

MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

(Professional paper)

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Abstract

The task of the school is to develop the internal personality of a student, according to his or her inclinations and the needs of the society. Primary school comprises the children aged 7 to 15, the ages when students go through various periods of very deep and sudden changes, so Physical Education has the task to compensate those changes and stir physical growth and development. Physical Education provides a wide variety of possibilities for fun, entertainment and play, which is very important to young people and which provides an important means in physical education. The reduction in the level of physical activity does not decrease, and the decline of motor skills is the most prominent in children and adolescents, which implies even more prominent negative effects on health when these children become adults. The state has recently adopted the Regulation on the National Programme of prevention, treatment and control of cardiovascular diseases in the Republic of Serbia up to 2020. The document states that 33.6 percent of the adult population smokes, 46.5 per cent has hypertension, 40.3 per cent consumes alcohol daily or occasionally, 18.3 per cent is obese, and 74.3 per cent is not physically active enough. In order to prevent such a situation, there is a whole range of activities with the idea to increase the level of physical activity. However, one of the major problems is psychological – a large number of children are not motivated – they do not like or do not enjoy physical activity. Instead of dissatisfaction with working conditions, which is often stated as a reason, one should turn to that which determines students' attitude towards physical activities – competence and commitment of Physical Education teachers!

Keywords: *students, Primary school, sports activities, motor skills, physical activity, functional abilities, teacher, competence*

INTRODUCTION

Developing motivation in the teaching theory and practice is one of the most important endeavors of modern teaching. The more varied motivation is, the more successful teaching is, and it is less likely that the classes will become tedious.

Recently, a decreasing number of students have attended school in order to gain new knowledge and develop the whole personality, which leads us to the question on the nature of classes, when all the activity is reduced to memorizing the facts not interesting to students, the facts students learn only because of the grades. Teachers do not involve students enough in the teaching process, often ignore their ideas and suggestions, do not show more understanding and do not cooperate enough with their students. One of the prerequisites for the successful teaching is the mental preparation of students for work. Motivation and interest of students and their permanent preservation satisfy the principal of motivation, and pos-

sibilities of teachers and professors are limitless, which should be fully used.

Some studies in the field of physical education have shown that most of the factors that influence the love towards sports activities are closely linked to the way a physical education teacher organizes and conducts classes.

A teacher's relationship with the students in class, sharing responsibility for meeting the objectives and the subjective feeling of students that a teacher is competent, and the atmosphere of motivation to work are the most important factors that lead to children's sense of satisfaction in physical education class. The impact of motivation as the main driver of activities in general, in this case the driver of physical activities, is an essential problem in the field of efficiency of physical education, so it could be said that motivation, especially in conjunction with motor skills, has probably the greatest impact on the achievement of students.

The Ministry of Education made a decision to abolish the physical education classes conducted by physical education teachers in the lower grades of primary schools. It is not disputable whether a class teacher or a physical education teacher should work with students, but how our children grow up and how teachers work with them. Simply put, inadequate physical education teaching puts at risk the health of students. When children start school, their way of life changes, and all the changes are reflected on their physical development. Physical education can largely compensate for “the lack of movement”, and games can meet other needs of children. Some international health organizations have recommended that children need to have a regular systematic physical activity every day, at least one class.

It is certainly difficult for teachers to find out and take into account motives, interests and needs of each individual student in large classes. Diverse needs and interests of children of individual age groups find their place in curricula, but it is difficult to motivate all students in different conditions and circumstances in the long run.

Conceptual definition of motivation

Motivation is a desire to achieve some success and willingness to invest the necessary effort in order to achieve this goal. The word *motivation* has a Latin root; it comes from the Latin word *movere* – which means to move, to set in motion.

Dealing with the problem of motivation, Corell (W. Corell, 1964, taken from Djordjević, 1997:103) argues that “it is typical of humans that that they are never without motivation. As soon as a person reaches the goal and its motive disappears, a new one appears. Thus, each motive can be seen as a link in the endless chains of motives, which shows a human as an active being”.

Rasel (Russell), 1971, taken from Djordjević, 1997:103) believes that for practical activities of teachers, the approach to motivation in practice consists of two components:

1) Teachers should be familiar with the principles that are proven to motivate the majority of students and trained to apply them in everyday school practice.

2) For the students who learn unwillingly, and whose behavior is directed towards goals outside the class and school activities, teachers will apply individual motivation, using the knowledge of psychology of individual behavior.

