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HUNGARIAN PE TEACHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT CURRENT ISSUES OF PE LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

MNENJE MADŽARSKIH UČITELJEV ŠPORTNE VZGOJE O AKTUALNI PROBLEMATIKI POUČEVANJA ŠPORTNE VZGOJE IN UČNIH METODAH

Abstract

The political transition in Hungary triggered a series of changes in society and in education bringing new value preferences. As ideological, moral and ethical factors have been brought to the forefront, education as a value-transformation medium should be also changed. The opinions of 492 Hungarian PE teachers about current questions of Physical Education learning and teaching methods were in the focus of this study. A questionnaire of 18 items with a 5-grade Likert-scale was used. Opinions of groups (sorted according to age, qualification and workplace (settlement type) of teaching) - were compared using the Statistica Program for Windows 6.0. During the examination, it could be established that the approach of Hungarian PE teachers is formed by European attitudes, but that Hungarian education is looking for a balance between reforms and traditions.

Key words: Hungarian public education, PE teachers, teaching methods

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Izvleček

Politična tranzicija na madžarskem je s seboj prinesla vrsto sprememb v družbi in izobraževanju, saj so se vzpostavile nove vrednote. S tem, ko so v ospredje stopili ideološki, moralni in etični dejavniki, se je tudi izobraževanje kot transformacijski medij moralo spremeniti. Pričujoča raziskava se je osredotočala na mnenje 492 madžarskih učiteljev športne vzgoje o aktualnih vprašanih učenja in poučevanja športne vzgoje. Uporabljen je bil vprašalnik 18 vprašanj na 5-stopenjski Likertovi lestvici. Mnenja različnih skupin učiteljev (glede na starost, kvalifikacijo in tip kraja zaposlitve) smo primerjali s pomočjo programa Statistica za Windows 6.0. Raziskava je pokazala, da načine dela madžarskih učiteljev športne vzgoje opredeljujejo evropska načela, da pa madžarsko šolstvo še vedno išče ravnovesje med reformami in tradicijo.

Ključne besede: madžarsko javno šolstvo, učitelji športne vzgoje, učne metode

“Education means helping children to bring to fruition their possibilities.”

(Erich Fromm, German philosopher)

INTRODUCTION

The fruition of children's possibilities, as Erich Fromm said, has to be the main purpose of every European educator. Due to the political transition of 1990s, in the Central-European countries including Hungary there was an overall change in every-day life. During the socio-political transition people changed their attitudes towards different aspects of life. In this process, education failed to be consistent and it needed a paradigm shift.

The aim of educational policy trends in European Union countries is to find a common denominator while keeping national characteristics intact. This common denominator should match current EU standards regarding education. In order to realize this goal, professional selection and efficient employment of optimal teaching and studying methods are indispensable. Regarding the selection of methods, teaching aims, requirements, subject-matter and its structure, characteristics of the age group, and the aspirations and interests of students are decisive factors.

To realize 'the European education' purpose, preparation for a constructive lifestyle is offered by references to "the global pedagogical value and the constructive lifestyle [which] are materialized in the constructive habit- and behaviour-repertoire" (Bábosik, 1999). The constructive-type methodology could produce educated European young citizens while the manager-type 'driving' role of educator could be more acceptable than direct guiding in teaching- studying activities.

In the process of physical education acquisition in order to solve certain didactic tasks, different teaching methods were employed:

physical education is the only among different subjects in which (qualifier) ability-type measuring-system works in an alternative way; which is typical of strategic activity; whereby the essence is the different type of teaching, planned according to detached measures and individual work (Gergely, 2002).

A choice of methods is the basis of the theory of physical education and is an index of the efficiency of the learning process. Verbal communication, information, motivation by the teacher, the attention to tasks, etc. are all methods available for the teachers.

PE at school provides a special organ as physical activity affective, cognitive and psychomotor competencies of the students can be developed, the complexity of which is not afforded in any other cultural domain. Psychomotor manifestations, movement-situations teach adaptation for helping students to overcome everyday stress. According to this reason, raising the importance and emphasising of the role of PE and PE teachers are the main tasks of every specialist, teacher, coach, scientist or researcher (Hardman, 2003a). The question, however, is what kind of methods are to be used by Hungarian PE teachers in the way of preparation for the new socio-political situation. The presented research in this sense explored the educational methods during PE lessons chosen by teachers (autocratic, permissive) and teachers' role during PE classes, with special attention to the rate of verbal instruction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the course of this investigation, subjects were limited to PE teachers currently teaching in elementary or high school of either 6th or 8th grades. The sample size was roughly 500 individuals (n=492).

