

Do We Need a New Concept of School Physical Education?

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Numerous studies conducted in Serbia in the last half century point to the ineffectiveness and the problem of marginalization of school physical education. The aim of the study was to investigate the level of basic motor skills in volleyball, basketball, and gymnastics among second-year students of both genders at the Faculty of Education in Užice. In the period from 2015 to 2022, 7 generations of students were tested. The results of the study showed that female students have significantly worse motor skills than male students. About 35% of female students did not even meet the minimum educational requirements, and 10% of them did not even try to solve motor tasks. The results of this and many other studies pointing to problems in teaching are such that one can reasonably ask the question, do we need a new approach to school physical education? Does physical education meet the specific aptitudes and needs of students? Does the content of teaching correspond to the interests of young people, and is it in line with their contemporary culture and social trends?

Keywords: physical education, effects, teaching, quality

Introduction

A large number of researches (Arunović 1990; Bokan, Radojević and Radislavljević 1990; Martinović 2003; Šekeljić, Marinković, and Stamatović 2013; Šekeljić and Stamatović 2013) carried out in Serbia over the last half century indicate the ineffectiveness of physical education teaching. The ineffectiveness is of such proportions that students of both genders, neither after finishing primary school (Martinović 2003), nor after finishing secondary school (Šekeljić and Stamatović 2013), possess the motor skills that, according to educational standards, they should have learned by the sixth grade. It is an increasingly pronounced phenomenon that female students after secondary school have worse motor skills and motor abilities than they had during primary school (Šekeljić, Marinković, and Stamatović 2013). The prob-

lem of student absenteeism from physical education classes is becoming more pronounced in Serbia (Jorgić and Veselinović 2008). The fact that there are similar problems in other countries and that the number of students who actively participate in physical education classes is significantly decreasing, and there are more and more students who avoid classes, is indicated by the following papers: Ntoumanis et al. 2004; Brooks and Magnusson 2006. Female students avoid physical education lessons more often than male students, more often forget physical education equipment and more often ask teachers not to burden them with any activities (Forsyth et al. 2009). Students complain of negative experiences and feelings of incompetence or boredom during classes, which causes them to be disinterested in the teaching (Vilhjalmsson and Thorlindsson 1998). For some students, physical education is stressful and because of this, they miss school on the days they have physical education (Biddle 2001).

In addition, there are increasingly current views that the content of classes does not correspond to the interests of students, nor does it correspond to their cultural and social trends (Hardman 2007, 2008). If the policy of marginalization of physical education continues through a reduced number of classes, insufficient funding, a poor material and technical base, lack of human resources, bad curricula and the ministry's disinterest in quality control of teaching, the situation will worsen in the future (Hardman 2008). Sometimes the predictions are so unfavourable that there is a real danger regarding the survival of school physical education in the third millennium (Marshall and Hardman 2000).

Methodology

The objective of the study was to examine the effects of physical education teaching in that segment of teaching objectives that refers to motor skills in:

1. gymnastics (forward somersault (FS) and reverse somersault (RS), handstand (HS), jump over the buck with legs spread apart (SA) and squat (SQ)),
2. in volleyball (bouncing the ball with fingers (FG) and forearms (FA)),
3. basketball (basketball two-step (TS)).

The research sample consisted of 500 female and 200 second-year male students of the Faculty of Education in Uzice. The research is of a descriptive and analytical nature, and testing was applied with the work technique. In the assessment of motor skills, an instrument with an assessment scale

Table 1 An Instrument with an Assessment Scale by Which Motor Skills Were Assessed

Grade/performance
0 The candidate did not even attempt to perform the motor task
1 Attempted, but the task was not executed
2 The task is performed with errors in technique and posture. The basic characteristics of motor skills are hard to see
3 The task is performed with errors in technique and posture, but it can be considered that the students have mastered the basics of motor skills
4 The task is performed with minor errors in both technique and posture.
5 The task is performed without errors in technique and posture

Table 2 Descriptive Statistical Parameters of Boys

Grade	FS	RS	HS	SA	SQ	FG	FA	TS
5	75	52	56	134	65	67	50	65
4	11	27	13	38	11	17	23	12
3	10	15	27	20	10	10	15	4
2	4	6	4	4	8	4	12	13
1	0	0	0	4	6	2	0	6
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Median	4.6	4.25	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.2
Skewness	-1.863	-0.976	-0.697	-1.949	-1.447	-1.818	-0.841	-1.312
Kurtosis	2.399	-0.094	-1.033	3.794	0.817	2.809	-0.624	0.185

Notes Forward somersault (FS), Reverse somersault (RS), Handstand (HS), Jump over the buck with legs spread apart (SA) and Squat (SQ), Bouncing the ball with fingers (FG), Forearms (FA) and Basketball two-step (TS).

was used, which was already applied in the research of Bokan, Radojević, and Radisavljević (1990), Martinović (2003) and Šekeljić and Stamatović (2013).

