

ARTICLE BY N. ZIVANOVIC - FOUR LANGUAGES

ABSTRACTS (E)(F)(S)(P)

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN CENTURIES AND MILLENNIA

Sociological, cultural and educational aspects of physical education throughout history, from the Mesopotamian civilization up to the present days.

Key words: history, physical education, sports, recreation.

ÉDUCATION PHYSIQUE COMME PONT ENTRE LES SIÈCLES ET LES MILLENAIRES

Aspects sociologiques, culturelles et éducatifs de l'Éducation Physique à travers l'histoire, de la Mésopotamie à nos jours.

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EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA COMO PUENTE ENTRE LOS SIGLOS Y LOS MILENIOS

Aspectos sociológicos, culturales y educativos de la Educación Física a través de la historia de la Mesopotamia hasta nuestros días.

Palabras-clave: historia, educación física, deportes, recreación.

EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA COMO PONTE ENTRE OS SÉCULOS E MILÊNIO S

Aspectos sociológicos, culturais e educacionais da educação física através da história, da Mesopotâmia até os dias de hoje.

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN CENTURIES AND MILLENNIA* (E)

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"All shall pass, but soul, honor and what is good shall remain."
Patriarch Pavle

Ever since the first cultures and communities, humankind has tried to share the same space, and up to now one can notice people's concern to organize adequate physical activities in the best possible way. The aims of the exercises were different and they changed in centuries, but one aim has always been the same – utility. Such individual's inking towards practical utility and use of physical activity has directed him/her to search and create adequate systems of physical activities. In times behind us they were created and adjusted to the corresponding time and technical achievements. Utility of physical activities, as its basis agonistics, has fortunately always had education and a need (for physical activities), which are essentially the foundations of the development and perfection of sport, physical activities and recreation (sport for all). This aspect of physical activities allows us to define physical education as an area encompassing the three mentioned areas as an individual's activity, which as a part of general culture by knowledge ABOUT physical activities and knowledge FOR physical activities and within its areas of physical education, sport and recreation), enables a transformation of personality from real into possible.

This very endeavor towards transformation, i.e. reforming one's personality, has been characteristic along centuries in all previous and present civilizations. Constantly asking himself WHY and HOW to exercise, individuals have tried to find the best answer in the circumstances they have lived. And he has succeeded. For no matter how much he tried to reach the heights through physical activities (owing to his intellectual pride) he has, after inevitable falls, always succeeded to stand up and go on. Among our experts there are people who, by virtues immanent to them, such as their love, faith and hope, enlightened the ways ahead. We thank those who have built, and are still building our line of business. We can rely on their foundations and virtues, and should thank them for having dedicated to human beings and their problems and for having cared to transfer their knowledge to us.

1.

If at the beginning of humankind's evolution movement was a way to reach or escape a destination, today it is more and more a way to survive in the high-tech time. Thus, movement becomes physical activity, which in turn is an indispensable, specific food for people's being.

In Mesopotamia, at the origin of the first civilization, humankind has not only created the writing system, but has also stepped into something that we call history. Working on individuals education people also cared for physical education. Different forms of physical activities that are known from numerous researches were based on the natural forms of movement.

The same basis we find in the Egyptian civilization. But old Egyptians have widened the aims of exercise and have turned some forms of physical activities into professional ones. Since then, i.e. more than 4000 years ago, our line of business has knowns professional forms of physical activities.

Minoan civilization continued the same trend, but it added some new forms, such as specific acrobatics known as the bull games.

Ancient Greek culture is important firstly because of education system based on equal division of intellectual and physical education (except for Sparta, which based its education system on physical education). Then, at the peak of culture in Ancient Greece, palestras were the meeting places of all free Greeks and there, from sunrise to sunset, people exercised, talked and were taught. The third essential characteristics of this era were their games, especially all Greek games, and the Olympics were the most important among them. Those games, i.e. physical activities, are agonistic in the gist of contemporary sport.

