



## A Study on the Changing values of School Physical Education and Health Education

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### ABSTRACT

*The article deals with teaching in the educational area "Human and Health" at primary and secondary schools. The research was based on a questionnaire survey for teachers. The questionnaire was structured into 6 parts (personal data, educational area "Man and Health", P.E. – position, curriculum, facilities, needs). The situation in teaching (content, and provision of material, didactic materials, and teachers' interest in service training) is analysed in the results. The outcomes informing about the status of these subjects at school, their support by the school management, popularity among pupils ..., necessary for high-quality physical education (readiness of graduates, Ministry of Education's assistance, and support by school management), didactic shortages in P.E. teaching and the most burning problems are summarized in the conclusion.*

**KEYWORDS :** physical education, health education, curriculum, vocational preparation of graduates, didactic materials

### Introduction

The importance of the educational area "Human and Health" is increasing in the current world considering growing hypokinesia, overweight and obesity on one hand and eating disorders on the other hand, civilization diseases and unhealthy habits leading to various addictions. The new framework educational programs offer a new educational field to eliminate some unwanted phenomena and to contribute to prevention of undesirable behavior. Focus on this kind of education is socially necessary. However the schools are not prepared for it in many directions (lack of educated specialists for health education, teaching materials, conditions for education, support by school management and school founders, etc.).

The on-going school or also curricular reform in the Czech Republic brings primarily changes in the content and objectives of education. Apart from passing over knowledge, schools currently lay considerable emphasis in their work on teaching pupils how to work with information and how to master other life-long skills, so-called key competences, which should make their full-value life in the 21st century easier (Methodological Portal – An Opportunity for Teachers, 2011). A component part of school reforms which are underway or have recently been implemented abroad, too, is, above all, the revision of the curricula affecting also Physical Education (Fuchs, 2000; Janík & Najárová, 2007).

The newly drawn up educational area **Human and Health** includes 2 branches of education: Physical Education and Education for Health. Due to the health and hygienic needs of pupils, the branch of Physical Education must be included in all years of study. The educational content of the branch of Education for Health must be included in educational programme. School educational program plans in which year (years) and in which way its educational content is implemented. The educational content of the branch of **Education for Health** is a healthy life style and concern about health. The expected outputs include: student's efforts to make positive changes in their life in relation to their own health and the health of the others, introduction of mastered relaxation methods in their daily routine; implementation of mastered relaxation methods in stressful situations depending on specific situations, intervention in serious injuries and life threatening states ... (The Framework Educational Programme for Gymnasiums, 2007). The educational content of the branch of **Physical Education** are health affecting activities. The expected outputs include, above all, the organisation of one's own loco motor regime, the use of suitable and available physical activities in keeping with one's loco motor potential, interests and health needs.

### Objective of research

The objective of the research was to analyse the current situation in the teaching of Education for Health and Physical Education. We were interested in the content, material conditions, specific needs of today's teachers and the position of P.E. at school in comparison with

other disciplines.

### Surveyed group

The surveyed group was composed of primary and secondary schools teachers (n 328) interested in additional training (participants of the educational workshop Body Prague 2012) and faculty teachers who take care of students of sport during their teaching practice (43% men, 57% women). The most frequently stated age of the respondents was 51- 60 years (32%), 41- 50 years (29%), 31- 40 years (23%). 36% of the probands teach at primary schools, 43% at gymnasiums, 21% at secondary technical schools.

### Used methods

The used questionnaire was divided into 6 parts: personal data, educational programme of Man and Health – Health and Physical Education (position, content, equipment, and needs for improvement). In total, the respondents replied to 58 questions. The majority of them were closed questions (yes - no answers, or estimated % for the content of P.E., available equipment and apparatus ...). Open-ended questions were used to find out opinions on recommended changes, reservations about the salary and stress, suggestions for improvement, positive and negative aspects of P.E. teacher training.

### Results

The **educational area of Man and Health** is a new discipline, and schools had to rely on themselves while introducing it. 52% of schools have introduced lessons of Education for Health (26% of them even in each year of study). The greatest part of schools (40%), however, preserved the old model (incorporation of respective topics into other subjects). Physical Education has been allocated 2 lessons a week in all years of study at 60% of schools, while 34% of schools offer 3 lessons a week in some years of study. Mere 6% of schools have 3 lessons of P.E. a week in each year of study.

More than half of the teachers require the complementation of didactic materials. There is more interest in practical training, despite this, one third of the teachers want to complement their theoretical knowledge as well.

