

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MODERNIZATION OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POLISH SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

The issue of modernizing physical education in Poland ought to be analysed against the backdrop of the country's social, cultural and economic reality. The level of health and hygiene in Poland is alarmingly low. The country's morbidity rate continues to rise (incidence of coronary disease is particularly frequent), infant mortality rate is high while the average life span is falling. The sanitary conditions in the country are bad, obesity constitutes a serious problem, moreover, alcohol and nicotine addiction is rampant. Under these circumstances, the situation may be improved only through raising health awareness and the promotion of a new lifestyle.

With regard to the physical education theory, considerable emphasis ought to be put on the permanent education of the society intended to prepare its members for an active and creative participation in physical culture throughout their lifetime. Thus, the approach to the issue of modernization of the current physical education system in Poland accounts for a variety of factors. Consequently, modernization ought to encompass a number of task-specific issues which, for the sake of order in this paper, have been divided into 3 complementary categories: 1. axiological-teleological, 2. sociological (related to social environment), 3. praxeological.

The outline highlights the major theses of criticism concerning the traditional model of physical education in Poland and, additionally, it recommends the necessary changes to be introduced.

Key words: modernization of physical education, health and hygiene, physical activity, lifestyle

ABLAUF DES MODERNISIERENS IM SYSTEM DES SPORTUNTERRICHTS IN DEN SCHULEN POLENS

Zusammenfassung:

Die Frage der Modernisation vom Sportunterricht in Polen soll aufgrund der soziologischen, kulturellen und ökonomischen Wirklichkeit analysiert werden. Das Niveau der Gesundheit und Hygiene ist erschreckend niedrig. Die Krankhaftigkeitsrate steigt (die Koronarkrankheitenrate ist besonders häufig), Säuglingssterblichkeitsrate ist sehr hoch, und die Lebenserwartungen senken. Sanitäre Bedingungen sind schlecht, Übergewicht ist ein ernstes Problem geworden, Rauchen und Trunksucht sind wuchernd. Diese Situation kann nur dadurch verbessert werden, dass die Leute sich der Gesundheit und der Entwicklung von einem neuen Lebensstil bewusst werden. In bezug auf die Theorie des Sportunterrichts soll wesentliche Betonung auf die permanente Ausbildung der Gesellschaft gelegt werden, um die Mitglieder dieser Gesellschaft für die aktive und kreative Teilnahme an der regelmäßigen körperlichen Aktivität vorzubereiten. Auf diese Weise kann der Zugang zum Thema Modernisation des heutigen Sportunterrichtssystems in Polen als ein Grund für verschiedene Faktoren erklärt werden. Letztlich soll diese Modernisation eine bestimmte Anzahl von aufgaben-spezifische Themen umfassen, die in diesem Artikel in drei einander ergänzende Kategorien aufgeteilt werden: 1. axiologisch-teleologische Themen, 2. soziologische Themen, und 3. praxeologische Themen.

Einerseits wirft dieser Abriss das Schlaglicht auf die Hauptthemen der Kritik, die auf das traditionelle Modell des Sportunterrichts in Polen gerichtet wird, und andererseits empfiehlt er die notwendigen Veränderungen, die durchgeführt werden sollen.

Schlüsselwörter: Modernisation des Sportunterrichts, Gesundheit und Hygiene, körperliche Aktivität, Lebensstil

The fall of communism in Poland in 1989 brought into discussion many pressing issues such as a need for changes in the overall school and educational system including the system of physical education.

It is new attitudes and practices as well as the wish for the changes in the way of living on a macrosocial scale that are considered as the starting point for all innovating projects and proposals. This is what is postulated by the critics of the Polish school system. The critical comments centre on the following points:

- Schools have become socially isolated and far removed from real life situations, they put emphasis on books rather than on the pupils. Moreover, they do not enjoy high social esteem and do not contribute to the comprehensive development of children and adolescents. The schools fail to prepare young people for work and to participate in cultural activities;

- Boredom, passivity, fear, lack of emotional bonds, and the authoritarian attitude of teachers are the prevailing features of Polish schools;
- Teaching, carried out carelessly and quickly in overcrowded classes, is verbalized with the focus on memorizing. Nothing is done to encourage the pupils to be free to express themselves, to be active, creative or independent;
- Lessons carried out in classes are the only way of arranging any school activity, which has proved to be ineffective in preparing individuals to participate fully in social life;
- The school does not have enough financial resources, which results in a lack of teaching aids and facilities, bad financial conditions of the teachers as well as difficulty in building new school buildings.