Table 1: Questions regarding educational methods of PE teachers and their role during PE classes

		strongly disagree				strongly agree
2.	Students learn the most during PE lessons, when they get accurate instructions for practicing.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Informal practicing – inspired, but not controlled by teacher – should be provided in every PE lesson for students 10-14 years of age.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	In school PE classes, different situations can occur, when the teacher has to resort to an autocratic education style.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Besides direct control, PE teachers should give opportunity of autonomous practicing for students during PE lessons.	1	2	3	4	5

The research method used was a questionnaire. The data collection was completed during 2003-2004 academic year. The questionnaire can be divided into two parts, which enables subjects to answer anonymously. Respondents' sex, age, academic qualifications and workplace (settlement type) of teaching were asked. A questionnaire of 18 items was used in the evaluation, which was determined with a five-grade Likert-scale, where one (1) means 'I strongly disagree, or I have other opinions'; while five (5) means 'I strongly agree, or I completely agree'. Between these two extremes, gradation is provided by two (2), three (3) and four (4). There were no right or wrong answers; subjects encircled the number which reflected their opinions. Among the 18, items there were those related to theory of training, theory of physical education and practical statements (content and methodology). In addition, there were items concerning the materials for teaching gymnastics.

Table 2: Demographic Data of PE Teachers (per person)

N=492				
Female		Male		
249		242		
Age Groups				
21-30 yrs.	31-40 yrs.	41-50 yrs.	51-60 yrs.	61< yrs.
76 (15 %)	138 (28 %)	191 (39 %)	78 (16 %)	9 (2 %)
Qualification /graduated from/				
Semmelweis University - Budapest	University of Pécs	Teachers Training College for Lower Secondary School	Teacher Training College for Primary School	Not holding degrees
117 (24 %)	37 (8 %)	281 (56 %)	54 (11 %)	3 (1 %)
Workplace in (settlement type)				
Budapest	County town	Town / City	Village	
49 (10 %)	10 (22 %)	237 (48 %)	96 (20 %)	

Items 2, 5, 12 and 15 reflected the educational methods of PE teachers and their role during PE classes (Table 1).

Concerning basic statistical data, Statistica for Windows 6.0 was used to process the answers. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test provided us with an overall view, while differences between our groups were certified by the Mann-Whitney U-test.

The demographic data presented in Table 2 insure a basis for comparison and show the distributions of the subjects.

RESULTS

Firstly, the Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used to analyse the differences between age groups in the variables 2, 5, 12 and 15. As can be seen in Table 3, Item 12 by variable qualification and workplace groups, just as Item 15 by variable age groups showed significant p values (Table 3).

Table 3: Significant Results of Kruskal-Wallis H-Test

Kruskal-Wallis H-Test with Item 12 in variable qualification groups			
KW-H (4;492)=15.6511369	p < 0.0050	F (4;487)= 3.40796607	p= 0.0092
Kruskal-Wallis H-Test with Item 12 in variable workplace of teaching groups			
KW-H (3;492)=7.67364909	p < 0.0500	F (3;488)= 3.98799423	p= 0.0080
Kruskal-Wallis H-Test with Item 15 in variable age groups			
KW-H (4;492)=9.37471806	p < 0.0500	F (4;487)= 1.68489792	p= 0.1522

As a second step, the Mann-Whitney U-Test was run comparing all groups to each other. Analysing Item 2 of our questionnaire, the significant difference was found among groups in relation to qualification. A divergence between those with university degrees from Budapest and those with college degrees for lower secondary school was observable since the teachers with the university degrees from Budapest evaluated the item higher (Table 4).

Table 4: Significant Differences in Item 2

Group 1 (mean)	Group 2 (mean)	U value	Z value	p
with university degree – Budapest (4.487)	with college degree for Lower Secondary School (4.189)	14124.0	2.21368	p < 0.05

The statistics of Item 5 showed that teachers from rural areas are more inclined towards informal practicing in PE lessons than the teachers from county towns (Table 5).

Table 5: Significant Differences in Item 5

Group 1 (mean)	Group 2 (mean)	U value	Z value	p
County town (3.127)	Village (3.448)	4471.5	-0.89432	p < 0.05

Item 12 of the questionnaire studied the frequency of autocratic educating control. Between the age groups of 31-40 and 51-60, the younger ones are more convinced that strict rules are needed

to preserve order. In comparison to the college degree teachers for lower secondary school and for primary school the teachers with university degree from Budapest expressed higher inclination towards authoritarian style of teaching. In the view of locality the teachers who work in the capital city of Budapest use the autocratic style of teaching more often than their colleagues who work in town and in village settings (Table 6).

