
How Sport Classes Can Beneficial For Children

The Influences of Physical Education in School Curriculum on Teenager Development

Physical activities usually are a part of all central curriculum frameworks, and is compulsory in primary and lower secondary education in many countries. Because currently physical education in school curriculum is in transition to new standards, healthy physical development of teenagers may be neglected, which is why students should create initiatives within curricular and extracurricular activities of schools and raise awareness to the prospective governmental levels.

Physical education – defined and recognized, yet is more than just a mere concept and holds the responsibility for proper physical development of teenagers. At the basis, physical education in a straightforward manner is defined as “education through physical [means]” (EBHG 2013). This simple description is the essence of the concept as connected to development. Furthermore, physical education is the subject of “knowledge, skills, capacities, and values along with the enthusiasm to maintain a healthy lifestyle into adulthood” (Menoutis 2010). These factors shortly and to the point define the essence mentioned above. Finally, the school subject of physical education in Latvia is known as Sport or Youth Sport; the fusion of the essence and factors aforementioned create an all-round discipline and open a path to a balanced and healthy development (Menoutis 2010, IZM 2013: 4). The discipline is a direct interpretation of both physical and mental developmental needs of students by the responsible authorities. In conclusion, encompassing physical and cognitive aspects, physical education or Sport is a concept with a deep meaning, which can be a useful tool for helping teenagers develop.

In practice, the practical appliance of physical education by students in curricular and extracurricular activities may develop healthy physical awareness, along with healthy lifestyle and thus higher self-confidence. To begin with, physical education promotes the bio-motor abilities – the basic abilities to perform physical activities – and physical awareness – physical strengths, weaknesses, capabilities and characteristics – of students (Jansone, Fern?te 2009: 16). These concepts complement one another. Although, they ask for a thorough approach from the teachers, as every movement has its steps of development (Jansone, Fern?te 2009: 4). In addition, Jansone and Fern?te state that during each lesson students are to learn about and practice healthy lifestyle (2009: 4). This can positively affect the futures of thousands, because the knowledge about healthy lifestyle can be useful throughout the life. In this perspective, not much is necessary to lead a healthy life: eat healthy, exercise, give up bad habits and think positively (VM 2013). And, finally, promotion of self-confidence, which in turn can boost such a skill as the ability to defend oneself, may have a positive impact on the futures of teenagers. Therefore, all of these three factors – physical awareness, practical knowledge of healthy lifestyle and higher self-confidence – are favourable for healthy development of teenagers.

However, physical education is mostly viewed in the context of physical development. For the purpose of this essay it is worth comparing the typical physical education model with Sport Education model in such categories: involvement of students and teachers in the class

activities, and development of skills. Firstly, in the traditional system, the student comes to class and with the help of the teacher works on a certain exercise and performs to receive a mark (Jansone, Fern?te 2009: 5). On the other hand, Hastie states:

the benefits of sport education participation include an increased investment in physical education, an increased level of learning in games units, and increased opportunities for potentially marginalized students (...) [students] take an active role in their own sport experience by serving in varied and realistic roles that we see in authentic sport settings such as captains, coaches, umpires et cetera. (1998: 1)

Within this approach, students with the help of teachers grow in different settings and roles, thus furthering development. Secondly, teachers in a multi-activity Sport class are responsible for the management of individual lessons: presenting tasks, holding students accountable, developing student learning (Jansone, Fern?te 2009: 5). Unfortunately, this way, for example, weaknesses of individual students may be neglected. However, according to Hastie`s (1998: 3) research, in the Sport Education model the teacher is a facilitator, as well as organizes active involvement and is free to work with individual students. Thirdly, in physical education programme students in large groups can train bio-motor abilities such as throws, serving techniques, though these skills class-wise are usually mandatory only prior to the skill related tests (Jansone, Fern?te 2009: 6). In comparison, in Sports Education, students themselves organize game seasons and participate in season tournaments, all the time honing their skills (Hastie, 1998: 2). In this case Hastie points out that the development of skills falls mostly on the students, who use their free time to perfect moves or train physical attributes (1998: 2). To sum up, taking into consideration that in a typical physical education programme students are training specific skills at a greater extent and in Sports Education they are more involved, a mix of programmes would be recommendable. Sports Education would need to provide more exercises set by the teacher and traditional class – a season for each type of game.

Nevertheless, sport classes are still often more product oriented than process oriented and development pedagogy, focused on the healthy development of individuals, might be a better way of addressing the problem. To illustrate how teenagers would benefit from this movement to development pedagogy in physical education, let me give an example. During the school years, the pull up exercise in Sport classes was performed only a short time before the test, therefore there were students who for a very long time were not able to perform this exercise. But the teacher would focus on testing or the ‘finished product’ rather than development of this concrete skill from the basics, which describes normative pedagogy. The focus on development would give, in my opinion, much better results, because during the same period in school I was participating in extracurricular physical activities, which resulted in increased performance with the same exercise. In conclusion, a complete transition to development pedagogy could improve the overall situation in the physical education, because it is more focused on individual performance.

With the development pedagogy at our doorstep, a process oriented physical education programme, containing elements from Sports Education if possible, together with students` own physical development initiatives could provide a diverse and positive environment for the future of physical education, which will not be neglected by the responsible authorities.