

PROFESSOR VLADIMIR FINDAK – FOUNDER OF TODAY’S TEACHING METHODOLOGY OF KINESIOLOGY IN CROATIA

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Summary – On 22 November 2007 Prof Vladimir Findak celebrated his 70th birthday. His rich opus includes 55 books and 275 published papers. He is a member of numerous prestigious national and international associations, he has been awarded a great number of acknowledgments, he started a number of anthological works which mark his successful career. He actively participated in more than 10 research projects and was the head scientist in many of them. He participated in more than 100 congresses in this country and abroad. During his 37 years of work in higher education, his scientific, professional and human value has been recognized both in Croatia and abroad.

Keywords: Vladimir Findak, teaching methodology of kinesiology, kinesiology

Preface

Professor Vladimir Findak is a scientist, a professional, a teacher, a person involved in sports, a social worker, a renowned manager, an excellent organizer and implementer. He is a member of numerous international and domestic professional associations and organizations, who celebrated his 70th birthday and 50 years of work on 22 November 2007. With his work, commitment and character he has contributed not only to science and the profession, but also to the time in which he has lived and worked. His refined sense for the written word attracts the curiosity of children, students in primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as of preschool teachers, primary and secondary teachers and professors. He is among the favourite authors of all the generations of his time. A scientist that has contributed so much to kinesiology and to methods of work in kinesiology, an author preferred both by Croatian and European kinesiologists, he claims that writing textbooks for the first, second, third and fourth grade of primary school was one of his most demanding tasks. All this confirms the value criteria which, in Professor Findak’s case, always put the “youngest of my brothers” – the child –

first. A man first of all, but also an expert and a scientist, he puts his teaching work before everything else. His other obligations, such as his work in the Academy of Educational Sciences, the Croatian Kinesiology Federation and different organizational committees take up more than 16 hours of his time every day – he knows the answers to many questions, who never says “no” to obligations and always fulfills them in the best possible way. Accepting responsibilities and facing problems have become stereotypes of Professor Findak, so recognizable by his associates, he himself being their most reliable associate. I have experienced it myself when working with Professor Findak, when I learned the meaning of the word “professionalism”, even after 50 years of working at full intensity as a sportsman, an expert and a scientist. Always punctual, the president of the Academy of Educational Sciences starts his classes, meetings, consultations, and exams on time. Such an attitude towards others calls for respect. Numerous kinesiologists, teachers, experts and scientists regularly attend Professor Findak’s lectures. Underpaid PE teachers fill lecture rooms to attend lectures given by this living legend and real authority. Generally, at openings of congresses, capacity audiences applaud their scientific role-model. That is only possible to individuals with great integrity, and whose life is like an open book, to be shared with others to its most valuable and minutest detail.

These and many other qualities, especially love for people, for his work and his profession, place him not only among acknowledged but also renowned scientists and professionals in this country and beyond in the area of kinesiology and its applied areas.

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Curriculum vitae

Prof VLADIMIR FINDAK, PhD was born on November 22, 1937 in Zagreb where he completed his primary and secondary education. After that, in 1957, he completed a one year study of physical education at the Teacher Training College in Zagreb and then graduated at the same Teacher Training College in Zagreb in 1960, and at the School for Physical Education in 1967. He earned his master’s degree in 1973 and obtained his doctoral degree in 1981. From 1957 to 1963 he worked as a physical education teacher in a primary school in Kutina. In 1963 he was transferred to secondary school (Kutina Grammar School) where he worked as a physical education teacher until 1970. In 1970, he applied at the Teacher’s Academy in Zagreb – Department of Physical Education where he was accepted as lecturer. He was a lecturer until 1974 when he became a professor in higher education. Since teaching methodology of physical education was the subject of his scientific interest, he defended his doctoral thesis in under the title

