

DISCOURSE ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATIONDANA MASARYKOVÁ¹ - PETR VLČEK²¹Faculty of Education, Trnava University
Slovakia²Faculty of Education, Masaryk University
Czech Republic**ABSTRACT**

The curricular revisions are currently being in process in several countries in the European Union. The process of planning, projecting and designing national curriculum has always encountered various problems. In general the process has a political background and it may result from academic discussions or research based conclusions. Physical education has always played a very specific role in education. Although it has been a compulsory subject in primary and lower secondary education throughout the countries in Europe (Physical Education and Sport in Europe Eurydice Report, 2013), its position cannot be described as equivalent in comparison to the other subjects.

One possible concept how to achieve a quality physical education is to standardize physical education in curricular documents, which could stress the importance of this subject. However, to accomplish this task is more difficult than someone would think. The learning outcomes are in European countries mostly defined qualitatively, but some of the countries report quantifiable outcomes (United Kingdom, Sweden, and Iceland).

The paper tries to identify the principal problems of physical education curriculum development and presents a short introduction to planning and designing physical education aims, outcomes and standards in chosen European countries. We compare backgrounds of curriculum development specifically in Slovakia and the Czech Republic as the countries with common history but currently different approaches to projecting and designing national curriculum.

Keywords: physical education, curriculum development, Slovakia, the Czech Republic

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of physical education in different countries are diverse. In our article we agree with Naul (2003) who admits that different and various concepts of the subject exist in terms of the curriculum. Throughout the history the status of Physical Education has developed. In our considerations we also agree with Brettschneider (1997) and many other authors (Cazers & Miller, 2000; Kössel, Štumbauer & Waic, 2004; Siedentop, 2006) that from the late 17th century to the mid-18th century three systems (the German, Swedish, and English) laid foundations of sport and physical education in many countries across the world. Naul (2003) recognises four concepts of PE (sport, movement, physical and health) which developed in the 19th century and are more or less predominant in various countries today. In contrast to Naul (2003), who paid attention mostly to the western European countries, in our paper we would like to add some more current components from the Czech and Slovak point of view.

The curricular revisions are currently being in process in several countries in the European Union. The process of planning, projecting and designing national curriculum has always encountered various problems. In general the process has a political background and it may result from academic discussions or research based conclusions. Physical Education has always played a very specific role in education. Although it has been a compulsory subject in primary and lower secondary education throughout the countries in Europe (Physical Education and Sport in Europe, Eurydice Report, 2013), its position cannot be described as equivalent in comparison to the other subjects.

One possible concept how to achieve a quality physical education more equivalent to other subjects is to standardize physical education in curricular documents, which could emphasize the importance of this subject (Krick, 2006). However, to accomplish this task is more difficult than someone would think and furthermore, it is not much discussed in the context of physical education. As we feel the need for professional discussion on this kind of topic, in our paper we introduce the development of curriculum and potential student testing as an issue concerning physical education. We present some suggestions for possible solutions, which are based on experience from abroad as well as on our experience from a working group preparing the standards for physical education.

OBJECTIVE

The paper tries to identify the principal problems of physical education curriculum development and presents a short introduction to planning and designing physical education aims, outcomes and standards in the two chosen European countries. We compare curriculum development in Slovakia and the Czech Republic as the countries with common history but currently (to some extend) different approaches to projecting and designing national curriculum.

METHODS

Methodology is based on comparative physical education and sport. Over recent years this scientific field has been gaining in popularity⁷ which is evident in the number of articles dedicated to the methodology of comparative physical education and sport (Hardman, 2000; Kaulitz, 2001; Kudlorz, 1989; Pühse & Gerber, 2005) but also in the growing number of comparative studies in different areas of physical education and sport⁸.

Haag (1989) names two dimensions for comparative research:

1. Horizontal – comparison of different social settings at a given time
2. Vertical – comparison of different time periods regarded to fixed questions

We describe the development of physical education concepts in two different countries at the same time period - horizontal approach. As a method of our research we have chosen the qualitative analysis of texts (Gavora, 2000), especially RVP ZV (2007)⁹ and ŠVP¹⁰ (2008). Švaříček and Šedová (2007) describe particular steps of this method. We also use our own information that we experienced as the members of the professional groups developing the national curriculum in both countries in 2012 and 2013.

We pay attention mainly to the elementary school physical education level - ISCED 1.

7 especially with English and German writing authors

8 Vlček (2009) presents a list of the most important publications dedicated to the comparative research in physical education written by Czech, English and German writing authors.