Roman civilization differed from Greek one because it developed a specific concept of physical activities that was adjusted to the concept of the state. For the minority of the youngsters, physical

activities were organized and they were based on natural forms of body movements. But the majority was directed not to active participation in physical activities as in Ancient Greek, but towards observation of the other people competing and exercising. Basic idea of such a programme was according to Juvenal's words: "bread and games" and circus games and gladiators; fights are not only specific synonyms of the Juvenal's words but also devastating to the concept of education and physical education.

Medieval forms of physical activities can and have to be seen from two perspectives. One is directed to the West and the other to the East Europe and the world. This division was made at the beginning of the 4th century by Roman emperor Theodosius, who divided his land into the West and the East Roman Empire. This territory division is reflected in the relation to the forms of physical activities. While in Eastern Europe forms of physical activities based on natural body movements were maintained, in Western Europe those activities were based on new, derived forms of body movements. This was due to different aims of physical activities that had to be in accordance with different concepts of waging war, and thus different attitudes to the education of young people. Representatives of such concepts are, on the one hand, knights on the west who demonstrated their skills in knights' tournaments, and the heroes in the east who demonstrated their skills in fights and battles. Neither of them managed to maintain different forms of physical activities as they were in their era because nobody could and was allowed to take part in any organized form of physical activity.

New era differed from the previous epochs and was characterized by the expansion of not only industrial production but the education system as well, and when physical education is concerned, we can observe three essential features:

1) in continental part of Europe school physical education was based on gymnastics, and school curricula were based on different gymnastics systems, depending on the country;

2) in England, i.e. in Great Britain, school physical education was based on sport and thanks to Thomas Arnold and Thomas Hues and numerous sailors and state missionaries sport expanded outside its borders;

3) in North America, and mainly in the USA, game was the gist of the school physical education curriculum.

After World War Two, when the idea of globalization took over education and physical education got new forms, which are a mixture of gymnastics, games and sport. In this period different trends in our line of business were developed: ethnocentrism, biocentrism, egocentrism, anthropocentrism and theo-anthropocentrism. Today, when we talk about Europe there is a prevailing idea of unified educational system that would enable greater mobility of teachers, pupils and students and a wider choice of professions. 2010 is the year of enactment of this idea in Europe, according to Bologna's chart. This also means unification of school curricula in physical education.

The second important feature of the New Era is fast development and even faster expansion of sport. From the local sports club, sport has grown to the continental and world leagues. In the function of politics and business, sport has exerted its influence and is an important factor of globalization acceleration. But top and professional sport is a closed circuit, and it is based on "show program", isolated from us. This is not worth regretting because the basic idea, as in any circus program, is to entertain stadium audience and TV audience as well as to fill in their spare time. Huge financial gain for sportsmen and those around sport is something taken for granted.

The third feature is reinstallation of Juvenal's – Panem et circenses in the new Era concept of ruling of the roman emperors is becoming closer to today's system of ruling in the world and the basic task is to turn people into senseless mass which will eat, drink and watch sport spectacles. More than this is not necessary. Sport and sportsmen promoting new ideas and new world's Gods unfortunately play an important role in this. We have to face this and to oppose this aim and to direct further development of physical education as seen in school physical education, school sport and recreation (sport for all) into the course of physical activities as indispensable food for individual's being.

And such physical activities must be accessible to people. This means that we must give them opportunities to go in for exercise through physical education and sport for all by themselves and not just to watch it passively. Declarative manners are not enough and mechanisms are to be found to accomplish this idea. This is not an easy job but it is feasible.

2.

This short review of basic features of physical education in centuries and millennia show that

humankind and its physical activities have remained the focus of our interest. Some ups and downs in the history of humankind were reflected in physical activities as well. People have adapted and adjusted their aims to the demands of their time and social circumstances.

But no matter what the past was and future prospects are, it is important to realize that the essence of our line of business is – people. And that individual – a secret to himself/herself is one and unique and unrepeatable personality. Fragile and weak, divided between good and less good, with one's gifts given by Creator.

**Article published in the 1st Serbian Congress Pedagogist of Physical Education and 2nd European Congress FIEP annals, held in September, 2004, in Vrnjacka Banja.*



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