“Modernization of Physical Education from Grade 1 to Grade 4 of Primary School” in 1981 at the Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego Instytutu metodiki wychowania fizycznego in Warsaw. He became assistant professor for the course Teaching Methodology of Physical Education in 1982. In 1983 he was appointed by the Executive Committee of the Croatian Parliament as assistant to the president of the Committee for Education, Culture, Physical and Technical Education. However, after taking over this duty he remained at his faculty attending to duties and tasks relating to the course Teaching Methodology of Physical Education. He was elected full professor in 1987. In 1990 he was appointed by the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Parliament as assistant to the Minister of Education, Culture and Sports. He remained in this position until 1993, when he returned to the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb – Pedagogical sciences. In 1993, after receiving a positive evaluation of his achievement in educational work he was for the second time elected full professor. He worked at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb – Pedagogical Sciences until 1996 when he transferred to the Faculty of Physical Education, University of Zagreb as full professor for the subject Teaching Methodology of Kinesiology. In 1998 he acquired academic tenure as full professor. After 50 years of work in education of which 37 years in higher education institutions he still holds this position at the Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb.

Prof Vladimir Findak has been active for 50 years in the area of education. In that period he took active part in designing physical education curricula at all levels of education – from primary school and secondary school to higher education, postgraduate and doctoral programs of study. Since 1985 he has participated as a lecturer in postgraduate programs of study at several universities in Croatia and abroad and has been head of postgraduate studies in the area of kinesiological education since 1996. He has been the head of the doctoral program of study since 2006. During the last twenty years he has been mentor to a number of students preparing their master's and doctoral dissertations as well as member of the Committee for evaluating master's and doctoral dissertations at his faculty and other faculties in the country and abroad. It is evident that in the last 37 years, Prof Findak was involved in the education of a great number of preschool teachers, primary school teachers, special education teachers, teachers of physical education and kinesiology professors. In addition to that, he was actively involved in the professional development of all profiles of educational staff. He was director and lecturer in many seminars, symposia, courses and public discussions for preschool teachers, teachers, subject area teachers and professors. As he holds other specializations, he was director and lecturer at many conferences for the education and professional development of staff in sports and sports rehabilitation.

The scientific and professional work of Prof Vladimir Findak is related to the area of kinesiology and its applied disciplines, especially teaching methodology of kinesiology. To this day he has published 55 textbooks, manuals and monographs independently and in cooperation with other authors, 105 scientific and 170

professional articles or a total of 275 articles. He actively participated in over 10 research projects, and was head researcher in many of them. He was an active participant in over 100 scientific and professional conferences in Croatia and abroad. During his 37 years of work at higher education institutions he spent some time abroad (Poland 1973, German DR 1976, the Czech Republic 1978, Poland 1980, Federal Republic of Germany 1985, Austria 1986, Hungary 1986), and undertook study tours to the USSR, Spain, Bulgaria and Sweden. He was guest lecturer in several European countries: Poland – Warsaw 1980, Slovenia – Ljubljana 1998, Kranjska Gora 2001, Austria – Graz 2002, Hungary – Pecs 2005, Italy – Bolzano 2006. To this day he reviewed more than 400 scientific and professional articles in Croatian journals; he reviewed many publications from abroad, as well as scientific and professional articles by foreign authors.

As a public worker Prof Vladimir Findak has been an active participant in many scientific, professional, sports and social organizations. He is the author of several anthological works and documents, he participated in public media, radio and TV shows and has been holding multiple offices and functions. In 1989 he was elected honorary president for life of the Croatian Association of Pedagogues for Physical Education. In 1991 he was one of the founders of the Croatian Olympic Committee and in 1992 was elected as full member of the Croatian Academy of Educational Sciences. In 2003, he was elected honorary president of the Association of Kinesiologists of Teaching Institutions and advisor to the supervisors of the Republic of Croatia.