9 Framework Education Programmes (in Czech Rámcové vzdělávací programy - RVP ZV, 2007)

10 National Education Programme (in Slovak Štátny vzdelávací program – ŠVP, 2008)

RESULTS

The fall of communism in Czechoslovakia brought some kind of vacuum to school physical education. After separation, Slovakia and the Czech Republic decided to reform national curricula, which were supposed to nearer their education to western European countries. The curricula changes also affected physical education. After almost 20 years the educational changes are being evaluated and the curriculum is currently being revised.

Recent development of physical education curricula in Slovakia

In 2008 the Slovak school system went through significant reformative changes. The school reform brought two levelled curriculum named as the National Education Programme (in Slovak Štátny vzdelávací program, 2008) and the School Education Programme (in Slovak – Školský vzdelávací program). Apart from aims and competencies the National Education Programme included also content standards and outcome standards. The content standards described the minimal teaching content of the subject and the outcome standards described pupils' minimal achievements - outputs. On the base of the National Education Programme schools were given responsibility to create their own School Education Programme according to their individual school conditions, possibilities and goals. The reactions to this new approach were diverse as on one hand, some schools welcomed unknown freedom, but on the other hand, the others did not know what to do. The process of reform was not coordinated as there was a lack of information and materials for planning and creating quality School Education Programmes. Mostly it resulted in copying the National Education Programme into School Programmes and the initiative intention of government to provide schools with new responsibility got lost. The standards showed themselves also problematic as many of them could not be measured or tested. The teachers in PE could not evaluate correctly pupils' results because the standards were not straight forward. The exchange of Minister of Education in 2012 and a growing number of unsatisfied teachers have started new process of curriculum revision.

Curricular revision in Slovakia

The process of revision started in autumn 2012 and all the changes in curriculum should be implemented in September 2014. The revisions are being performed on the pre-primary, primary and secondary level of education (ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3). The main goal is to simplify content and outcome standards and to make teacher-friendly curriculum with clear requirements for pupils' achievements. The professional groups responsible for curriculum revisions are coordinated by the National Institute for Education (NIE) as an institution directly managed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS). The groups for PE include MESRS representative, NIE representative¹¹, academic representatives (specialists for ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3) and representatives of schools (PE teachers). The National Institute for Education also has several advice boards – commissions for subjects. These commissions approve the materials prepared by professional groups or suggest particular changes.

Before the revision there had been done only little to receive some empirical data about the previous National Education Programme. The outcome standards had not been largely evaluated, there were available only limited data reporting to lower physical condition of pupils (Zapletalová, 2011, Lednický - Doležalová, 2012). Therefore, it is more likely to believe that the standards will reflect ideas of individuals and political intentions.

One important part of the revision is also the recommended taught time of PE. The Framework Teaching Plan recommends 2 hours (hour = 45 min.) per week for all levels of education. However *The Concept of the State Policy in Sport - Slovak Sport 2020*, that was approved by the Government in December 2012 suggests at least 3 hours per week at the primary level of education by the end of 2013. This requirement has not been taken into account so far. According to Eurydice report on Physical Education and Sport at School in Europe (2013), Slovakia is the only country reported that has considerably reduced the taught time at primary level between 2006/07 and 2011/12.

Recent development of physical education curricula in the Czech Republic

According to the latest national curriculum papers named the Framework Education Programmes (in Czech Rámcové vzdělávací programy - RVP ZV, 2007) each elementary and secondary school was supposed to create its own programmes on basis of the national curricula in order to match specific school circumstances, regional traditions and educational purposes. Reforming process of the curricula has been criticized by teachers for the low support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS, MŠMT in Czech), weak co-ordination, formalism, and low activity of the academic community (Janík et al, 2011) which resulted in low acceptance of the curricular reform among the teachers and worsening study results of Czech pupils. As a result of the recent unsatisfactory study results of Czech pupils, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports decided to start developing new educational standards. These should be based on the framework education programmes. Thus, the development of the standards as well as the testing of the study results have recently become a very important issue in the Czech Republic.

Development of educational standards in the Czech Republic

Based on the decision of Minister of Education, Youth and Sport from 1st of September 2013, the Framework Education Programmes (RVP ZV, 2007) should be changed and educational standards should be implemented to it.

The standards for Math, Czech language and English were created as first. In October 2012 professional groups for the development of the educational standards for other subjects were created and the standards are now only being formally finalised as the groups were supposed to finish their work until the end of June 2013. According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport experienced educational experts, academic representatives and representatives of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and other educational institutions were chosen to form the members of the professional groups. The group developing the standards for PE consisted of a MŠMT guarantor, a NUV¹² guarantor, three academic representatives¹³ and three representatives of the basic schools. The task of this group was to develop the educational standards for PE until the end of April 2013.