Both interests, if used skillfully, can generate motives for school work and learning.

In addition to planned motivation, students are also motivated by high-quality educational work and successful learning. The effective motivation has four characteristics: keeping the attention of students, the personal interest of students in educational work, self-confidence, and achieving the sense of self-satisfaction.

Motivation in teaching should be permanently explored and all the factors that influence it should be taken into account, since, without motivation, teaching is doomed to failure. Particular attention should be given

to students and their internal factors that will move them to participate in the teaching process actively and creatively.

It often happens that motivation of students is formed in the direction of the stimulus, so students do not learn because they are motivated for that subject, but because of the teacher who is the source of stimulus. In the lower grades of the primary school such stimulus is positively of great importance, and later, when it is necessary to develop interest in school subjects and solve the problems related to school materials, motivation should be transferred from teachers to school subjects and their content.

Good preparation of a teacher is important for successful implementation of teaching, since a well-prepared teacher is more motivated to work, he/she is in a good mood, willing to communicate, willing to answer questions and find the answers together with students. A teacher in a good mood, who at every moment knows what and how to do, will have a positive influence on the motivation of the students for work. Otherwise, lack of preparation and motivation, and apathy of a teacher cannot guarantee a good atmosphere for work and successful conducting of teaching.

The important characteristics of a teacher according to Hogarta (taken from Djordjević, 1997: 116) are: to be familiar with the subjects he/she teaches, to be able to link materials with other subjects, to love children, to be familiar with developmental problems of children, to know more than average people, to have a strong will, to develop positive relationships, to trust his/her students, to appreciate unusual ideas, to allow and encourage self-initiative.

Students “especially appreciate teachers”: who are funny, balanced and composed, who are serious, pleasant and kind, who are polite, open and resourceful, who are considerate, compassionate and ready to forgive, who are accessible and modest, who do not get angry easily, who are persistent, hard-working and honest, who are interesting and witty speakers, who do not interrupt the presentation of the students, who do not read from the book when teaching, who assess fairly, who often question students, who give grades publically, who let the students concentrate.

Without motivation in teaching, that is, without motivation of its direct participants, there are no good educational results. Teachers below average general and specific skills cannot be successful at their jobs. Each teacher, among his/her students, has extremely gifted individuals to whose questions he/she should provide answers.

Motivation in physical education

Incentives in schools, in majority of cases, come from teachers. A teacher, as a subject of teaching, is the most responsible for the organization, conduction and outcomes of the teaching process. He/she has the most competence for the proper conduction of the teaching process. He/she encourages students to work, helps them

to overcome difficulties with understanding some teaching materials, in a word, he/she affects the development of the anthropological status of students. Moreover, a great role of a teacher is reflected in the possibility to direct students towards self-education, self-control and self-evaluation. In practice, we can often hear the statement, "whether or not you will love physical education classes depends on what kind of a teacher you have".

A good preparation of a teacher for the class of physical education is not only a guarantee for the successful work of a teacher, but also that his/her students will enjoy the activities (Findak, 2003:195).

On the classes of physical exercise, it is required to work continually throughout the year in order to master the curriculum (conduct planned motor activities), that is, to achieve set tasks. The exercises are often monotonous, tedious, it takes a long time to "learn" them, and thus the motivation of students is essential.

The efficiency of physical education classes largely depends on the conditions in which they are conducted. The variety and richness of form and content of physical exercise require some space and using a lot of devices and equipment, and nowadays, one cannot imagine a school or a residential area without sports facilities, training rooms or fitness trails. However, the environment in which our children live is not stimulating and do not encourage them to be physically active; they spend the increasing amount of time in front of the computer and TV screens, and playing computer games, and less and less time in the parks and sports facilities. More and more frequently, blocks of flats are built without yards, there are car parks instead of playgrounds, in a word, the society does not pay enough attention to this grave problem, whose consequences will affect the health of children in the later period.

When it comes to the younger school age, the reality is that physical education classes in schools in Serbia are not conducted in prescribed scope or intensity. It is widely known that the equipment of the schools in our country is very poor and does not meet minimum requirements needed for modern organization of physical education classes. The results of work in such schools are below the minimum required level, and the fact that the schools are poorly equipped often leads to passivity of a teacher. Class teachers are not motivated to work, they very often replace the physical education class with some "more important" one, and even the slightest reason (bad weather conditions) is enough not to conduct class at all, not to mention the fact that in schools there is not an adequate space and enough exercise equipment.