He was president of the following Organizational committees:

- 2nd Congress of physical education experts of the former Yugoslavia in Zagreb, 1984.
- 8th School of physical education experts of the former Yugoslavia in Šibenik, 1988.
- 1st – 10th Summer school of physical education experts of Croatia, 1992-2001.
- 11th – 16th Summer school of Croatian kinesiologists, 2002-2007.
- 1st – 4th Summer school for Croatian primary school teachers, 1994-2001.
- 1st – 9th Croatian conference on the training of non-swimmers in Croatia, 1994-2006.
- 1st – 4th Summer week of sports of primary school students from the Alps-Adria region (Austria, Italy, Hungary, Germany, Slovenia, Switzerland, Croatia), Rovinj, 1999-2007.

In addition to that, he was member of the Executive or Organizational Committee of: the 1st Congress of Physical Education Experts of the Former Yugoslavia (Belgrade, 1981), the 3rd Congress (Novi Sad, 1987), the 4th Congress (Bled, 1990), the FISU/CESU Conference, the University Games '87 (Zagreb,

1987), the Conference on Sports in the Alps-Adria countries (Rovinj, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2004), the 13th International Scientific Conference of the Committee for Sports and Leisure Time ICSSPE-UNESCO (Rovinj, 1989).

Other activities include:

- editor-in-chief of the journal „Vjesnik“– the official journal of the Croatian Association of Physical Education Experts, 1977-1987,
- member of the editorial board for the area of education in the journal «Kinesiology», 1987-2007,
- member of the editorial board for the area of physical and health education in the journal „Metodika“, 1999-2007,
- editor-in-chief of the Conference proceedings (10) of all the Summer schools of physical education experts in Croatia, 1992-2001,
- editor-in-chief of the Conference proceedings (6) of all the Summer schools of Croatian kinesiologists, 2002-2007,
- editor-in-chief of the Conference proceedings of the first five Croatian symposia on the training of non-swimmers, 1994-1998,
- editor-in-chief of the Conference proceedings of the four Summer schools for elementary school teachers in Croatia, 1994-2001.

In addition to that, Prof Vladimir Findak was member of the editorial staff of numerous publications which were published on the occasion of various meetings, congresses, symposia, etc.) in Croatia and abroad:

- the 2nd Yugoslav Symposium on the training of non-swimmers, Pančevo, 1987,
- the 3rd Yugoslav Symposium on the training of non-swimmers, Portorož, 1990,
- the 13th International Scientific Conference of the Committee for Sports and Leisure Time ICSSPE-UNESCO, Rovinj, 1989,
- the 2nd International Symposium on Sport for the Youth, Bled, 1993,
- 1st-4th International Conference on Sport in the Alps-Adria Countries, Rovinj, 1993, 1996, 1999, Opatija, 2004,
- 1st-4th International Conference on Kinesiology, Dubrovnik, 1997, 1999, Opatija 2002, 2005.

Prof Vladimir Findak has been continually present in sports for almost 60 years, as an active sportsman, a professional or a sports official. As a sportsman he competed in swimming, athletics, gymnastics, soccer and handball. As a coach in athletics, soccer and handball he achieved a series of notable results together with his athletes, some of whom became national representatives. As a skiing coach he taught hundreds of children, students and adults how to ski. He was equally successful as a swimming coach, that is instructor of non-swimmers.

In the area of sport recreation, Prof Findak actively participated in the organization DTO “Partizan” (which was a precursor to today’s organization) since 1953.

Over the last 50 years of work, Prof Vladimir Findak held many offices and duties of which we mention only those relating to the highest functions in certain organizations and their executive bodies. He was:

- president of the Executive board of the Association of Croatian Pedagogues for Physical Education (1972-1974),
- president of the Chairmanship of the Association of Croatian Pedagogues for Physical Education (1975-1976),
- president of the Association of Croatian Pedagogues for Physical Education (1977-1983),
- member of the Chairmanship of the Association of Yugoslav Pedagogues for Physical Education (1980-1984),
- president of the Chairmanship of the Association of Yugoslav Pedagogues for Physical Education (1983-1984),
- president of the Committee for scientific work of the Association of Physical Education Pedagogues of Croatia (1977-2003),
- president of the Committee for science and research of the Association of Yugoslav Pedagogues for Physical Education (1985-1987),
- president of the Committee for teaching staff of the Croatian Association for Physical Education (1985-1989),
- president of the Professional Committee for the training of non-swimmers at the State Committee for the training of non-swimmers “Partizan” Croatia – Association for Sports Recreation (1977-1989),
- president of the Croatian Federation for (Sports) Recreation “Sport For All” (1992-2007),
- president of the Scientific Committee at the Croatian Kinesiology Association (2004-2007),
- president of the Council for Sport of Children and Young Adults of the Croatian Olympic Committee (1995-2005),
- member of the Chairmanship of the Croatian Academy of Educational Sciences (1997-2001),
- president of the Croatian Academy of Educational Sciences (2004-2008).

In addition to memberships and duties in Croatia he was also a member of international associations:

- FIEP-Federation Internationale d’Education Physical (1981-1985),
- FESC-Federation Europeenne des Sports Corporatifs (1992-2007),

- ICHPER-International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance (1994-1998),
- FBSCHE-Forum für Bildung-Schulsport-Schule Alpe-Adria (1995-2005)
- EFCS-European Federation for Company Sport, currently vicepresident of the „Health Commission“,
- PGAJ – Projektgruppe für Schule und Schulsport Alpe-Adria, currently member of the Executive board,
- FIEP-Federation Internationale d'Education Physical, delegate of the Croatian kinesiological association in the assembly.

For his scientific, professional, educational, social work and work in sports he has received several awards and acknowledgements, including the following:

- State award for training non-swimmers, 1980,
- Award for meritorious physical education expert in Yugoslavia, 1985,
- City of Zagreb award for physical education, 1986,
- The May award of the Association of Organizations for Physical Education, 1989,
- Lifetime Achievement Award „Dr Franjo Bučar“, 1993,
- Trophy of the Croatian Olympic Committee, 1997,
- Award of the International Olympic Committee “Sport and Education”, 1999,
- Lifetime Achievement Award of the Croatian Association of Sport Recreation “Sport for All”, 2004.

He was awarded numerous acknowledgements, some of which by: the Athletic Federation of Croatia in 1964, the Handball Federation of Croatia in 1968, the Association for Defense against Drowning of Croatia in 1975, the Pedagogical association of PE of Croatia in 1977, the Sport Recreational Federation of Croatia, in 1987, the Federation of Zagreb School Sport Clubs in 1989, the Association of Kinesiologists of Zagreb in 1997, the Croatian Olympic Committee in 2006.

Prof Vladimir Findak dedicated almost all of his life to his work, to his profession and research, which he not only successfully advocated and promoted but also represented. Besides that, he has been in the focus of all developments of the profession, participating in almost all events and activities relating to the promotion of the profession since the beginning of his work to this day, which makes his role and merit in the promotion of the profession and kinesiological thought even bigger.

Professor Findak's anthological work

Prof Vladimir Findak's role as initiator, participant and (co-)author in creating so called public documents which undoubtedly have anthological value is undisputed. This is because on one hand these documents are always current in their message, and on the other hand, these documents know no boundaries. On the contrary, although some of them were written 25 years ago, and others were promoted in the last 20 years, they have been used in their authentic form to this day. Moreover, as time goes by, some of them are becoming more relevant (such as the Declaration on movement as a health factor), since our civilization burdens children with increasing intellectual and emotional activity on one hand, at the same time providing insufficient physiological challenge. This comes accompanied by abundant food that is usually of unverified origin. (Nagyová, Ramacsay 1999). Physical activity prevents the manifestation of fatness (Flynn et al. 2006) and other health disorders (Bouchard i Després, 1995). Research conducted by Horgan (2005) shows that 39% boys and 58% girls between 7 and 18 years of age exercise less than the recommended minimum of one hour per week. All those documents, although created 25 years ago, still have a universal value, which had to be recognized and lies primarily in their messages and the effects of their application. In order to comprehend their weight it is important to point out that these documents belong to different areas, through which important status and civilization issues are solved, as well as issues of life importance. This suggests not only the visionary instinct of Prof Vladimir Findak, his variety of interests, his fine sensibility for the problems of his profession, but also the appropriate quantity of humanism with which he himself and his profession react to the blows coming from life and work in the modern world. This shows that he has always been in the right place! As a matter of fact, his work speaks for itself. The mentioned documents are presented in chronological order, as they were created, and not according to other hierarchical criteria:

