

THE QUALITY OF PE TEACHING IN JUNIOR GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

(Professional paper)

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Abstract

In this work the authors focus the attention on the quality of PE teaching in junior grades of primary school. They point to some weaknesses of the classes and as long as the possibilities to overcome the existing problems. The first part is devoted to the importance of PE classes and its role in the mental and physical development of a child. The second part deals with the organization and the quality of PE teaching in junior grades of primary school referring to a large number of studies in this field. The third section covers the subject indicating the various possibilities for improving the process of physical education teaching at this age.

Keywords: motor skills, sports and technical education, physical and mental development teacher, physical exercise, motor education, lesson plans, curricula, methodology of physical education,

Theoretical approach to the topic

PE teaching in junior grades of primary school has a role to enable the children meaningful and controlled basic – biological - need for mobility, thus affecting to their adaptive abilities, health prevention and promotion, proper growth and development, developing the motor skills, sports and technical education, to implement the education tasks, altogether aiming to provide proper and complete mental and physical development of the children.

The provided concept of PE enables the freedom and expression of the teacher's creativity in the class designing. Based on the scheduled themes for realization (orientation annual curriculum), the teachers themselves, according to their professional evaluation select the themes, taking into account the age characteristics of the children and the current performing conditions that are available. The teacher approaches to teaching and classes planning regarding all the methodological requirements that characterize the PE class.

In addition to regular classes, that are accomplished through the lessons, the teacher is required to implement a large number of extracurricular activities in the course of PE. Theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to realize PE classes in the classroom, the teacher acquires studying at the Teacher Training College, or at the Teaching Academy former. Whether it is quite enough or not, the work results will indicate hereinafter.

The contribution of PE teaching to mental and Physical development of the children of this age

Physical education in junior grades of primary school and its contribution to the versatile and harmonious development as a topic is still under research, analysis and debate, not only in the professional circles and direct carriers of such activity, but also in the wider social public.

A large number of national and international scientists and experts have been engaged in research and analysis in this area since long time. Among the best known are:

a) the situation of physical education in junior primary school.

b) research on the overall activity in the classroom Lučić (1975).

c) research related to the intensification of physical education - Višnjić, (1979); Spasov, (1980); Rodić, Berković, & Ivanović, (1981); Berković, Malacko, & Bala, (1982); Stamatović, (2006).

The results of these studies and analyses generally suggest that PE in junior grades of primary school is not efficient enough and, in general terms, underdeveloped. Also, there is opinion that this inefficiency reflects very negatively on all aspects of physical education and functioning of the system as a whole.

As it is well known, junior school age is very convenient for the children to develop an understanding and sense for physical education and to create permanent habits for engaging in it. All this could be realized only through a concrete and various motor activity that would ensure the children basic motor education and reveal the most important values of physical exercise. If this time is missed, which often happens, the pupil is brought into the situation to start with necessary basics just in the following age period, i.e. in the senior grades of primary school. Since in that time, due to some difficulties and changes that occur during puberty, the processes of motor exercise are rather slower, especially in girls, the shortage occurred in the former period is usually not made up in full, but it is carried over the next older school age. So as the pupil completes the school time as very often does not acquire the necessary motor education and habits, causing the activity in physical culture mostly stops after the school time ends.

The reasons for such state are numerous. It seems that the deciding one is the relationship between school and this teaching field, as well as low quality of teaching, relating to the effectiveness of physical education. The school still does not understand the true meaning and essence of physical education. Hence, the overall concern on the physical development of pupils and their physical education is left to the teacher. The current training of the teachers for these classes is at such a level that some larger effects could not be expected.

Most teachers traditionally favor recreational exercises. The content of their work is mainly based on the children games that are usually not complied with the core objectives and tasks to be solved in the various stages of this age. In this mode of work, the role of teacher is mostly managed to direct or control the children, instead of being more focused on conduct or manage the process of exercises.

