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WHERE IS THE SYSTEM OF EUROPEAN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION HEADING? CONTENT-BASED TENDENCIES OF ITS DEVELOPMENT

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The article presents the author's vision of the tendencies of the development of the system of school physical education in the European Union. Based on the literature review and personal experience of work in the sector of physical education, the author defines the following tendencies: student-centeredness (recognizing students' needs as the priority), equal focus on the process and learning outcomes (equal attention to the process of acquiring physical education competencies and the product of students' learning activities), regularity (physical activity in formal and non-formal education regularly), increasing frequency (an increase in the number of compulsory physical education classes at school), dynamism (responding to the needs of physical education subjects in determining its content and forms), competency orientation (the acquisition of competencies necessary for the students' lifelong physical education) and innovation (the constant search for new ways to increase the effectiveness of physical education). The rationale behind them are in the current situation that makes these trends in the development urgent. However, the author shows that introducing some of them may encounter many restrictions and unwillingness of the school authorities and teachers of other school subjects. The presented article concludes that the actual vector of the movement of the European school physical education system is not that straightforward, as the pandemic has curved it with hypodynamism and constant stress that have affected people's physical and psychological health. Besides, the prevalence of academic subjects over physical training remains evident and is still viewed as 'physical training'. Therefore, one of the most powerful ways to cultivate the culture of keeping their physical and mental body healthy and taking care of their environment is to gradually shift attitudes to physical education from training-oriented to those perceiving the system as culture-related.



Key words: the tendency of the development, the system of school physical education, student-centeredness, learning outcomes, competencies, dynamism and innovation.

У статті представлено авторське бачення тенденцій розвитку системи фізичного виховання в школах країн Європейського Союзу. На основі аналізу наукових джерел та особистого досвіду роботи у сфері фізичного виховання автор визначає такі тенденції: орієнтованість на студента (визнання потреб учнів як пріоритетних), важливість як процесу, так і результатів навчання (увага приділяється як процесу набуття компетенцій з фізичного виховання, так і продукту навчальної діяльності учнів), регулярність (регулярна фізична активність у закладах формальної та неформальної освіти), збільшення кількості обов'язкових уроків фізичної культури у школі, динамізм (врахування думки суб'єктів фізичного виховання при визначенні його змісту та форм), орієнтація на набуття компетентностей, необхідних для учнів протягом усього життя, та інноваційність (постійний пошук нових шляхів підвищення ефективності фізичного виховання). Проаналізовані тенденції відповідають потребам розвитку сучасної системи освіти в школі, однак, запровадження деяких із них може викликати супротив шкільної влади та вчителів інших предметів. Крім того, пандемія з її гіподинамією та постійними стресами, які вплинули на фізичне та психічне здоров'я людей, стала викликом для розвитку системи фізичного виховання у європейських школах. Є очевидним, що шкільні дисципліни орієнтовані на вивчення матеріалу, пропагуючи «фізичну підготовку», а не фізичний розвиток дитини. Автор робить висновок, що зміна ставлення до системи фізичного виховання в школі може стати одним із найефективніших способів розвитку у європейців культури збереження свого фізичного та психічного здоров'я та турботи про довкілля.

Ключові слова: тенденція розвитку, система фізичного виховання в школі, орієнтованість на студента, результати навчання, компетентності, динамізм та інноваційність.

Introduction. The European Commission has been drawing particular attention to physical education and sports in EU member states since 2007 when the White Paper on Sport was published. The situation with physical education in the EU countries has covered in the following documents: "EU Guidelines of Health Enhancing Physical Activity" (2008), "European Union Work Plan for Sport (2014–2017)", "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation and relevance of the European Union Action Plan for Sport 2014-2017, European Union Action Plan for Sport (2015), Communication from the European Commission" Developing the European Dimension in Sport "(2011), EURIDYCE report "Physical Education and Sport at School in Europe" (2013), reports on meetings of expert groups "Physical activity that improves health".



The expediency of the European community's appeal to the problem of organizing school physical education is also due to the growing health problems that became more urgent in the COVID-19 pandemic time. Thus, school physical education should be viewed as a system that is self-regulated to some extent. Here we mean a multi-level system that combines paradigm, approaches, theoretical concepts, leading agents and stakeholders, and organization and content learnt. This article presents the author's view of the content and process development tendencies in the European school physical education system.