"The causes of inefficiency of teaching are attributed to various factors (insufficient number of classes, inadequate curriculum, poor conditions, etc.) but also to insufficient involvement of class teachers, who conduct physical education classes in the lower grades. It should be noted that the quality and efficiency of physical education classes in the lower grades are essential assumption and necessary prerequisite for successful conducting of teaching in the later age periods" (Zrnzević, 2009).

Bearing in mind that the results of physical edu-

cation teaching are generally poor, class teachers and teachers have to understand that there is no room for improvisation in their vocation, that classes have to be prepared, that they have to perceive the conditions in which they work and plan classes accordingly. They need to apply modern methods and techniques, but come up with new and better solutions themselves as well. Creativity in teaching will stimulate the interest of children, and also their greater commitment and interest in physical education classes. In practice, it has been confirmed that a good teacher can achieve better results, even in quite modest conditions, than a bad teacher in optimal conditions. It is not fair to attribute teaching failures only to working conditions, without taking into account proficiency of class teachers and teachers.

Students are assessed according to the marks they have from other subjects, "friendship", and not according to their real capabilities and skills. If the single subject teaching starts in the fifth grade of the primary school, a physical education teacher, instead of planning work and conducting curriculum with respect to vertical linking of the subject content from the first to the fifth grade, often starts with the curriculum which should have been conducted in the first grade of the primary school. In such cases, without enough previously acquired knowledge and skills, students have problems to acquire comprehensive curriculum for the upper grades of the primary school, which greatly affects the motivation of students as well. Students, especially the female ones, are, because of these reasons among others, exempt from the physical education classes, and physical education teachers, who need to compensate for irreparable, often lose their motivation to work. The effect of motivation in any physical activity cannot be denied, the motivation is an inseparable factor in the success of students.

Students will certainly be more motivated if in a school there is everything necessary for conducting physical education classes. However, it often happens that in spite of the fact that the school is well equipped, classes are not conducted on a satisfactory level, students finish school having never practiced on a horizontal bar, balance beam, parallel bars, having never practiced high jump, long jump, not having used all the available equipment, and it is widely known how much devices can further motivate and stimulate children to work and be creative. Classes will certainly be more interesting and more motivating if the exercises are performed with the different equipment (ropes, sticks, balls of different sizes, cones, hoops). Therefore, equipment should be used as much as possible, and its use should become an everyday practice in working with children.

Physical education teaching provides enough opportunities for a number of ways and places to conduct activities (sports fields, halls, outside the school, on the snow, near the water, and in the water).

To what extent students would be motivated to actively participate in physical education classes depends on the extent to which teachers respect their interests and desires. Despite the fact that a teacher is obliged to

implement prescribed curriculum, students, to an extent, should be able to participate in the selection of games, and in upper grades, they should be provided with the opportunity to choose the activities for some parts of a class. In this way, we can expect greater cooperation of students, their active involvement in the process of exercising, better results and a higher motivation to work. Organizational forms of teaching and their types, each in its own way, contribute to a more active participation in classes. It is recommended to work in small groups, since, in this way, an individual student can be more involved, and more effective results are achieved than when working with the whole class. The members of a group are more active, and they put more effort for the success of their group, and thus, in a great extent also meet a share of their personal needs. An individual needs to understand that his/her activities and behavior are important for the success of the group and realization of the set goal. Each group and individual have responsibility and pleasure to participate in the achievement of goals.

It is well known that students often take a positive attitude towards physical education classes or even ask for additional activities within the school, even today, in the era of dominance of electronic technology. However, to have an attitude about something does not mean to directly engage in the field of physical education, and let alone that this is an evident parameter for achieving better results in mastering the tasks planned in the curriculum for physical education classes. The positive attitude of parents towards physical education can contribute to the greater involvement of children, thus creating not only conditions necessary for the progression of motor skills, but also for the correction of ballasting adipose tissue, which is today an increasing problem, especially in women.

Milanović suggests the concept of an optional sport, in which he sees the significant shift in modernization and democratization of teaching (taken from Dobraš, Dragosavljević, Vučković, Gadžić, & Lepir, 2013).

All the students need to be active in the class, since it has a number of benefits both for students and teachers. The effort the teachers invest motivates students to engage with more interest in the process of exercising, which will bring better results and make students realize how important it is to incorporate physical exercise into daily life.