- I. CODE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION EXPERTS OF CROATIA**, Vladimir Findak, Ivan Gagro, Josip Pokec, authors, – Association of Physical Education Experts of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, 11 December 1982.
- II. BASIC COMMON CRITERIA FOR SWIMMING IN YUGOSLAVIA**, Ivko Šink – SR Slovenia, Vladimir Findak – SR Croatia, authors. „Partizan“ Yugoslavia – Association for Sport Recreation, „Partizan“ Croatia – Association for Sport Recreation, Republic Committee for the training of non-swimmers „Partizan“ Croatia, Lipik, 20 November 1983.
- III. STRUCTURING TEACHING METHODOLOGY FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A SCIENCE**, Vladimir Findak, author, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb – Pedagogical Sciences, Institute for

Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy – Pedagogical Sciences, Zagreb, 17 May 1985.

- IV. **OATH OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION PEDAGOGUES**, Miloš Mraković, Vladimir Findak, Dušan Metikoš, authors, Association of Physical Education Pedagogues of Yugoslavia, Association of Faculties for Physical Education of Yugoslavia, Rector's conference of the Alps – Adria countries, Bled, 5 October 1990.
- V. **DECLARATION ON MOVEMENT AS A FACTOR OF HEALTH**, Vladimir Findak, Miloš Mraković, authors, Association of Physical Education Pedagogues of Croatia, Rovinj, 7 July, 1994, Croatian Olympic Committee, Lausanne, 29 October 1994.

The principles of this Declaration seek to accomplish such natural living in which physical activity will be part of everyday life. All governments and non-government organizations should support and take steps to establish such a system in which regular physical exercise will be considered a factor of health and culture of living, and the right and obligation of every person.

Bibliography

Textbooks, manuals and monographs

Prof Vladimir Findak has published 55 textbooks, manuals and monographs. Twenty-seven titles were published by *Školska knjiga* from Zagreb.

(List of bibliographic sources could be found in Croatian version of article.)

Based on the analysis of the published books, it can be concluded that they are the fruit of not only theoretical, but also very intensive and lasting empirical work by the author. This is due primarily because the achievements of empirical and scientific knowledge of the author influenced not only the level of theoretical training and professional development in the area of sport education and sport recreation, but also their practical training and development. All the published titles can in a way be divided into 3 thematic units. The first one comprises of textbooks and manuals intended for children, students and young adults, that is, their introduction with various organizational types of work, especially extracurricular physical activities which can be practiced in their free time – with the aim to make physical exercise a permanent, daily addiction. The second thematic unit comprises of books in the area of teaching methodology which the author intended for preschool teachers, primary school teachers and physical education teachers. Thanks to the author, we are one of the rare professions (perhaps the only one) where basic teaching methodology issues are addressed at all levels of education. The third thematic unit comprises of books which deal with the issue relating to basic regularities relating to the implementation of the educational process,

the teaching process, the process of physical exercise, and books relating to the training of non-swimmers.

In the end it should be noted that the books by Prof Vladimir Findak are very well accepted in the professional community, not only because they are easily read, but because they are textbooks, manuals and monographs that carry a message, which is why he is so highly esteemed among children, pupils, students, preschool teachers, teachers, subject area teachers and professors.

Scientific work

Prof Vladimir Findak has published 105 scientific papers. Thirty-eight of them were published in journals quoted in secondary and tertiary publications whereas 67 were published in proceedings of home and international conferences. Here are some of these works:

Scientific papers published in journals quoted in secondary or tertiary publications

(List of scientific papers could be found in Croatian version of article.)

