

PHYSICAL EDUCATION – STATUS AND TRENDS

Review

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Abstract

Today, public life is changing daily following the challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic and the war that began more than a year ago. The consequences of these two events have revealed many influences on our way of life that we can find in every sphere of life. On the other hand, as a social phenomenon, physical education arises, develops and changes following the needs of society in the historical period. The above events and many others that have significantly changed our way of life in the last 30 years make it necessary to review the condition and deduce trends in physical education.

In this report, based on studies by several authors, some basic perspectives on physical education as an integral part of the educational system of the Republic of Bulgaria are outlined. Both the purpose and tasks as well as some basic provisions related to the implementation of the process of education in physical education and sport at school have been reviewed.

Keywords: *physical education, society*

INTRODUCTION

"It is a curse to live in interesting times" Confucius. Is it a curse or a privilege to live in interesting times? We certainly live in such interesting times today. Looking at the past 3 years, we can point to two keys, and from the point of view of Confucius, I would say interesting events that changed our way of life immensely. One disease and one war, and there are many more similar, everyday events that lead to change. Each change itself leads to other changes, development and improvement. Changes occur in every sphere of public life.

Based on the statements of authors such as (Rachev (Рачев), 1998), (Balint, 2008), (Levkovets, 2015), (Rakhimov, 2022) physical education follows to be considered a separate sphere of public life, in its essence it is a social phenomenon that appeared and developed following the demands and needs of society. And today it follows the changes brought about by the interesting times in which we live. Online training in physical education has appeared, but despite this, its leading function is still the daily provision of the necessary number of movements of the person, which in turn has a direct connection with his lifestyle and, accordingly, health. This is also the reason why physical education is the object of continuous research interest, which defines it as permanent and of great importance not only for the individual but also globally for humanity. Today, research continues, looking for a solution to various problems. For example, Zheleva-Terzieva in a study aimed at revealing the frequency of activities with individual sports from the curriculum found "a number of weaknesses" regarding the organization and conduct of the educational work (Zheleva-Terzieva (Желева-Терзиева), 2022). Borisov (2017) makes a comprehensive analysis of the functioning of the physical education system in the educational system (Borisov (Борисов), 2017). Another group of authors such as (Dimitrova (Димитрова), 2019; Marinov (Маринов), 2014; Nancheva (Нанчева), 2019; Kostova (Костова), 2019) track changes in the various aspects of the physical performance of students.

What has been said so far gives us the reason to set the goal of the present study to reveal the state and bring out the perspectives that lie ahead.

METHODS

The present study is entirely based on a study of literary and documentary sources that address problems in the field of physical education, which are mainly concentrated on its manifestation in the educational system.

ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

Going back in time and tracing the developments of a number of authors, the emergence of physical education was caused by society's need to segment physical culture. Physical culture is a global phenomenon and as such encompasses all the achievements and values of society in connection with the physical development and improvement of man (Ponomarev (Пономарев), 1974), (Rachev (Рачев), 1998), (Kosiewicz, 2010), (Ivanii, 2014). In the beginning, the man had the need to be faster, stronger, and more durable with the sole idea of sustenance and survival. Later, his drive to oppose and prevail over another person or the other tribe continues the line of necessity for the development of his individual motor qualities. With the development of humanity, the need to combine and match these acquired and purposefully developed individual qualities appears. Regardless of the reason that gives rise to the opposition, however, we should note the competitive nature of man, which leads in its wake to the need for faster, higher, and stronger. Yes, sports emerged in response to the need to compete. Its development requires earlier and earlier specialization, which is largely limited by the peculiarities of human ontogenetic development and the fact that not every person has the necessary prerequisites to achieve the necessary maximum sports result. But at the same time, the need for purposeful execution of movements is inherent in every individual. This need is the main prerequisite for the emergence and development of physical

education and recreation, as specific manifestations of physical culture.

The essence and general idea of physical education provide, on the one hand, the right, and on the other hand, the need of the individual to perform movements in a purposeful manner, which affects his health status. Not only today, but also looking back in time over the past 100 years, physical education has the character of a compulsory academic discipline, called by some sports, by others physical culture or physical and health education and many other and different names, but always aiming to provide the person with the necessary minimum movements and related to health and a healthy lifestyle. In addition, it is also the way in which (Levkovets, 2015) considers physical education, namely that it solves not only the problems of human development in a motor aspect.