In addition, the hygienic-health conditions in Poland are disgraceful: a high incidence of diseases, particularly cardiovascular system diseases, a high infant mortality rate, shortened life span, bad cleanliness conditions, a growing addiction to alcohol and nicotine, obesity, etc. The representative investigation on 18-year-old individuals from Wrocław (south-west of Poland) showed sight defects in 18% of subjects, dental decay in 60 %, lowered vital capacity of lungs in 15%, various sorts of electrocardiographic (ECG) changes in 40 %, faulty posture in 65% (Charzewski, 1989). Moreover, the deterioration of the working capacity and endurance fitness can be seen. Many voice their opinions about the symptoms of biological degeneration or even the danger of deviating from the right course of human population development (Raczek, 1986).

A new category of threats such as alcohol abuse, smoking and drug abuse escape a precise statistical analysis. The range of those dangers is growing dramatically affecting younger and younger people. 75% of post secondary students have drunk alcoholic beverages. Over one million of Polish adolescents came into contact, although irregularly, with various types of narcotics, and over three thousand of individuals are considered, according to Monar¹, drug addicts. Among adult smokers there are over 60% of men and 30% of women. What is even more worrying is the fact that the number of young girls who smoke is increasing.

The research on the daily timetable of a secondary school student showed that homework was the main form of spending leisure time. Young people devote 36.0 % of their free time to homework, 13% to watching TV, 11.5% to reading books and the press,

6.7% to helping with the housework, 5.4% to meeting friends, 5.1% to walking and 3.5% to listening to the radio. Different types of sports and recreational activities arranged in school and after school classes overall amount to 3.5% of free time. The number of people who do physical exercises in sports clubs and physical education associations equals about 6%, and taking into account those who practice sport individually it does not exceed 8% (Wolańska, 1989). The crisis of the 80's hampered the development and spread of physical culture in Polish society.

In order to find out how often different recreational forms of physical activity were undertaken, the investigation of teenagers from a grammar school in Kraków was carried out. It showed the following:

The rest of the subjects - 54.8 % did not do any forms of physical and recreational activity except during physical education classes at school. The results show that Polish schools do not satisfy the pedagogical requirements of developing abilities and interests nor do they prepare students to look after their body, health and strength (Bukowiec, 1990).

The situation presented above largely stems from the bad working conditions of Polish teachers. Sports equipment shortages, bad quality and lack of sports facilities, low salaries - these are the facts with which Polish teachers are faced. All these factors taken together are by no means conducive to the development and favourable approach to physical education. 40% of schools do not have gym halls and 75 % of physical education classes in 1st to 4th forms of primary schools take place in a school corridor. Thus, it is not surprising that young people perceive physical education classes neither as a means for achieving future sports

the frequency of doing physical exercises	number in percents
every day	11.3%
every 2-3 days	13.5%
once a week	11.5%
once in two weeks	3.2%
once a month	2.2%
very rarely	0.4%
no data available	3.5%
Overall	45.2%

¹ Monar - a Polish organisation that provides help to drug addicts and AIDS sufferers.

career nor as an important factor helping in looking after their health. The school and any sports and recreational institutions are considered to play very little importance in promoting any form of social activity among teenagers. Girls see physical education in terms of health, hygienic and aesthetic as well as integrating and socializing values. Boys, on the other hand, appreciate fitness-sport aspects of physical education.

According to the recent data provided by the Department of National Education, 27,448 of primary and secondary schools were attended by 7,528,768 pupils in 1993. This was tantamount to 20% of the population in Poland. It turns out that the systematic and central approach to physical education in schools (cohesion, modernization) becomes more and more difficult. Due to the changes taking place in Poland, many initiatives and decisions about education are now taken by self-government administration or a teacher himself/herself (financial decisions, detailed syllabuses, types of activities after classes). Moreover, private and public schools have appeared in Poland. According to the latest data, there are 985 such schools with eighty thousand pupils.