The majority of scientific articles are related to the teaching methodology of kinesiology, especially to issues of memory and valorization of the anthropological status of children, pupils and young adults. Furthermore, they deal with the methodology of planning physical exercises, of programming physical and health education, methods of work, the organization and implementation of the process of education, the teaching process, the process of physical exercise as well as other issues in the theory and practice of educational work. The published scientific articles have contributed to the raising teaching methodology of physical education, that is, teaching methodology of kinesiology to the level of a scientific discipline, which is what the author is known and acknowledged for not only in Croatia, but also abroad.

Prof Vladimir Findak's scientific articles have significantly improved and advanced the area of kinesiology, particularly applied kinesiology since they contributed to the development of a methodology and model by which they can in a scientifically founded way implement the process of individualized work in the areas of applied kinesiology, and especially in the area of education. This is why the author's scientific articles represent an important contribution not only to further theoretical research but also to improving practice, especially since the obtained fundamental scientific information based on experimental methods is very successful in practical application.

Professional articles

Prof Vladimir Findak has published 170 professional papers. Ninety-one of them were published in conference proceedings, whereas 79 of his works represent professional papers published in various scientific and professional journals.

The majority of his professional articles belong to the area of physical education teaching methodology, physical and health education teaching methodology, kinesiology teaching methodology and to training non-swimmers. One part of the articles is related to vital problems in education. In the mentioned articles, the author addressed and studied issues relating to organizational types of work in the basic and differentiated program of physical education with the use of teaching equipment, materials and techniques, as well as issues relating to the efficiency of the physical exercise. Part of the professional articles are dedicated to issues of physical exercise and health, sport and education, training of children non-swimmers of all age groups, students, young adults and adults, school sports activities and current issues in the area of kinesiological education, kinesiology of sport and kinesiological recreation.

The author's professional articles have a very high applicable value, since he presented basic scientific information in a very simple and acceptable way, which had great effect on the improvement of the work of professionals and, in that way, the improvement of everyday practice in the mentioned areas of applied kinesiology. In addition to that, Prof Vladimir Findak greatly contributed to the popularization of the profession and its application in daily life.

Elaborations, studies, curricula, abstracts, scripts, videotapes

Based on the titles of the numerous elaborations, studies, projects, curricula, synopsis, scripts and videotapes it can be concluded that Prof. Vladimir Findak gave an evident contribution to the development of a foundation science, especially its applied area in kinesiological education and to the profession as a researcher or head researcher in several scientific projects, as author or co-author of public documents in the area of education, as an active participant in creating laws and decrees, especially in the area of physical education and sport, and as an initiator and implementer of plans and programs (curricula) and programs for the education and professional development of staff in the areas of education, physical education and sport.

Since 1970 to this day he has participated in the creation of curricula for physical education, that is, physical and health education in the entire educational vertical, that is from preschool, primary school, all levels of secondary school to curricula for courses in physical and health education in higher education. Accordingly, he was an active participant in proposing and regulating the today historical organizational types of work, such as physical exercise 2x60 minutes

per week, legal norms such as mandatory training of non-swimmers in the Law on elementary education, the mandatory course “Physical and Health Education” for students in their first and second year at all faculties and universities in Croatia, and other.

He is the author or co-author of syllabi for the pre-service courses: Physical education teaching methodology, Kinesiology teaching methodology for preschool, primary school and physical education teachers, kinesiology majors, and the course Kinesiological education for the postgraduate and doctoral study from the early 70s to these days. He actively participated in the creation of several elaborations, studies and projects in the area of education, kinesiological education, kinesiology teaching methodology and sport recreation. He successfully disseminated the information from the results obtained to the students and the wider scientific and professional community. The projects he lead were clear, and his role as head researcher was carried out in a self-assuring manner. He is very cooperative in communicating with colleagues, which is why he became an authority researcher, desired associate and respectable colleague.

References could be found in Croatian version of article.