Results and Discussion

Based on the data from tables 2 and 3, it is clear that the effects of teaching are not at the expected level, given the fact that these basic motor skills are included in the teaching content from the third grade of primary school and represent the minimum educational standard for sixth grade students.

The results shown in tables 2 and 3 indicate that about 77% of male students and 45% of female students perform motor skills without errors, or with minor technical errors. A significant number of female students (20–30%) perform the elements with significant errors, but the basic characteristics of the technique are observed, while 20–30% do not possess these motor skills. It is interesting that 5–25% of female students did not even try to

Table 3 Descriptive Statistical Parameters of Girls

Grade	FS	RS	HS	SA	SQ	FG	FA	TS
5	54	24	33	31	23	28	25	19
4	23	19	18	29	20	19	17	26
3	13	29	15	15	17	19	19	21
2	4	18	7	5	11	16	2	15
1	1	2	3.5	1	4	5	11	11
0	5	8	21	20	25	13	9	8
Median	4.1	3.2	3.0	3.2	2.7	3.1	3.0	3.0
Skewness	1.709	-0.394	0.463	-0.221	-0.727	-0.026	0.047	0.008
Kurtosis	2.942	-0.856	0.128	-1.658	-0.580	0.961	-0.356	-1.220

Notes Forward somersault (FS), Reverse somersault (RS), Handstand (HS), Jump over the buck with legs spread apart (SA) and Squat (SQ), Bouncing the ball with fingers (FG), Forearms (FA) and Basketball two-step (TS).

perform motor tasks. Probably, the reason for this behaviour is that the respondents perform these elements very poorly, so they do not want to be the subject of ridicule.

The results achieved in gymnastics are similar to the results found by Bokan, Radojević, and Radisavljević (1990) and Martinović (2003). Bokan, Radojević, and Radisavljević explained the poor results for female students in Belgrade schools by claiming that they never learned or tried to do any gymnastic element during physical education classes.

Educational standards in the field of sports games predict that students in higher grades of primary school and during secondary school should master more complex motor skills such as serve, smash, block, and serve reception, which would allow them to play volleyball with the application of the rules, which is one of the objectives of physical education in this educational segment. This research showed that a large number of students of both genders fail to master the motor skills that would enable them to play a volleyball or basketball game. Therefore, the question arises as to which programme the teachers implement and which activities the students engage in during physical education classes in secondary school. The question is justified because a significant number of students, even after twelve years of education, have not acquired the basic motor skills that are expected to be mastered in the sixth grade.

The basketball two-step is already included in the curriculum of the third grade of primary school, and it is planned for students to learn it in the sixth grade. Grades of 5 and 4 were given to 77% of male respondents and 45%

of female respondents (tables 2 and 3). 19% of men and 34% of girls do not possess the minimum educational requirements.

The results are not expected because volleyball and basketball belong to the sports activities that students of both genders like to engage in most during school and free time (Krsmanović, Berković, and Krsmanović 1996; Šekeljić and Sturza-Milić 2010; Šekeljić and Stamatović 2011; Šekeljić and Marković 2012; Marković et al. 2013), so the question can be asked, what do their motor skills look like in other areas?

The skewness values indicate a normal distribution in all test results except for the forward somersault. For the forward somersault, the skewness value (1.709) indicates a greater number of good results, which means that it is easy for most of those tested. In other cases, the skewness values are such that they indicate a normal distribution or a greater number of weak results. The values of kurtosis, except for the forward somersault, are such that one can speak of the vagueness of the results. Such descriptive statistical parameters are devastating considering that it concerns motor skills that are included in the educational programmes of younger school ages and that are presented as an educational standard for students of the 6th grade of primary school. The research included 20-year-old female respondent, so discrimination was expected, which has a pronounced hypocriticalness with positive asymmetry.

To overcome the poor quality of Physical Education (PE) classes at school, the European Parliament, through the Department of Culture and Education, requested information on the status of PE classes, curriculum goals, contents, deliveries, competent authorities, lesson plans and class instruction, and the status of teaching staff and their qualifications, and raised questions regarding the disabled, ethnic and religious groups, gender problems, professional training, etc. The data indicated that PE classes are marginalized by allocation of time, curricula, finances, material and technical bases, human resources, lesson plans and their implementation, and the interest of the Ministry in teaching quality control since 1990 (Hardman 2008).

A decades-long analysis of PE teaching effects in Serbia, whether referring to the acquired motor skills or improvement of motor abilities, indicates the conclusion that the effects of PE teaching are bad (Arunović 1992; Bokan 1988; Krsmanović 1992; Kukulj 2003; Marković 2009; Martinović 2003; Matić and Bokan 2005; Šekeljić et al. 2009; Šekeljić et al. 2011). The causes of poor teaching efficiency in Serbia are complex, but they can be reduced to the factors of the teaching process.

