

## CIRCUMSTANCES FOR FLEXIBLE APPROACH IN SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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Review paper

### Abstract

Physical education as imminent part of social educational activities demands continual researches and conceptual re-thinking according to changes in cultural transformations as well as in potential differences behavioural allocations of pupils in educational system. Periodically are done state's reforms in the field of physical education. But it is a real question do they really reach to the expected results and effectiveness? Recent large-scale study of L. Borissov (2014) lead to the conclusion that the obligatory PE content do not secure in the necessary extent the complete development of the pupil's motor potential. Lacks are in the necessary number of specialists in PE and the poor PE facilities in some of the schools. So matters in school physical education have to be constantly rethought with changes in content and estimation in this school subject according to the competences of the PE teachers. For the purpose flexible approaches in the work of the PE teachers are necessary.

**Key words:** physical education, conceptions, continual researches

### Introduction

Since the 70s of XX century body received a new special attention and entered the scene of social sciences. Boom in the academic researches concerning human body are registered in most of the countries. To the beginning of XXI century the new body awareness by and by starts to be connected with its well-being and questions about its health and hygiene, illness and curing. Evident starts to be the role of the motor and movement culture closely connected with the regular physical activity of people. The only school subject closely connected with body, but with its spirit too, is physical education. Nowadays while seeking full effectiveness of school physical education in all decisions connected with its tasks, purposes, content, methods to conduct, etc. one has to use the proved in the scientific and educational sphere humanistic, holistic and integral approaches.

#### *About the demanded approaches in contemporary teaching and learning*

Humanistic approach is connected with finding values in all people so that all of them start to be fully functioning persons with their place in the society. In child's growth parents, teachers, etc. have to show empathy and unconditional positive attitude to all children without any prejudice about race, sex, minority group, extent of abilities. In this sense we have to mention the new attitude to children and adults with disabilities during the last decades. *Holistic approach* can be considered as an extension of the humanistic approach. In education it is based on the premise that each child has to find identity and purpose in life by embracing the humanitarian values. In this sense some scholars speak about *culturological approach* too. Purpose is to help pupils to be the most that they can be. Abraham Maslow referred to this as "self-actualization".

Teaching and learning processes with holistic perspective are connected with the development of intellectual, emotional, social, physical, creative and spiritual potentials of the individuals. *Integral approach* is defined by Ken Wilber (2006) with the aim to "cultivate body, mind and spirit in self, culture and nature. And further (2015): "Knowledge itself is now global. The sum total of human knowledge is available to us – the knowledge, experience, wisdom, and reflection of all major human civilizations – pre-modern, modern and post-modern – are open to study by anyone." Integrative education comes in many varieties but its purpose is to make connection between the different artificially divided fields to study (or school subjects). This approach also seeks the connection between academic knowledge (usually connected with memorizing of facts) and practice (Huber, M. T., Hutchings, P., & Gale, R., 2005). It also supposes interdisciplinary education, the results of which are higher than studying single-discipline subjects (Ed Lawton 1994). This rough analysis of the approaches in education concerns sports and physical education too. One can see how competent, flexible and quick have to be in taking decisions the educators, if they logically seek the best results in their work.

#### *About the education of the nowadays Z generation*

Last decades technologies underwent a dashing development. A century ago the way of living of people was predominantly motor active. Mechanical work covered only 1-4 percent of human activity. The rest larger portion belonged to the physical activity, so necessary for the well-being of people. Today this portion is quite the reverse. To the end of XX century the information technologies conquered the world of people.

In nowadays digital age education from the very early years is connected with the computer machines. Nobody can ignore the importance of the computers especially in making of informed choices but at the same time emerged contradictions in the lifestyle of the nowadays so called Z generation, who does not know a world without the Internet, cell phones or iPods<sup>1</sup> As certain ments are not late. A study in Cyprus done in 2011 and 2012 with 2472 pupils (12-19-years-old) shows that when not in school pupils are engaged with meeting of friends (54 %), Internet surfing (50,8 %), watching TV(45, 7%), playing of video games (34 %), sports games with friends (25,7%), reading of books (12,5%), others (6,8%)(E. Mileva & Y. Nicolaou, 2012). Or as can be seen the part of physical activity of these 12-19-years- old pupils is insufficient. Other investigation carried out in 10 schools with 568 pupils in Tirana(Albania) shows that it is of daily occurrence 52,3 % children (55,2 % boys and 49,3 % girls) to be engaged with their private computer at home for 1-3 hours; 60% of children (56,3 % boys and 63,5 % girls) stay 1-3 hours daily in front of the TV; 20 % of children (19,3 % boys and 20,0 % girls) use 1-3 hours daily to send SMS-s; 53,1 % of children(61,6 % boys and 44,2 % girls) use 1-3 hours daily to prepare their home works – 30% of the girls use 4 and more hours for the purpose (Mema, B.& K. Ushtelenca, 2014). We chose only these two examples to show the customary daily round of pupils today. The conclusion is that generally today children do not play and do not sing. They are mainly consumers and as if they are not trained up to be active builders of life and environment. Education of youngsters is turned mainly to their information literacy (how to access and use information). But is it necessary for the society to wait and use information only about how its citizens to cope with long term medical conditions? Or increased to optimum physical activity can help?