It is important to point out, that for the development of the standards, there was no empirical evidence available and the Framework Education Programmes were originally formulated without the assumption of the future standards extension. Therefore, the educational outcomes defined in the curricular documents apart from skills and theoretical knowledge contain also attitude and behavioural outcomes. Thus, according to the Framework Education Programmes the PE educational content is difficult to achieve and to evaluate.

Based on the research results it is evident (Vlček & Mužík, 2012) that the current conception of the Czech PE is not accepted homogenously. According to the latest educational programmes mentioned above (Framework Education Programmes - RVP ZV, 2007) a wide variety of PE activities concerning especially health targets should be used in the PE classes (Mužík, 1999). However, there is a low congruence between the projected and realised curricula (Vlček & Mužík, 2012) which presents a significant problem for the quality evaluation of the subject (Egger, 2002).

DISCUSSION

In the following paragraphs, we compare some chosen issues concerning curriculum in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

- Both countries are revising the curriculum at the moment. They use some common but also different approaches in the curricular projection.

11 one of the authors of this article

12 Národní ústav pro vzdělávání: <http://www.nuv.cz/>

13 among them also one of the authors of this article

- Both countries use a similar structure of the curricular documents – national level and school level.
- The Czech documents could be described as more outcome based whereas the Slovak curriculum concentrates more on the content.
- The countries have chosen different approaches toward the incorporation of the standards into the curricular hierarchy. The Slovak standards were projected at the same time as the whole projected curriculum whereas the Czech standards were done separately.
- Czech goals of PE concentrate more on health issues whereas Slovak PE goals are more diverse.
- Because the Slovak curriculum has recently been revised and the Czech curriculum has not come through this process yet, there is a better congruence between the projected PE goals, content and standards in Slovakia, than in the Czech Republic.

CONCLUSION

Practitioners and researchers in the profession of physical education need to know the historical background, current attitudes and future perspectives. As we read the reports and articles about the perspective of physical education in Europe (Frömel, 2001, Hardman, 2003; Hardman & Marshall, 2000, etc.), it is not difficult to notice that the future of the subject and the discipline is being challenged. A careful study and understanding of the curriculum and standardization of physical education in different countries is a prerequisite to a full understanding of the overall situation. The outcome is very clear in theory. Development of educational standard without the support from empirical results is accidental, intuitive and not systematic (Zeitler, Köller & Tesch, 2010).

In our paper we have tried to compare the process of curriculum and standards development in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. We wanted to present two ways which are partially similar but also very different. We cannot say at the moment which way is better or will be more successful, however we believe that this kind of international cooperation and discussion can help to improve the process of curriculum development thanks to exchanging valuable experience. Still we need to bear in mind that the curriculum is one thing and the reality is different from the theory though.

