kadrovske i financijske uvjete za rad, 4) probleme vezane za ravnopravnost spolova, 5) probleme vezane za učenike s invaliditetom, 6) kvalitetu programa tjelesnog odgoja i 7) kvalitetu poučavanja, tj. na kvalitetu same izvedbe nastave. Naročito zabrinjava osobito loše stanje objekata i opreme za izvođenje nastave tjelesnog odgoja, koje je često praćeno i nedostatnim financijskim sredstvima za te potrebe, u većini srednjoeuropskih i istočnoeuropskih zemalja, ali i u nekim dijelovima južnoeuropskih zemalja (npr. jug Italije). Usporedno s uočenim sniženjem ugleda i položaja tjelesnog odgoja u školama i s upitnom kvalitetom nastave javlja se opća zabrinutost zbog znatnog pada funkcionalnih i motoričkih sposobnosti mladeži, kao i zbog nedopustivo visokog postotka odustajanja mladih ljudi od vježbanja ili sudjelovanja u sportskim aktivnostima. U previše europskih zemalja uloga tjelesnog odgoja se preusko i neopravdano svodi sa-

mo na pružanje prilike za stjecanje iskustva, što učvršćuje natjecateljski pristup po kojemu je važan samo sportski uspjeh pa natjecateljski sportovi dolaze u prvi plan. Time se obezvređuje načelo sudjelovanja, a i horizonti i spoznaje o vrijednosti i važnosti tjelesne aktivnosti se ne proširuju, već se sužuju. Ne treba onda čuditi da interes učenika za tjelesni odgoj opada iz godine u godinu te da mladi postaju fizički sve manje aktivni.

Trend smanjenja mogućnosti za svakodnevni tjelesni odgoj u školama, udružen s trendom kontinuiranog opadanja fizičke aktivnosti mladih u roditeljskom domu ili u široj zajednici, naročito u tzv. razvijenom svijetu, pridonosi razvoju sedentarnog (sjedilačkog) načina života koji se nastavlja i u odrasloj dobi i kroz cijeli život. Vrlo vjerojatno danas u Europi više mladih pati od kroničnog istegnuća zapešća ("kompjutorsko zapešće" od "mouse wrist"; miš je dio računalne opreme, op. prev.) nego od "teniskog lakta" ili "nogometnog koljena". Danas je potreba za promidžbom zdravog i aktivnog stila života među djecom i mladima ogromna, a postaje sve veća. U mnogim je zemljama sve više mladih izloženo pogubnim utjecajima sve raznolikijih socijalno neprihvatljivih oblika ponašanja i delinkvencije koji dovode u opasnost njihovo zdravlje, pa čak i život. Te su tvrdnje potkrijepljene rezultatima istraživanja koji govore ne samo o sniženim razinama tjelesne aktivnosti, o povećanom postotku pretilih osoba u populaciji ili o povećanim zdravstvenim rizicima uzrokovanim sedentarnim načinom života, nego i izvješćima o tome da mladi stvaraju lošu sliku o sebi, o nepravilnoj prehrani, obiteljskim problemima, stresu, velikom postotku odustajanja od tjelesne aktivnosti, povećanom nasilju među mladima, povećanom postotku pušača među mladima, kao i o povećanoj zloporabi alkohola i droga.

Želi li tjelesni odgoj zadržati svoje mjesto u školskom programu među predmetima obvezatnog programa te promicati i učvršćivati naviku fizičke aktivnosti kao temelja za sudjelovanje u sportu, tada se valja suočiti sa svim tim problemima. Ako važne druge (roditelje, učitelje i druge) u životu djeteta valja uvjeriti u važnost tjelesnog odgoja, tada će nam trebati sve postojeće političke vještine i argumenti u korist tjelesnog odgoja od lokalne preko nacionalne do međunarodne razine jer za postignuće cilja ne-

će nam biti dovoljna samo predanost osnovnoj zadaći (promicanju tjelesnog odgoja) i primjena kvalitetnog nastavnog plana i programa. Valja utjecati na (lobirati) tvorce politike odgoja i obrazovanja, donositelje odluka, članove odbora i povjerenstava, upravitelje, kolege iz drugih predmeta i "korisnike" i uvjeriti ih u obrazovnu i odgojnu autentičnost tjelesnog odgoja.

Uočene prijetnje školskom tjelesnom odgoju trebale bi zabrinuti i sve koji su na bilo koji način protagonisti uključenosti u sportske i cjeloživotne aktivnosti tjelesnog vježbanja. Nedostatak nužnih temelja, koji se mogu postaviti samo školskim programima tjelesnog odgoja, negativno će se odraziti i na sudjelovanje u sportskim aktivnostima. Naime, za ogromnu većinu mladih ljudi škole su glavno, a nerijetko i jedino, mjesto gdje mogu dobiti kvalitetnu poduku iz tjelesnih i sportskih aktivnosti. Stoga je logično pretpostaviti da bi tjelesni odgoj, u suradnji s ostalim konstituirajućim partnerima tjelesne aktivnosti, morao igrati zapaženu ulogu "od kolijevke pa do groba" u životu svakog pojedinca ne bi li se oblikovala "tjelesno obrazovana osoba". Škole posredstvom svojih programa tjelesnog odgoja mogu redovito utjecati na ogroman postotak današnje djece i mladeži koji će sutra postati roditelji i građani treće dobi. Škola je najvjerojatnije jedina institucija koja može pozitivno utjecati na stavove i ponašanje **sve** djece i mladeži bez obzira na spol, dob, sposobnost ili nesposobnost, etničku pripadnost, vjersku pripadnost, socio-ekonomski ili socio-kulturni status, i to zato što sva djeca moraju ići u školu. Nastava tjelesnog odgoja u školama vitalna je

za sve aspekte normalnog rasta i razvoja (tjelesnog, socijalnog i emocionalnog) djece i mladeži. K tome, tjelesni odgoj stvara i prirodnu zaštitu organizma pred mnogobrojnim bolestima uzrokovanim sedentarnim načinom života i oblikuje temeljne vještine i sposobnosti koje omogućuju sudjelovanje u sportskim aktivnostima tijekom čitava života.

Promidžba ciljeva tjelesnog odgoja i sporta, kao i onih koji su odgovorni za provedbu programa, mora biti briga **svih**. Jer nije jednostavno preoblikovati tjelesni odgoj i sport u školama, to je velik izazov koji moramo prihvatiti da bismo poboljšali trenutačnu situaciju. Združeni, tjelesni odgoj i školski sport pridonijet će proširenju mogućnosti za bavljenje tjelesnom aktivnošću za sve kulturne i subkulturne skupine tijekom čitava života, kao i u svim institucijskim i širim društvenim zajednicama. To su izazovi koje ne smije ignorirati ni znanstvena zajednica i koji zavređuju relevantna istraživanja. Na sreću, znanstvena su istraživanja posljednjih godina skinula neke "velove tajne" s procesa poučavanja i socijalizacije u raznim i brojnim kulturološkim i međukulturnim kontekstima. To su izazovi koje valja prihvatiti želimo li da se tjelesnom odgoju i sportu poklanja jednaka pažnja kao i drugim javnim strategijama i djelatnostima i koje utječu na populaciju u cjelini. Pravo na igru, tjelesni odgoj i sudjelovanje u sportu možda i nije najvažniji svjetski problem, uspoređi li se s gladi, siromaštvom, bolestima, nepismenošću i terorizmom. No ono se, u najmanju ruku, može definirati kao osnovno ljudsko pravo.