*About the health of pupils*

Nowadays in methodology of physical education the expected apogee is reformation in school physical education for lifetime physical activity. In reality more often the growing physical inactivity of children and young people leads to unhealthy way of living and increased number of obese pupils or pupils with spinal curvatures, cardiovascular diseases, myopia, high blood pressure, etc. Statistics for the Bulgarian pupils shows that (a) only one third of the children and youth aged 7 to 19 are vigorously active, (b) physical activity declines dramatically with age during adolescence,

<sup>1</sup>Changes occurred gradually. Sociologists and psychologists started to define the new generations as X-generation (born between the years 1966 – 1976), Y-generation (born between the years 1977 – 1994), Z-generation (born between the years 1995 – 2011 and later), retrieved from www.vspages.com/generation-x-vs-generation-y-vs-generation-z...- look at the theory of William Strauss and Neil Howe.

and (c) female youth are much less physically active than male youth(B. Peneva& V. Ivanova, 2014). Bad habits (drinking of alcohol, cigarette smoking, sexual life that starts at a very early age) have an uncontrolled entrance in pupils’ daily round. On the base of a large investigation of 5 to 16-years-old children P. Milanova/П. Миланова (2012) finds that most critical is the age 12-15-years-old (figure 1<sup>2</sup>). There is the greatest number of boys and girls using alcohol (70, 3%), tobacco (46, 0 %), drugs of different kind (63, 3%). At this age also the aggressive behavior of pupils increases. Very often the expression is in mutual fights (61% of boys and 39% of girls report about this).

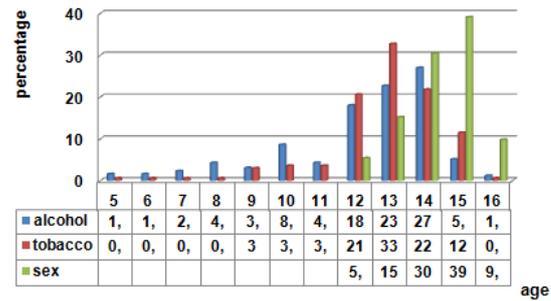


Figure1. The alcohol, tobacco, and sex in the life of pupils (according to P. Milanova, 2012)

We suppose that reason for this misbehavior of youngsters at this age is their strong wish to be like the adults and as a result comes the imitation of the elderly people just in these bad habits. At the age of 16-years-old percentage sharply falls down. Furthermore, greater become the pupils’ knowledge and awareness to matters with the increase of age. Embarrassing problem are the spinal curvatures. Nowadays they are amongst the most widespread breakdowns in the health of pupils. On the average in Bulgaria ¼ of the 8 – 15-years-old pupils have light or heavier scoliosis or other spinal curvature. A screening in Sofia over 1343 children in 11 schools done by G. Markovska in 2012 showed that 50, 4% of the children (n= 677) have irregular posture, 12, 1% (n=162) have spinal curvatures and only 37, 5% (n=504) are with normal posture (G. Markovska, 2013).Or roughly told only one of three pupils has managed to form and retain good posture. Furthermore, last survey on spinal curvatures done by the National Center of Public Health Protection (2012) revealed that 60% of pupils have spinal curvatures, bad posture or another problem of the musculoskeletal system (<http://ncphp.government.bg/>). Is it necessary then to speak about epidemic situation? The best way to prevent spinal curvatures from becoming a severe problem is by their early detection and prompt treatment. Here very important is the mutual work of pupils, teachers and parents and the systematic control on the problem too. Unfortunately unified methods for the purpose are necessary.

<sup>2</sup> The original figure is shown where blue is alcohol, red – tobacco, and green – sex.

Otherwise the differences in statistical data of the researchers will be inevitable. During last decades problem among pupils becomes obesity. This problem is everywhere, e. g. in Brazil from 1989 to 2003 men continued to show increased rates of obesity. In Southern Brazil prevalence of obesity is similar and even higher than developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. Youth obesity has increased, reaching a prevalence of 10, 6% among girls and 4, 8% among boys but 13, 9% for both boys and girls in the Southern region (Oehlschlaeger, M. H. K., Pinheiro R. T., Horta, B., Gelatti, C., &San'tana, P. , 2004). In Croatia 15% of 11-years-old girls and 21% of 11-years-old boys are overweight or obese according to body mass index. This percentage among 13-years-olds is 12% for girls and 22% for boys, and among 15-year-olds, it is 10% for girls and 23% for boys (C. Currie et al., 2012). Citations of the kind are numerous. What is the situation in Bulgaria? The most recent survey conducted by the National Centre of Public Health Protection (2012) revealed that 38.5% of Bulgarians aged 14 to 60 are overweight or obese according to body mass index.