On a global scale, the problem of the quantity and quality of the movements and the health status of the individual appeared in parallel with the technological revolution and is deepening to this day. Massively different organizations, the leading one of which on a global scale is the WHO, are looking for a solution to the problem of hypokinesia. WHO data indicate that among children between 5 and 18 years of age, obesity in different regions of the world is between 3.3% in the Southeast Asia region and 8% in the Americas region. Data for Europe put this rate as one of the highest at 7.9%. WHO, (2022). Similar and even more alarming are the data for the elderly population. Official WHO, (2011) data from as far back as 2011 show a 50% increase in obesity among the elderly population between 1980 and 2008. At the same time, recent research indicates that within the EU between 30 and 70% of the adult population is overweight, and obesity has reached between 10 and 30% in the various member states. As leading factors, for the indicated figures, we can consider the significant reduction in the number of movements for the indicated period on the one hand, and on the other hand, changes in the quality and quantity of food consumed by the population.

Proof of this is the New World Action Plan for Physical Activity 2018-2030 of the WHO, which highlights sports and physical activity as leading factors of mental health and quality of life. Also the WHO Physical Activity Strategy for the European Region 2016–2025” (WHO, 2016), where the organization recommends a minimum of 150 minutes per week of aerobic physical activity for adults and 60 minutes of daily activity of varying intensity for children and adolescents.

Despite these recommendations, today we still cannot find the formula by which to calculate the necessary and sufficient number of hours of physical education per week, which are the main source of motor activity for the student. In a 2013 European Commission report the annual number of hours of Physical Education in the member states varies between 50 and 108 per year (EC), 2013). A similarly wide range within the EU is not only comparing individual countries but also comparing different age groups of pupils. Based on the development of D'Anna et al., (2019) we can indicate that in countries such as Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Italy and Sweden in some of the ages physical education classes are held once a week. Moreover, during the first year of education in Luxembourg, there are no classes for physical education. In almost all other member countries, their number fluctuates between 2 and 3, and in Hungary, they are held 5 times a week. The duration of these lessons is also different. It varies between 30 and 90 minutes in different member states. In this regard, it is necessary to disclose opportunities for

physical education classes to be at least 3 per week with a duration of 60 minutes.

But is this activity enough for teenagers? Our observations on the lesson work in physical education indicate that with a lesson duration of 45 minutes in no more than 15 of them, the intensity of the load is sufficient to have a constructive effect on the functional development of the student. At the same time, we can provide such a load 2 or 3 times a week, which is extremely insufficient to lead to lasting adaptation and constructive functional changes that we are looking for as a result of the negative manifestations of body weight and immobilization. The specified features of the lesson in physical education impose a different view on the teaching of the subject and its focus, namely on teaching the students how to develop their motor skills themselves, and how to master new skills.

Looking at physical education in this way, we are moving towards a change in its general purpose from the purely practical effect on the student, which to a large extent has the character of a state, to a processual and long-lasting one. In practice, this means transforming the goal from achieving the student's physical perfection to the student's mastery of knowledge, skills and attitudes to use movement and motor activity throughout life in the direction of a healthy lifestyle. In the language of the student, this means teaching him how to be capable and physically active and turn these states into a long-term process, and from the point of view of education, it implies the formation of competence that has a direct relationship to a healthy lifestyle.

To achieve such a goal, physical education within the educational system would largely respond to two of the four pillars of modern education that Delor, (1996) puts forward, namely to learn to know and to learn to act and be able. The other two, to learn to live with others and to be ourselves, could also be realized and confirmed in the various activities in the educational process of physical education (Delor (Делор), 1996)

Achieving such a goal implies, on the one hand, an expansion of the range of physical education activities, and on the other, its individualization. Speaking of expanding the range of activities, we should direct our attention to activities that the student performs independently, outside of school, but at the same time lead to an increase in his daily motor activity and are based on the knowledge, skills and relationships formed at school. An option in this direction is a change in the way the student travels to and from school. I assume that if the student realized the need and benefit of daily physical activity, he would choose walking or cycling to and from school, of course, this implies a change in the attitude of road users towards pedestrians and cyclists.

On the other hand, I pointed out the individualization of physical education. We live in a different time today. We have the right to move freely. In fact, the fact that the world is open and our free movement is facilitated gives us the opportunity to exchange views, attitudes, ways of communication, and culture, to change our point of view, and our way of working and communicating. We should apply a similar approach in our direct professional activity. When we talk about physical education, on the one hand, we must take into account the changes in the student, as the object of influence, and on the other, the changes in the environment in which the student will apply what he has learned. Based on the European educational space and the peculiarities of the social relations of children in Europe, we should take into account the fact that they have changed significantly in the

last 20 years. Today, students live in the conditions of an information world, I would even say they are overwhelmed by all kinds of information. This means that the teacher interacts with a student who has 24-hour access to information from various sources. In practice, instead of repeating information, the teacher should know each of the students and give them the right to share their knowledge with others, then analyze and interpret this information together. The same applies to movement training. It is necessary to diagnose the students' skills, after which the learning content should be refined according to the level of each student, and not the performance of the same physical exercises by everyone, which are too easy for some and impossible for others.