REFERENCES

- Bennett, B. L. (1970). A Historian Looks at Comparative Physical Education. *Gymnasium*, 7, 10-13.
- Brettschneider, W. D., Brandl-Bredenbeck, H. P., & Rees C. R. (1997). *Sportkultur und jungdliches Selbstkonzept: Eine interkulturell vergleichende Studie über Deutschland und die USA* [Juventa]. Retrieved from http://books.google.cz/books?id=FSbH_TPgmTIC&pg=PA52&lpg=PA52&dq=etic,+emic,+universalismus&source=web&ots=2fCnX_OiTW&sig=HriI_xK8JlgwAsZW3qLmcl0k8l&hl=cs&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result#PPA5,M1
- Brettschneider, W., D., et al. (2003). Die SPRINT Studie : Eine Untersuchung zur Situation des Schulsports in Deutschland. Retrieved November 24, 2008, from http://bildungsklick.de/datei-archiv/40033/gesamtbericht_dsb_sprint_studie.pdf
- Cazers, G., & Miller, G. (2000). The German Contribution to American Physical Education: A Historical Perspective, *JOPERD*, 71(1), 44-48.
- Egger, K. et al. (2002). *Qualität des Sportunterrichts*. Bern: Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Sport und Sportwissenschaft der Universitäts Bern.
- Frömel, K. (2001). Tělesná výchova a sport v systému vzdělávání a výchovy v počátku tisíciletí. *Česká kinantropologie*, 5(1), 39-48.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013. Physical Education and Sport at School in Europe Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Haag, H. (1989). Sportpädagogik. In Haag, H., Strauss, B., & Heinze, S. Theorie- und Themenfelder der Sportwissenschaft : Orinetierungshilfen zur Konzipierung sport-wissenschaftlicher Untersuchungen (pp. 48-69). Schorndorf: Hofman.
- Hardman, K. (2000). Comparative Physical Education and Sport. *ICSSPE Directory of Sport Science*, 28, 59-77.
- Hardman, K. (2003). Worldwide survey on the state and status of physical education in schools: Foundations for deconstruction and reconstruction of physical education. In Hardman K., (Ed.), *Physical Education : Deconstruction and reconstruction – Issues and directions* (pp. 15-34). Schorndorf : Hofmann.
- Hardman, K., & Marshall, J. (2000). The State and Status of Physical Education in Schools in International Context. *European Physical Education Review*. 6(3), 203-229.
- Janík, T., Najvar, P. & Solnička, D. (2011). Od idejí k implementaci: kurikulární reforma v rozhovorech s řediteli (nepilotních) gymnázií. *ORBIS SCHOLAE*, 5(3), 63-85
- Kaulitz, B. (2001). Vergleichende Sportpädagogik. In H. Haag, & A. Hummel (Eds.), *Handbuch Sport-pädagogik* (pp. 95-104). Schorndorf: Hofman.
- Kössl, J., Štumbauer, J., & Waic, M. (2004). Vybrané kapitoly z dějin tělesné kultury. Praha : Karolinum.
- Krick, F. (2006). *Manuskript für ein themenheft über qualität im schulsport - Bildungsstandards im Sportunterricht - Risiken und Chancen, Sportunterricht*. Retrieved December 8, 2010, from http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/fb/fb05/ifs/-sportpaedagogik/Mitarbeiter/Krick/2006_Krick_Bildungsstandards_im_SpU.pdf
- Kudláček, M. (2006). American adapted physical education in the first half of the 20th century, *Acta Univ. Palacki. Olomuc., Gymn*, 36(1), 23-28.
- Kudlorz, P. (1989). Comparative Physical Education : An International scientific Approach. *International Review of Education*, 35(1), 65-72.
- Lednický, A.- Doležalová, L. 2011. Porovnanie všeobecnej pohybovej výkonnosti športujúcich chlapcov v rokoch 1986 a 2010. In *Atletika 2011*. Bratislava: ICM AGENCY, 2011. ISBN: 978-80-89257-37-9
- Lednický, A.- Doležalová, L. 2011. Porovnanie všeobecnej pohybovej výkonnosti športujúcich dievčat s odstupom 25 rokov. In *Atletika 2011*. Bratislava: ICM AGENCY, 2011. ISBN: 978-80-89257-37-9
- Naul, R. (2003). Koncepcie školní tělesné výchovy v Evropě. *Česká kinantropologie*, 7(1), 39-53.
- Muzik, V. (1999). Gesundheitlich vorbeugende Körpererziehung - eine neue Richtung in der tschechischen Schule. In: J.C. Bussard & F. Röth (Ed.), *Which Physical Education for which School?* (pp.91-96). Berne: SVSS.
- Pühse, U., & Gerber, M. (Ed.), (2005). *International Comparison of Physical Education*. New York: Mayer&Mayer.
- Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání – RVP ZV (2007). Výzkumný ústav pedagogický v Praze. Retrieved July 8, 2009 from http://www.vuppraha.cz/soubory/RVPZV_2007-07.pdf
- Siedentop, D. (2006). Introduction to Physical Education, Fitness, and Sport. McGraw Hill.
- Švaiřček, R., & Šedová, K. et al. (2007). *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách*. Praha : Portál.
- Vlček, P. (2009). Komparativní kinantropologie. *Česká kinantropologie*, 13(1), 82-95.
- Vlček, P., & Mužík, V. (2012). Soulad mezi projektovaným a realizovaným kurikulem jako faktor kvality vzdělávání v tělesné výchově. *Česká kinantropologie*, 16 (1), 31–45.
- Zapletalová, L. a kol. 2011. Sekulární trend v ukazovateľoch telesného rozvoja a pohybovej výkonnosti 11-18-ročnej školskej populácie na Slovensku. Bratislava: Peter Mačura- PEEM, 2011. ISBN: 978-80-8113-042-7
- Zeitler, S., Köller, O., & Tesch, B. (2010). Bildungsstandards und ihre Implikationen für Qualitätssicherung und Qualitätsentwicklung. In A. Gehrmann, U. Hericks, & M. Lüders (Eds.). *Bildungsstandards und Kompetenzmodelle. Beitrag zu einer aktuellen Diskussion über Schule, Lehrerbildung und Unterricht* (pp. 15-28). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.