Literature review. There has been plenty of research in different disciplines devoted to physical education and sport. The analysis of relevant publications with an interdisciplinary focus has been made in the author's publication "Development of physical education in European Union: a literature review" (Skalski, D. 2017). Here we will look at the articles with a particular attention to the tendencies of the development of the system of school physical education in the EU countries, namely:

- student-centeredness (Trendowski & Woods, 2015; Colquitt, et al, 2017; Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Hills & Croston, 2012; Butler, 2004);
- equal focus on the process and learning outcomes (Chatoupis & Vagenas, 2011);
- regularity (Mishu, et al., 2019; Bailey & Fernando, 2012 Hartescu & Morgan, 2019; Park, et al, 2017);
- increasing frequency (Annerstedt, 2008; Bailey, et al., 2009; Bernstein, Phillips & Silverman, 2011; Kougioumtzis & Patriksson, 2011);
- dynamism (MacPhail, Tannehill & Avsar, 2019);
- competency orientation (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012; EUPEA, 2018; Lleixà & Sebastiani, 2016);
- innovation (European Commission, 2008; Martin, Kahlmeier, Racioppi, Berggren, Miettinen, Oppert, J.-M. et al., 2006; Departments: Issues, 2012; Casey & Jones, 2011 Cain, 2010; Weir & O'Connor, 2009; Koekoek, van der Mars, van der Kamp, Walinga & van Hilvoorde, 2018; Palao, Hastie, Struz & Ortega, 2015; Crook, Mauchline, Maw, et al., 2012).

Results and discussion. The literature analysis and the author's personal experience of being in the PE system for several decades allow us to produce a list of the content-and-process tendencies in European physical culture education development. The author will demonstrate their connection with some previous research and support it with some examples. The tendencies addressed here include student-centeredness, equal focus on the process and learning outcomes, regularity, increasing frequency, dynamism, competency orientation, and innovation.

The tendency of student-centeredness determines recognizing students' needs as the priority. In this context, T. Trendowski and A. Woods (2015) conducted a study to identify key principles of student-centred physical education. They proposed the following key principles: (1) prior knowledge; (2) organization of knowledge; (3) motivation; (4) development of mastery skills; (5) goal-directed practice; (6) students as social, emotional and intellectual learners; and (7) students as self-directed learners.

The tendency of student-centeredness can be realized by using the personalization of learning and its differentiation. Differentiated learning is a comprehensive



model and philosophy used in EU schools. The focus of differentiated learning is the personalization of the learning process, which considers the differences between students depending on the degree of readiness, interest and learning characteristics. Teachers should apply different types of assessment to students with different levels of readiness and choose learning strategies based on their interests. The practical implementation of personalized learning is facilitated by creating a student's learning profile, which is based on an understanding of individual learning style, multiplicity of intelligence, age, gender and culture. All these features significantly impact the characteristics of the student's learning activities and determine the nature of the interaction between teacher and student. To date, personalized learning has been more commonly used in adaptive physical education to work with students with special needs, but the urgent need for its use in general secondary education cannot be ignored. As Colquitt et al. (2017) put it, "The content, process, product and learning environment are all factors that contribute to differentiated instruction... Physical educators should strive to implement differentiated instruction in order to increase individual levels, willingness to participate, and engagement; to create a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation; and to assess students in all domains to track student learning" (Colquitt et al., 2017).

In addition, the tendency of student-centeredness is based on research that focuses on gender, racial differences of students and their different social status, and has intensified in recent decades as a means of reconceptualizing physical education (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Hills & Croston, 2012; Butler, 2004). This trend is significant, tending to the joint participation of girls and boys in physical education as one of its organizational and institutional principles. It is aimed at overcoming exclusion and full inclusion of both sexes in physical education.

The *tendency of equal focus on the process and learning outcomes* lays in paying equal attention to acquiring physical education competencies and the product of students' learning activities. The existence of this trend is to some extent prompted by publications in scientific journals. The analysis of articles, the subject of which is procedural and practical approaches to physical education, was made by Chatoupis and Vagenas (2011). The article's primary purpose was to identify, categorize, and analyze research related to the process and learning outcomes in physical education. This project was a continuation of previous research (Silverman & Manson, 2003), which focused on specific categories disclosed in articles published in several research journals: The conclusions made by these researchers, as well as the analysis carried out by Chatoupis and Vagenas (2011), allow to determine the prospects of the trend of equal focus on the process and learning outcomes in the content of physical education. In addition, they provide an opportunity to understand progress in this area and identify new approaches to the process and learning outcomes in physical education. The authors divided the analyzed publications on this issue into the following areas: formulation of learning outcomes, evaluation of the process and results of learning activities, the hidden content of the physical education curriculum, teaching methods, learning strategies, learning process and its results. The conclusions made by the authors testify to the presence of a pronounced tendency to equal attention to both the process and the results of educational activities in the field of physical education,



taking into account the individual approach to students and differentiation in the selection of physical activity.

The following identified tendency is *regularity*, i.e. physical activity in formal and non-formal education regularly. In several studies, regularity in physical education is seen as a way to improve the physical and mental condition, health and happiness (Mishu et al., 2019; Bailey & Fernando, 2012), sleep (Hartescu & Morgan, 2019), and also as a means of reducing aggression and stress (Park et al., 2017). Given the scientific justification for the need for regular physical activity, we consider the trend of regularity as a promising direction for the development of European physical education.

The tendency to *increase frequency*, which is associated with an increase in the number of compulsory physical education classes at school, causes controversies between those who formulate research-based European educational policies and school administration at the local level. On the other hand, European policy in physical education, which has a recommendatory nature and is subject to change in implementation at the national and local levels, determines the need to increase the frequency of physical education classes during all years of schooling. On the other hand, in the EU there is a tendency to increase the number of lessons in academic subjects as "more necessary for students", although the point of view of the students themselves is not taken into account. With this in mind, several studies have been conducted to determine students' attitudes and beliefs about the number of physical education lessons in school (Annerstedt, 2008; Bailey et al., 2009; Bernstein, Phillips & Silverman, 2011).