Speaking of individualization, it should be noted the students' point of view and expectations for and from physical education. Comparing them with those of the teacher, we should say that among the students, some social rather than educational attitudes to physical education are leading, statements verified by authors such as Garn & Cothran, (2006); Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson, (2011); Smith & Parr, (2007). The mentioned authors found that the student sees the lesson as a time for fun and time spent with friends in terms of motor activity. We should also take into account some differences in the way girls and boys think about physical education, which is also caused by social factors. In this regard, Lyyra, (2013) found that girls look for knowledge and skills in the lesson that is directly related to the ability to communicate and a healthy lifestyle, while for boys, physical activity is the leading one, as a means of proving their own capabilities and dealing with obstacles and challenges, which is born of the natural need for self-assertion. Knowing these gender characteristics on the part of the teacher and taking them into account in the selection of physical exercises implies differentiation and individualization, but not in the sense of selecting individual exercises, but of exercises or more precisely games that ensure the participation of every one according to his possibilities and views, which on the one hand will lead to satisfaction, and on the other to activity on the part of the students, as there will be interest and motivation to participate in the various activities.

Applying such an approach gives us the opportunity to place the third pillar of modern education, derived by Delor, (1996), which I mentioned earlier, namely to learn to be ourselves. Its construction is related not only to getting to know oneself but also to the formation of an objective self-assessment in the student and self-confidence, which will give him the opportunity for comprehensive personal formation and development, which at a later stage is a leading prerequisite for his effective integration into the world of adults. These are, in practice, social interaction skills, the formation of which is specific to participation in activities in the field of physical education and sports, the practice of which in the last 40 years has given way to video games, the Internet and social networks.

Going from general to particular, we should consider the current state of physical education based on the understanding of it. To a large extent, the understanding and attitude of the indirect participants in physical education are caused by their misunderstanding of it. In society, almost any motor activity is called a sport, without clearly distinguishing physical education, motor activity, or recreation. Such thinking does not allow individuals to understand the benefits of physical education within the educational system, which can be reduced to four main directions: motor, social, cognitive and emotional. I.e. four different spheres of influence that determine the

complex nature and effects on the student's personality. A complex impact that cannot be realized by any other subsystem of physical culture. The essence of sport does not allow for social and cognitive effects, and recreation does not imply motor and cognitive development.

Looking for the essence of physical education, in addition to complex development, it is necessary to note the fact that it is not a state, but a process that undergoes changes and development over time, which changes, as we noted earlier, is a consequence of changes in society. They, in turn, lead to the need for continuous scientific research, which, on the one hand, will clarify the problem and, on the other hand, indicate the ways to solve it. This explains the scientific nature and conditioning of physical education, which is another of its characteristics. In fact, it is science and scientific research that determines the development of any social sphere, including physical education. The scientific approach in the development of this specific sphere of human activity allows us to improve not only the activity, for its own sake, but the object of impact, the person, in the specific case the student, which is also the main task of the educational process.

Trying to clarify the essence of physical education, we should note that it is a process that follows social changes, is based on scientific achievements, and its impact is aimed at forming specific competencies in the student, which allow him, on the one hand, motor development, and on the other a cognitive one. Clarifying the essence of the phenomenon under consideration in this way, we should note that it is a specific sphere of human activity, which on the one hand is a prerequisite for the development of the sphere of sports, and on the other hand has its own specific goals and tasks that do not allow us to equate the two phenomena, but on the contrary to clearly distinguish them.

CONCLUSIONS

Deriving and analyzing the perspectives and trends in physical education, we should summarize them in the following several directions:

- The daily need for human physical activity is maintained, even greatly increased, which reinforces the importance and place of physical education and the educational system;
- As a result of the above, there is also the need to increase the weekly number of hours of physical education;
- Based on the peculiarities of the educational activity and the effects it has on the students, it is necessary to revise the purpose of physical education, with the emphasis being placed on their knowledge and skills for physical exercise activities throughout life;
- The change in the goal entails the need to expand the range of physical education activities to include those performed independently and daily by students in an extracurricular environment;
- Based on the specifics of the changes in the object of physical education, a mandatory element of the training should be the diagnostics of the students, which will allow the individualization of the means and methods, which in turn will make the process of learning in motion and developing the motor abilities of the student more effective;
- In the end, all these changes are impossible if we do not link scientific achievements with practical implementation.

In conclusion, we should note that as a social phenomenon, physical education will suffer continuous changes, which we specialists in this field are obliged to monitor and reflect in practice.

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