Using the positive emotions and natural tendency of children to a game, the teachers are able to activate them, more or less keeping their attention and expectations, but rarely manage to complete this activity align with their essential needs and interests. Such an approach, in fact, provides some sort of usually superficial and incomplete motor education, but very little contributes to the development, creative expression and self-affirmation in motor, functional and other potentials, abilities and features.

The insufficient training for work is often accompanied by lack of motivation expressing in a superficial approach and the pronounced tendency towards improvisation. In our schools, for example, you can rarely meet the teacher in proper sportswear during the PE classes. In such circumstances the teacher is considerably limited in motor activity, and thus the possibility either to involve in work more directly or to encourage and direct the activities of children by himself.

Moreover, it often happens that due to some omissions or failures of the children in some other sub-

jects the teachers willfully replace the PE classes with some other classes. Instead the children likes towards the physical exercise used as an incentive measure, the teachers act just the opposite.

All the above mentioned statements clearly indicate that teachers must be prepared sufficiently for professional work in this teaching field, so in the preparation of the curriculum at the teacher training faculties should be paid special attention to. In the curricula of these faculties, the activities and contents that would enable the students more comprehensively for this field of education are given very little space to. Hence, the large number of young teachers entering into the profession trained superficially in motor education and relatively modest fund of methodological information. All of this is a potential source of their de-motivation and their partial or complete alienation from physical education.

Lack of training for the teachers is certainly not the only reason for PE classes in junior grades of primary schools do not achieve satisfactory performance. Many analyses have shown that a significant part of the reasons should be tracked in the conditions of work, i.e. in the financial position and the overall treatment of these classes.

It is known, for example, that the PE classes in junior grades are often treated as secondary and less significant, compared to the same classes in senior grades. Almost in all primary schools the PE classes in senior grades have absolute priority, both in the terms of using the PE hall and other facilities for practice, so in the terms of equipment and the use of teaching aids. Moreover, it is noted, that the pupils in junior grades are presented in much smaller number in the extracurricular activities and sports sections. All that significantly limits their overall activity in physical culture and reduces the space for their opportune and continuous involvement in it.

Furthermore, the reasons of the current situation should be sought in the insufficient number of the PE classes. It is certain that 2-3 classes per week (even provided that they are regularly implemented) could not achieve the results that are expected from PE teaching, especially in the age of children when daily physical activity is exceptionally necessary.

Therefore, taken as a whole, the current state of physical education of junior school children are caused by entire set of circumstances. Each of them, of course, requires a separate analysis, the specific approach and the methods to analyze completely and thoroughly.

The fact is that, according to the current applicable regulations, physical education classes in junior grades (third and fourth) can be delegated to the teachers of PE. Although this option does not significantly disturb the principle of personal conception, or in any other way threatens the status of teacher, it has never been used completely and even in wider range. Moreover, it happened to the schools, which had already determined to engage a PE teacher in the PE classes in junior grades,

after a while returned it to the class teacher.

In such circumstances, of course, the problem of teacher's professional profile could not be resolved, but it is even more actualized now.

Solving the problem is not done always in the right way. It is obvious that the core of the problem is not who teaches physical education – a class teacher or a PE teacher - but how it is taught, then how it could be reached a higher level of implementation in the classes, provided that both profiles are educated enough in this teaching field.

Therefore, it is evident that the problem of the effect of PE classes in junior grades of primary school is far deeper and more complex, so the question of the teacher profiles could not be considered solely from all other issues related to this problem, more less it could be solved by one-sided choice for this or that profile.

The significant role in improving the quality of PE classes in junior grades of primary school should be played by the teacher training faculties.

The teacher training faculties and their role in raising the quality of PE classes in junior grades of primary school

The teacher training faculty students, among others, through the teaching methods in physical education acquire the necessary knowledge for PE teaching and classes in junior grades of primary school. The aim of the lectures of PE teaching methods in the teacher training faculties is to contribute in acquiring the knowledge and beliefs that allow the adequate expert (professional) attitude of the students towards physical education in general, which will assure complete understanding of its role and importance, and to enable them to realize the aim and the objectives of PE teaching from the first to fourth grade, using the most appropriate methods, procedures, forms and contents of work in accordance with the needs of the pupils in the present circumstances.