Table 6: Significant Differences in Item 12

Group 1 (mean)	Group 2 (mean)	U value	Z value	p
31-40 yrs. (4.145)	51-60 yrs. (3.782)	6314.0	1.960382	p < 0.05
with university degree – Budapest (4.325)	with college degree for Lower Secondary School (3.954)	12783.0	3.496269	p < 0.005
with university degree – in Budapest (4.325)	with college degree for Primary School (4.056)	2544.5	2.042013	p < 0.05
in Budapest (4.327)	in villages (3.875)	1842.5	2.129731	p < 0.05
in towns / cities (4.169)	in villages (3.875)	9760.0	2.030715	p < 0.05

In question 15 more significant differences were observable. The comparison of age groups 21-30 and 41-50, as well as 21-30 and 51-60 showed differences between younger and older teachers in both cases, since older teachers expressed more inclination towards autonomous practicing of students during PE lessons. In the view of qualifications, the university degree holders from Budapest used autonomous practicing more often than the college degree holders for lower secondary school. Similar trend was observed among teachers from county towns and villages where the first ones who agreed more strongly with this statement than the latter (Table 7).

Table 7: Significant Differences in Item 12

Group 1 (mean)	Group 2 (mean)	U value	Z value	p
21-30 yrs. (4.316)	41-50 yrs. (4.518)	6230.5	-2.04689	p < 0.05
21-30 yrs. (4.316)	51-60 yrs. (4.538)	2326.5	-2.30383	p < 0.05
with university degree – Budapest (4.607)	with college degree for Lower Secondary School (4.413)	14418.0	1.932489	p < 0.05
in county towns (4.627)	in villages (4.281)	4400.0	2.061846	p < 0.05

DISCUSSION

Verbal, audiovisual and practical information-conveyance was distinguished according to sources of information (Falus, 1998). As mentioned in the introduction, the physical education and sport domain differs from other cultural domains. A physical educator gives instruction to which students give psychomotor (movement) responses. These kinds of information streams reveal the complexity of interactions. It is presumed that physical education teachers – most of them encircled number four (4) – like to provide their students with instructions, but sometimes they support the ideas and creativity of students and in this sense motivate them for physical activity and sport.

Informal practice is a feature of the 'student-dominance' teaching strategy. Physical exercise-solutions, inspired but not controlled by the teacher, generally raise the activity and interest of students. This is the key element for persuading students to do extra-curricular sport activity. Among the groups, significant differences were found only in one case. Mean-values of answers of the item indicate that the subjects use informal practice as typical method.

An autocratic atmosphere is a character of physical education, deriving from the 19th-century gymnastic systems. PE teachers set up and keep those rules which result in fixed directions, where the teacher is the controller and students are 'executors'. This habit is the opposite of the current gathering ground, basing-on-agreements teaching style. Our statistical results presented two interesting facts in case of the item discussing autocratic education style. PE teachers with university degrees who work in Budapest favour possessing control of classes, while teachers working in the capital or towns, secure order with more control than subjects from villages. These results suggest that a more sociologically-oriented research into this matter could provide more useful information.

In the case of autonomous practice, students get an instrument and the goal, rather than a presentation of substantive exercise-solving. According to the investigation, this method is popular among PE teachers. Investigated teachers from elder groups (years 41-50 and 51-60) as well as university degree holders from Budapest and teachers from county towns frequently use this method.

CONCLUSION

The research showed that the approach of Hungarian PE teachers is formed by commonly accepted European attitudes, since the contemporary PE teaching-training encourages more liberal, independent practice method. At the same time, a certain number of subjects stressed a more controlled and prescribed method of practice due to the fact that certain physical activities include the risk of accident and injury. Accordingly, PE teachers set up and keep those kinds of rules which result in fixed direction.

However, since 1995 the National Core Curriculum (NCC) "based on current international trend that promote curricula to be 'open'" (Salvara et al., 2004), allows Hungarian teachers to choose the content according to their local possibilities and own interests.

This 'open' characteristic can be realized by the fact that presently – in connection with a 'new-wave' content way of thinking involving physical activities, healthy lifestyle, recreation, and even rehabilitation – cultural domains are mentioned in the curriculum instead of simple school subjects.

Finally, the conclusion can be drawn that the process of alignment with European Union standards can work in an appropriate way if public education-policy takes organized and planned steps. Hungarian education, including Hungarian physical education, is looking for a balance between reforms and traditions, because "at this time there is an opportunity ... for re-defining the parameters for 21st century conditions and needs, and for reshaping the physical education system to meet those needs" (Hardman, 1995).

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