Studies have shown that experiencing success increases, and experiencing failure decreases motivation. Thus, a great caution is necessary when assessing in physical education classes, a teacher should always, in the first place, have in mind the commitment and the interest of a student, and then progress in mastering the motor skills and knowledge, the level of physical development and physical fitness. Whenever there is an opportunity, students should be encouraged and praised for the progress, but also, in a proper way, it should be pointed out to errors, in order for the students to correct them and achieve better results.

If we work in such a way, it should be expected that the students have a greater interest to participate in the

process of exercising, which will lead to higher motivation for work and achieving better results, primarily in the development and increasing the motor and functional skills, which is one of the main task of physical education teaching. It often happens that some exercises are not interesting to children, that they have difficulties in performing them, which can lead to the problems in the learning process and cause difficulties in the work. In such cases, a teacher needs to motivate the students, to say encouraging words to them, so as to motivate them to put more effort in order to successfully complete the task. Of course, the measures should be appropriate for the age of students, and the difficulty of the tasks should be age appropriate as well. These measures are particularly important to apply with the students who tend to underestimate their own capabilities or have inferiority complex.

Students should be given the opportunities for real challenges and encouraged, so as to give them the opportunity to discover connection between effort and success, between success and motivation, and to develop self-confidence. If the students do not see the need to put effort, they will not even try. Even the successful students are not motivated if the task is too easy. Most students are excited by challenges if they are provided with all the conditions they need to succeed.

A teacher needs to fight against interfering factors and control the factors that contribute to better motivation. Without motivation during teaching, that is, without motivation of its direct participants, there are no good educational results.

At teaching training faculties the entrance exam result of physical abilities assessment is neglected, and the results of language and general information tests are put in the foreground. Bearing in mind that the future students of teaching training faculties, since they have insufficient knowledge of physical education from secondary schools, are expected to learn the materials they failed to learn before, and to master the new materials, this problem should be given more attention. Physical education teaching is present in the curriculum from the pre-school age to the enrolment in the faculty, so it is expected that future class teachers possess at least basic knowledge required for the admission to a teaching training faculty. It can be observed that students have a very low level of awareness about the importance of physical activity, mastering the methodology and improving theoretical knowledge, and that students are interested to learn only what is necessary for a positive mark. What can we expect from those who are supposed to influence on the formation of the habits in children to incorporate physical exercise into daily life? Future class teachers and teachers cannot calmly accept the current situation that students continually lag behind in the development of motor skills, but they must do everything to end such a situation and to boost the progress in development.

Those who teach the students the basic skills of physical education must themselves be aware of the importance of physical activity for the growth and development of children and for increasing their functional and

motor skills.

“As the future belongs to children who are now growing, and of whose formation we are just taking care, it is logical then, that the overall future of our society depends on their physical potentials, mental abilities, emotional stability and social adjustment” (Kragujević, 1985).

CONCLUSION

To what extent students would be motivated to actively participate in physical education classes depends on the extent to which teachers respect their interests and desires. The effort the teachers invest motivates students to engage with more interest in the process of exercising, which will bring better results and make students realize how important it is to incorporate physical exercise into daily life.

School practice has shown that students who are interested in a particular educational discipline achieve better results than disinterested and less motivated students.

In order to encourage more interest and enhance learning, it has been found that better results are achieved when working in groups and not with the whole class, of course, whenever it is possible, and with respecting the motives that drive an individual to join a group.

Physical education is considered to be favorable for the achievement of important educational results and promotion of physical activity among students, and success in physical education teaching largely depends on the motivation of students. The majority of factors that influence the love towards sports activities are closely linked to the way a physical education teacher organizes and conducts classes. The atmosphere of motivation to work, a teacher's relationship with the students in class, sharing responsibility for meeting the objectives and the subjective feeling of students that a teacher is competent, are the most important factors that lead to children's sense of satisfaction during the physical activity.

The profile of a modern teacher, who will successfully deal with the issues in contemporary teaching, includes the following elements: developed general skills, specific skills, general education, good vocational education, pedagogical and psychological education, methodological education, emotional maturity and stability, love towards children and youth.

“We do not need teachers who will, because of a mark, insult and belittle students, we need teachers who will nurture love and good example, and consider the personality of students. We need teachers who will bring closer physical movement - exercise to their students and elevate and raise their being with this specific food”. (Živanović, Stanković, Randelović, & Pavlović, 2010: 215).

In the end, it can be concluded that we must put more effort and work in order to improve the current level of motivation of students, because this is the only way to have high-quality and productive teaching and to have students who love going to school and are pleased to attend physical education classes.

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