The objectives of the Methodology of PE teaching are to make the students familiar with:

- general, theoretical, medical-biological, socio-historical, pedagogic and psychological basics of physical culture, relevant for understanding the overall issues of physical education of the children from the first to fourth grade in primary school, and also the knowledge necessary to form the expert (professional) attitude towards their own role in realization of its aim and objectives;
- basic bio-psycho-social characteristics of the children from the first to fourth grades and their age (and mobile) needs;
- the goals, objectives and contents, and the organization forms of work in PE teaching the pupils from the first to fourth grade of primary school, and to train them in implementing it properly use appropriate methods, procedures, forms and contents of work, as in a classical ones, so in the mixed classes;
- to enable the students to use independently and correctly professional-methodical sources: books, manuals, guides, collections, spellers, etc., for the pur-

pose of self-education and self-initiative in the process of planning, selection on the contents and the methods of work, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the pupils progress;

- to introduce them to the methodological attitudes regarding the application on the different contents, ie. to qualify them for the specific use of the order exercises, the body shaping exercises, the natural and constructed forms of movement, the elementary games, the relay games, the sports and other games, a variety of activities in water and snow, the acrobatic exercises, the balance exercises, the exercises with sports equipment, the children folklore and dance, and other physical activities;

- to make them known with the possibilities of correlation between the PE contents and other subjects, especially in terms of their application in other classes as a form of active rest (during the prolonged static strain, sitting, writing and alike)

- and getting them involved in various aspects of practical work qualify for independently planning, implementation and evaluation of work at the PE classes of the pupils from the first to fourth grade of primary school (Milanović, & Stamatović, 2004).

In order physical education and the teaching methods of PE teacher achieve its aim at the teacher training faculties, it is necessary to work on the improvement and coordination of the curricula in the field of physical education and the teaching methods of physical education at the teacher training faculties.

It is evident that the students enrolling in the teacher training faculties come with a modest knowledge in the field of physical education (about 20% of students are not able to swim, and of skiing better not to mention to). To enable them to successfully attend the lectures of Methodology of PE teaching, it is necessary to introduce the PE lectures in I, II, III and IV semester with 2 hours a week to complete the knowledge in the field of physical education and to prepare them for professional participation in the teaching. It is necessary to introduce at least one compulsory course of swimming and skiing for all the students of the teacher training faculty, and at the same time educate and prepare them for PE teaching in the school in countryside. One cross-country and hiking for all the students of faculty are needed to be realized once a year, and also provide the conditions for functioning of the sports sections within the extracurricular activities.

It is necessary to adopt uniform criteria for testing the physical abilities on the admission exam, along with an obligatory medical certificate on ability of the student to actively participate in PE teaching.

We consider such a curriculum, regarding the PE teaching and the teaching methods in PE, would contribute greatly to a better and more professional training of future teachers for managing the PE classes in junior grades of primary school, and thus successfully meets the requirements of education.

Regarding the teachers who are employed (it is well known that for more than 20 years in certain munic-

ipalities and districts there were no seminars or any other form of professional development and specialized training of the teachers in the area of physical education), it is necessary to organize the seminars, professional and scientific meetings which they would attend to. The topics of the role and importance of physical education in the mental and physical development of children, and the themes of practical work in the classes and in the extracurricular activities have to dominate at these meetings.

These meetings should be held at least every other year at the teacher training faculties, in particular schools within a specific city, municipality, district. The presence would be obligatory for all the teachers employed.

It is necessary affecting the Ministry of Education and the relevant authorities in the state to improve the material conditions for realization of the PE classes in the schools for the children from the first to fourth grade of primary school.

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