For example, in Sweden, a study was conducted among ninth-graders and «aimed a) to describe students' behavioural, normative, and control beliefs, b) to establish how the patterns between the three belief domains relate, and c) to analyze the impact of physical education lesson frequency on those beliefs (Kougioumtzis & Patriksson, 2011). As a result, the researchers found out that more physical education and health lessons affect more positive behavioural and control attitudes. In addition, students showed a positive attitude towards increasing the number of physical education and health lessons, both those who had one lesson per week and those who had two or more lessons (Kougioumtzis & Patriksson, 2011, p. 11). So, if we take into account the positive attitude of students, researchers, and European educational policymakers, we can hope for the development of the school physical education system to increase the frequency of PE lessons at school.

Considering the position of individuals and institutions interested in physical education, we make assumptions about the tendency of *dynamism*, i.e. responding to the needs of physical education subjects in determining its content and forms (MacPhail, Tannehill & Avsar, 2019).



Table 1

Stakeholders and Subjects of School Physical Education

Level	Stakeholders	Subjects
World	World Health Organisation, International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity, UNESCO	
European	WHO European Regional Bureau, European Commission, European Parliament, European Council, European Physical Education Association, European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity	
National	National PE associations, National PE teachers' associations, Ministries (of education, youth, sports), National teachers trade unions.	
Local	Schools, Universities, Local authorities	Parents, trainers, employers, community.
School		Students, teachers, school leaders, councillors, teacher assistants, psychologists.

To ensure the tendency of dynamism, first of all, there should be mechanisms of communication between stakeholders and subjects of physical education, as well as feedback on the practical implementation of the concepts of physical education in school by its main actors – students, physical education teachers and other subjects, administration and other school staff (consultants, teacher assistants, social educators), parents, coaches, employers. There have been numerous works and international projects funded by the European Commission (for example, the project "Identifying Best Practice across Physical Education Teacher Education Programs: A European Perspective. Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership project") devoted to partnership and cooperation to ensure the dynamic development of the physical education system in Europe. In the development of the physical education system, we define the *tendency of competence orientation*, which focuses on the acquisition of competencies necessary for the students' lifelong physical education. As a result of European integration and globalization processes in all member states of the European Union, physical education is based on a competency-based approach that allows meeting the needs of society and the individual. Recent recommendations focus on developing key competencies for lifelong learning (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012). Competencies are generally defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant to the context, and key competencies are those necessary for personal self-realization and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. Concerning physical education, competencies are set out in the standards and knowledge, skills and attitudes (EUPEA, 2018). Lleixà & Sebastiani (2016) believe that to be successful, acquiring competencies requires innovation in learning approaches.



We associate the *tendency of innovation* with the constant search for new ways to increase the effectiveness of physical education. The European Commission pays excellent attention to the use of innovative approaches and theories in physical education that are appropriate for children and young people and are implemented in the appropriate content and forms. It is said that:

Teachers should be encouraged to use technology in physical education classes to explore fitness and motor skill concepts in ways that personalize the curriculum to a greater extent than before. Heart rate monitors, video and digital photo equipment, computer software programmes and other equipment to estimate body composition can play a valuable role in this context (European Commission, 2008).

Innovations must be implemented based on empirical research based on data (Martin, Kahlmeier, Racioppi, Berggren, Miettinen, Oppert, J.-M. et al., 2006). Areas developed by researchers in this field are related to the potential of technologies to increase the time for direct physical activity during lessons (Departments: Issues, 2012; Casey & Jones, 2011); with general approaches to the use of digital technologies in the educational process of physical education (Cain, 2010; Weir & O'Connor, 2009); with the possibility of using digital technologies in game pedagogy (Koekoek, van der Mars, van der Kamp, Walinga & van Hilvoorde, 2018); the impact of technology on student achievement in physical education (Palao, Hastie, Struz & Ortega, 2015); using digital technologies to evaluate students and provide them with feedback (Crook, Mauchline, Maw, et al., 2012). Given the significant interest in the issues related to innovation in European physical education, particularly the general digitalization of society, we consider this trend in the development of physical education concepts promising.

Conclusion. Although the described tendencies logically fit in the niche of current and recent research, EU legislation and recommendations, the actual vector of the movement of the European school physical education system is not that straightforward. Firstly, it has been curved by the pandemic with hypodynamism and constant stress that have affected people's physical and psychical health. Secondly, the prevalence of academic subjects over physical training remains evident. Thirdly, it is still viewed as 'physical training'. Therefore, the only way is to gradually shift attitudes to physical education from training-oriented to those perceiving the system as culture-related. It is one of the most powerful ways to cultivate in Europeans the culture of keeping their physical and mental body healthy and taking care of their environment.

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