The most frequent teachers' answers to the question about recommended changes in Physical Education were: more lessons for Physical Education (33%), more attention to Physical Education and Education for Health (15%), higher financial support for material equipment (10%), less emphasis on pupils' performance. In Education for Health, the following necessary changes were most frequently mentioned: introduce on any occasion (12%), place emphasis on the life style (physical activity outside school as well, eating habits), release working manuals for teaching the subject.

### Physical and Health Education – Position

The importance of Physical Education in the new educational concept has grown. Our main concern was how the importance of the subject is perceived by teachers and the school management. 76% of teachers consider P.E. comparable with the other subjects, but 22% of P.E. teachers are convinced that it is considered less important. In a detailed analysis, P.E. teachers stated that for 32% of them P.E. seemed to be considered less important by the school management (being more important only for 4%). P.E. teachers think that up to 78% of colleagues find P.E. less important. The worst evaluation referred to parents – 92% of them think that the other subjects are more important. For the majority of pupils, P.E. is more popular than the other subjects (64%).

### Taught content in P.E.

We were primarily interested in the curriculum reform in Physical Education after the school competencies had increased.

Collective sports prevail in boys' Physical Education. The most frequently included disciplines (10 and more % of P.E. content) are football (42%), gymnastics (40%), basketball (33%), athletics (32%), floorball (30%), volleyball (29%). 80% of P.E. teachers did not mention swimming at all, 75% do not teach handball and 62% seasonal sports (skiing, ice hockey, etc.).

Very frequent components of girls' Physical Education (10% and more of the total subject matter) are gymnastics (60%), athletics (58%), volleyball (58%), basketball (38%). Swimming is not included by 76% of teachers, seasonal sports by 62%, football by 96% of P.E. teachers.

### Discussion

A key objective of Physical Education should be a "physically active person possessing individually appropriate physical and health literacy" (Mužík, Vlček, Vrbas, 2011). This objective, in turn, should be the focal point of all activities taking place in present-day Physical Education, and it is essential that the teaching is increasingly oriented not only towards practical activities, but also towards the acquisition of relevant knowledge related to the importance of physical activity for health. All this has to be performed on an adequate, captivating level respecting the age of pupils. Knowledge or skills, therefore, cannot be considered as output quality indicators (or the only output quality indicators) in the present-day concept of Physical Education. Knowledge and skills only become partial means that help to approach the real objective of Physical Education. This objective is *a physically active pupil* (or person) who considers physical activity as part of health support (Mužík, Vlček, 2012).

Our questionnaire survey for teachers manifested that despite the option to extend the number of lessons, school headmasters still stick to the minimum prescribed by the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic – 2 P.E. lessons a week. Education for Health was introduced in each year of study by less than 1/3 of schools. As compared to the other subjects, the importance of P.E. is still underestimated; what is more, nearly ¼ of P.E. teachers are even persuaded that it is a less important subject. This is the reason why any initiative promoting the importance of physical activity in the life of people is welcome.

The school reform also made the content of Physical Education more flexible. It is the schools themselves who create the curricula for each subject according to their conditions. Our research indicated a shift from the former centrally planned subject matter for the "uniform school" even in the selection of skills developed in P.E. lessons. It involves the strengthening of sports games, especially floorball, not including exercise on apparatus. The didactic level cannot be judged in our questionnaire, but the large number of offered games and the frequent occurrence of floorball suggest that a simplification of these didactic aims may take place there. It seems that the liberalization of the curricula might lead to some reduction in the offered content in P.E. lessons, and, for some teachers, also to a lowered didactic level of teaching.

### Conclusions

The quality of Health Education and its impact on pupils may be improved through more lessons, financial support for providing equipment and apparatus, a greater focus on the prestige of the subject. Some reserves are also in the training of teachers at faculties. Teachers themselves wish more practice and lesson observations in schools, more information on safety, rescue and assistance.

The support for Health Education by the Ministry of Education and by school managements is highly desirable. The Ministry may affect the number of lessons and equipment of schools by respective regulations. Financial support may encourage extracurricular activities and enhance the prestige of teachers. The Faculties have the power to increase the number of lessons of didactics, practice, offer novelties in the field and preparation courses for solving crisis situations. The Ministry and the Faculties should also take efforts to provide enough high-quality educational material, especially of didactic nature.

*The study has been supported by the research grant PRVOUK P15*

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