Competencies and Motivation of the Teaching Staff to Implement the Planned

Programme. It was stated in several papers that the average time used during the lesson is 37 minutes. After the usual organizational and communication activities at the beginning of the lesson are rejected, 30 minutes remain for active practice with the students (Krsmanović 1992). The data on the active time indicate that each student is active from 8 to 16 minutes during the lesson (Božović 2011; Krsmanović 1992), and that it is even less when gymnastics facilities are implemented (Petrović 2010; Vukašinović et al. 2010). Even with the application of methodical and organizational forms of work such as working with stations and supplementary exercises, the method of circular training in gymnastics classes does not achieve an active exercise time of more than 13.5 minutes (Petrović 2010); respectively, 21 minutes (Božović 2011).

This can be explained by the extremely weak engagement of the teachers, since it is known that the active practice time depends on the organizational-methodical forms applied in the class (Višnjić, Jovanović, and Miletić 2004). The competence and motivation of teachers in classroom teaching are also questionable. The research (Šekeljić et al. 2011) shows that 57% of the teachers held PE classes every time as scheduled. The PE classes are held twice a week in 31%, and one class in 11%, of classrooms. There were cases recorded in the first grade where no class was held in the two weeks during which the students kept records. The most common reasons why the PE class was not held are: bad weather conditions, lack of classes in other subjects, occupied school gym hall, preparation for a school performance, preparation for a writing test in Serbian or Maths, devoting time to more important subjects, and even the opinion that children should learn to read and write first of all and there will be time for PE classes afterwards. The children are often punished with no PE class for 'poor writing test, bad behaviour, not doing homework, not knowing the multiplication table.' About two thirds of the PE classes held are not in accordance with the teaching units scheduled in the month's curriculum, but rather they are aligned with the school conditions and the interests of the children. The research shows that 20% of the classes take place in the classroom, and the most common scenario is that after a dozen stretching exercises, the children play 'interesting geographies,' 'sinking submarines,' 'target shooting,' 'broken phones' and similar activities that cannot achieve the goals of PE classes.

Poor Material Equipment. According to the research (Petrović 1987; Bokan 1988; Milanović et al. 2010), two thirds of schools in Serbia do not have the material and technical conditions according to the standard specification, necessary for the implementation of PE classes. For this reason PE classes are most often carried out outdoors (playgrounds, yards, parks, squares) and de-

pend on weather and climate conditions. When the weather conditions are bad, the PE classes are held in halls or free classrooms. In situations where there are no conditions for the realization of the PE class, the indolence of school administrations in teaching quality control is understandable.

The Choice of Teaching Contents and their Structure is One of the Fundamental Problems in Teaching. At a time when the scope of knowledge in most sciences changes significantly every 4 to 5 years, the necessity of a careful analysis of the teaching contents is imposed in order to keep these contents constantly relevant in society (Matić and Bokan 2005). There is clearly a need for the programme contents of modern education to be flexible and current for both genders equally in order to avoid gender problems of teaching. Physical and health education must be based on scientific principles, but it is necessary for students to actively participate in determining the work content in class (Zdanski and Galić 2002), because lack of interest in the teaching content can greatly contribute to the student's failure and alienation (Matić and Bokan 2005). Such ideas find their foundation in paedocentric pedagogy in the didactics of Rousseau and Dewey, based on the thesis that the centre and central support of education is sought and found in the child. Humanistic pedagogic theories also consider that each individual should develop their inner potential, and this is only possible if students can consciously and freely choose and study teaching content in accordance with their interests. Internal motivation for learning is far more expedient than reward and punishment as a form of external motivation (Bruner 1976). The current curricula are too extensive. This has worse consequences for teaching since the curriculum is too broad, making intensive learning of all individual curriculum contents almost impossible (Matić and Bokan 2005). The commitment to physical activity depends on numerous factors such as value attitudes, social environment, structural and cultural barriers contributing to the existence of different interests, and attitudes and motives in relation to Physical Education (Flintoff and Scraton 2001; Višnjić et al. 2011). Boys choose physical activities more, while girls prefer to avoid PE classes, more often forget equipment and more often ask the teacher not to burden them with some kind of activity, and this phenomenon is especially expressed during high school and later (Fursuth et al. 2009; National Center for Health Statistics 2001). Boys like to compete, they are attracted to more intense exercise, the activities dominated by strength; they like cycling and traditional sports, while the girls see their physical engagement primarily as a function of regulating body mass (Garcia et al. 1995). They are more suited to non-competitive, cooperative and individual sports activities and they are more focused on socializing and ac-