Thus, up-dating the physical education system in Polish schools should be viewed from a wider perspective. It should include a list of detailed objectives and tasks which will, for convenience, be presented here in three domains (planes) that complement each other: axiological-teleological, social and praxiological.

1. The axiological-teleological domain gives a set of certain values, it postulates that a school should aim at social-cultural values as well as originally humanistic and promoting health values. The emphasis is placed on the aspects of innovative, integrated and prospective education.

In the process of physical education the most important in this area are the following:

- filling up the "axiological vacuum" through inducement and being sensitized to a set of values (health, vital, moral, cognitive and aesthetic values) that can be found in various forms of physical activity and ways of looking after the body. It also concerns those values that provide various fascinating and vital experiences;
- sharpening awareness and arousing

interest, sustaining activeness and strengthening motivation, getting involved in various activities, discovering one's own self (abilities, aims and wishes), developing a sense of community and responsibility;

- preventing from separating physical education from other subjects in school through optimal intellectualization and a far-reaching correlation between subjects;
- promoting and rewarding teachers for responsibility, creativity as well as anticipatory, empathic and dialogic attitude.

2. The social (environmental) domain emphasizes school receptiveness to the influence of the social environment and good cooperation between different groups within it. On one hand, this should help a school in attaining its didactic and educational objectives, and on the other hand, it may heighten society's awareness of the need for physical culture. Within this domain the following points are the most essential:

- real cooperation with parents, local self-government, health service institutions, sports clubs, youth organizations and physical culture associations;
- creating an encouraging social-moral atmosphere with an emphasis on a friendly attitude to other human beings, recognizing individual differences and reinforcing mutual trust between teacher and pupil;
- using sports-recreational infrastructure and taking advantage of natural values of social environment in creating a new style of living and in developing various forms of activity done outside the school and lesson situation;
- recognizing the problems associated with health, fitness, physical development, resistance and rest, for which not only the physical education teacher and the impoverished school health service should take care but also the whole school should shoulder the responsibility.

3. The praxiological domain concerns the functioning of the physical education system with regard to its practical aspects. The changes postulated deal with the everyday work of a school. They also refer to the issues of training in terms of organization, methods, activities, conditions and means as well as control and evaluation. The most important objectives are the following:

- Increasing the number of hours for teaching physical education classes. So far, most of the classes are missed due to either the pupils or teacher's absence from school, school celebrations and the like.
- There is a need for improving the hygienic conditions of the physical education classes. A lack of proper sanitary conditions make these classes unattractive and uninteresting, particularly, to a vast group of girls.
- The effort and strenuousness of physical activity during classes should be increased. Generally, the maximum pulse rate during a typical physical education class does not exceed 140 beats per minute and on average is too low.
- Physical education at school should not favour the more physically skillful pupils, paying less attention to poorer and average individuals. Pupils' sports results should not solely serve as a basis for the evaluation of teachers.
- Physical education should be engaged in the activities aiming at helping pupils to overcome various health disorders such as obesity, lowered physical fitness, chronic diseases or problems with body statics. Up till now, only 15% of those in need have participated in extra classes. Most pupils are excused from taking part in physical education classes at all.
- Carrying out a part of the curriculum not only during classes at school but also after school and during leisure time on Saturdays and Sundays.
- Granting young people the opportunity to take up various popular and attractive forms of physical activity with an emphasis on the so-called sports for lifetime.
- Recognizing intellectual-cognitive values through using films, slides, posters and modern control-diagnostic apparatus during physical education classes.
- Changing the approach to giving grades in physical education. Students should be graded on the basis of their systematic work in terms of physical fitness, knowledge, development of health-hygienic habits, ability to self-evaluate and control oneself. Thus evaluation should take into account the individual aspects of a pupil and the results of the whole educational process.

Conclusion

The data presented in the paper show how thorough the reform of physical education system in Polish schools should be. The changes refer to a today totally different perception of physical education aims and ideas. They are feasible if supported by the government and local self-governments, school headmasters, teachers, parents, youth organizations as well as mass media. The reform of the school physical education system should play an essential part in designing a national project of promoting health.

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