Surveys among children and youth aged 6 to 19 were undertaken by the same centre in 2004 and 2011 revealed that in 2004, 20% of pupils were overweight. In 2011, 30.2% of pupils were overweight and 12.7% were obese. According to the International Obesity Task Force (2008), 1 out of 10 children globally are considered overweight or obese. On this base we see that the situation among Bulgarian children is worse than the worldwide average.

On the other side are the anorexia cases especially among girls. According to the World Health Organization in Bulgaria, more than 100.000 girls have anorexia and the tendency in the coming years is for this number to increase to 150.000. How the predominantly high body weight of contemporary pupils reflects on their school physical education? Firstly, recommendations for prophylaxis on the base of purposeful exercises and sports are not enough. Pupils have to realize the gravity of the problem and without being boring the PE teachers have to be in their help constantly. Children grow up through movements and that is why it is very important for them to be engaged in swimming, basketball, volleyball, rowing, skiing, skating, etc. (all other sports they choose). All these sports can lead to getting of a correct posture and strong musculature, so necessary especially in the cases of children with weak muscles. Secondly, artistic gymnastics for three decades (1960 – 1990) took approximately 1/3 of the PE content during the winter months in lower and higher secondary school (5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> class). This was connected with obligatory competences of the PE teachers but with great physical loading for them too. Heavier pupils, on one hand, and preference to the sports games, on the other hand, lead to getting out of the gymnastics apparatuses from the sports halls of the schools.

Thirdly, still unsolved is the attitude towards the endurance test of 300 m (girls) and 600 m (boys) obligatory running at the beginning and at the end of the school year. Pupils changed their volume characteristics but the demands to them still stay the same.

*About the content of school physical education*

As can be seen in the Eurydice report of EACEA (2013) where obligatory content of physical education in primary (pink) and lower secondary education (red) in school year 2011/2012 is given, as if in Bulgaria the content of physical education is poor to a certain extent though the reforms in the school system. Some supplement comes from the optional activities (look in [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/150EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/150EN.pdf).) where for Bulgaria we find preferences to health and fitness, outdoors and adventure, swimming and other activities. On the other side counties as Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Spain, Hungary, others (total number 15) are with school autonomy and Germany, France, Cyprus and Slovakia with school autonomy only in lower secondary school. This fact reduces the expected critical attitude to the school physical education content in Bulgaria.

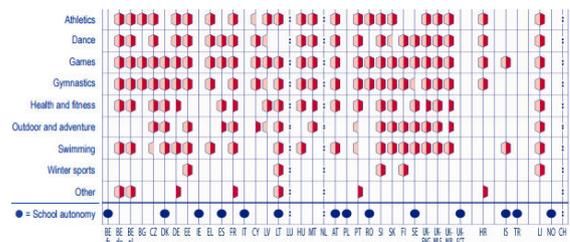


Figure 2. Eurydice report of EACEA (2013)

The state policy is returning of all children with disabilities to the general mainstream schools and closing of the special schools. For the purpose a new vision towards the PE content is necessary but for the moment matters stay only in the hands and the competences of the PE teachers and their ability for quick decision according to the concrete situation.

**Conclusion**

Periodically are done state’s reforms in the field of physical education. But do they really reach to the expected results and effectiveness? Recent large-scale study of L. Borissov (2014) lead to the conclusion that the obligatory PE content do not secure in the necessary extent the complete development of the pupil’s motor potential. Lacks are in the necessary number of specialists in PE and the poor PE facilities in some of the schools. So matters in school physical education have to be constantly rethought with changes in content and estimation in this school subject according to the competences of the PE teachers. For the purpose flexible approaches in the work of the PE teachers are necessary.

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## OKOLNOSTI ZA FLEKSIBILAN PRISTUP U SPORTU I TJELESNOM ODGOJU

### Sažetak

*Tjelesni odgoj kao blizak dio društveno-obrazovnih aktivnosti zahtijeva kontinuirana istraživanja i konceptualna promišljanja u skladu s promjenama u kulturološkim transformacijama, kao i potencijalnim razlikama izdvajanja u ponašanju kod učenika u obrazovnom sustavu. Periodično se vrše državne reforme u području tjelesnog odgoja. Ali pravo pitanje je postižu li zbilja očekivane rezultate i efektivnost? Nedavno istraživanje velikih razmjera L. Borissova (2014) dovelo je do zaključka da obvezan sadržaj tjelesnog odgoja osigurava u nužnom opsegu potpun razvoj učeničkog motoričkog potencijala. Nedostatci su u nužnom broju stručnjaka u tjelesnom odgoju u lošim postrojenjima za tjelesni odgoj u nekim školama. Tako da pitanja školskog tjelesnog odgoja moraju konstantno biti prilagođavana s promjenama u sadržaju i procjeni u ovom školskom predmetu prema kompetencijama učitelja tjelesnog odgoja. U svrhu toga nužni su fleksibilni pristupi u radu učitelja tjelesnog odgoja.*

**Ključne riječi:** tjelesni odgoj, zamisli, stalna istraživanja

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