tivities in nature (Greenwood and Stillwell 2001). Adolescent girls participate less in high-risk sports than the boys, and they are more interested in activities such as aerobics, volleyball and modern dance. On the other hand, boys are more interested in sports such as football, basketball, athletics, tennis, skating, weight training, and street or field hockey (US Department of Health and Human Services 1996; Hill and Hannon 2008), while few of them want to participate in dance because they feel these activities are feminized (Greenwood and Stillwell 2001). There is a different interest in different activities between the genders. Of 33 activities offered, the boys are most interested in football (73%), basketball (70.1%), bowling (62%), table tennis (54%), swimming (52%), field hockey (51%) and fencing (50%), while most of the girls preferred swimming (68%), skating (68%), volleyball (66%), bowling (64%), basketball (64%), gymnastics (61%), football (60%), yoga (56%), softball (54%) and canoeing (52%). The boys have a great influence on the girls' physical activities and are often the reason they do not participate in the game. The causes can be: intolerance and unwillingness of the boys to accept them equally in the game because they consider them worse players, not sufficiently knowing the rules or sports techniques; verbal discouragement; and even sarcasm or teasing (Maihan et al. 2006).

Possible Solutions

- to equip schools with objects, devices and equipment as provided for by the standards;
- to modernize the curriculum with teaching contents corresponding to the interests of children and youth;
- to separate the teaching contents by gender;
- to implement teaching classes separately by gender;
- to change the duration and structure of the class;
- to revise national educational standards;
- to create the tests and observation sheets to test motor skills;
- the permanent monitoring of teaching effects;
- to evaluate schools and teachers regarding the teaching effects;
- to make the results available to the interested public.

Conclusion

Numerous researches that we have mentioned in the paper have pointed to the weak effects of physical education teaching all over the world in the past half century. The effects of teaching are such that several questions can be reasonably asked:

1. Whether the present concept of school physical education fits the specific affinities and needs of students of both genders?
2. Do the contents and activities correspond to their interests?
3. Is it in line with their culture and social trends?

School physical education cannot be outside the cultural, sociological, economic, health, motivational, and even political currents of modern life. Therefore, it is necessary to modernize curricula and strategies for the promotion of physical education. It is necessary to identify children's needs and expectations related to physical education and design teaching practice through different class activities, extracurricular and optional activities. It is necessary to achieve the quality of teaching that will enable students to acquire and perfect motor skills, theoretical knowledge and habits for which they have an affinity and inclination, and which will help them to realize life in a quality way, the way they want it, in accordance with their capabilities and needs. It is very important to harmonize school physical education with the basic right of every human being to be educated and brought up based on their needs and wishes, and according to their ideals and role models.

The human body is designed to achieve the desired ideal of a humane, thinking being. In order for humans to reach the level of *homo sapiens*¹ in their phylogenetic development, it is necessary more than ever for them to be *homo mobilis*. The condition of all conditions of our survival is movement, and no virtual reality can refute that fact. The characteristic of modern society, in which real life is largely abandoned for the sake of identification with comic book heroes and virtual characters from video games and TV series, must come to an end. We must separate ourselves from the nihilism of post-modern society and create a new humanist cultural movement in which humans will again be at the centre of things, and physical education will receive the social role that is necessary if we want to preserve civilization. Some paradigmatic myths in the education of children and youth must be revised in order to establish better concepts and new ideas.

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¹ *Homo sapiens* is not a status symbol that a person receives by birth, but rather a symbol that should be earned during life.

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Ali potrebujemo nov koncept športne vzgoje v šolah?

Številna raziskovanja, izvedena v Srbiji v zadnji polovici stoletja, kažejo na marginalizacijo in neučinkovitost športne vzgoje v šolah. Namen raziskave je bil preveriti raven osnovnih gibalnih sposobnosti pri odbojki, košarki in gimnastici študentov ter študentk drugega letnika Pedagoške fakultete v Užicah. V obdobju od leta 2015 do 2022 se je testiralo sedem generacij študentov. Rezultati raziskave so pokazali, da imajo študentke bistveno slabše gibalne sposobnosti kot študenti. Približno 35 % študentk ni doseglo niti minimalnih izobrazbenih zahtev za šesti razred, 10 % pa jih niti ni poskušalo izvajati gibalnih nalog.

Rezultati te in mnogih drugih raziskav, ki kažejo na težave pri poučevanju, so takšni, da se lahko upravičeno sprašujemo, ali potrebujemo nov koncept športne vzgoje v šolah. Ali športna vzgoja v šolah ustreza specifičnim afinitetam in potrebam učencev? Ali učne vsebine ustrezajo interesom mladih in so v skladu z njihovo sodobno kulturo ter družbenimi trendi?

Ključne besede: športna vzgoja, učinki, poučevanje, kakovost