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Professional paper

REALISING AN IDEAL IMAGE OF A SPORTS STUDENT

INTRODUCTION

At Gimnazija Šiška, we have been working with sports students from different sports disciplines for twenty years. Ten years ago we founded a college type class of footballers in cooperation with the Football Association of Slovenia. In this way we attended to the complete educational system of footballers, their health and sports development. We took into account specific needs of young football players, we offered them quality schooling and training, appropriate dormitory care, sports nutrition, regeneration, psychological and medical care. In these ten years we have carried out different projects with which we have tried to ascertain the best conditions for successful development of football players in the sports as well as in the school field. In continuation, two projects are introduced briefly, while the third one is presented in detail.

CROSS-CURRICULAR APPROACHES AND TEAM TEACHING

Physical education and football trainings go on from Monday to Friday. Physical education curriculum is adapted to the demands of football training, it complements and upgrades it. It is also interwoven with other educational work and enriched with specific contents. With cross-curricular approaches to psychology, biology, chemistry, physics and history, there is a lot of cooperative learning. The upgrade of this project is a new project „Experimental elements of specialist sports grammar school” which is being carried out as an experiment with two classes of the first year students in this school year.

REGENERATION, INJURY PREVENTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION OF SPORTS STUDENTS IN FOOTBALL CLASSES

Once a week all students in football classes participate in regeneration training, and at school there is a sports psychologist help available for all students as well as medical care (physiotherapist) in the dormitory. Every year we prepare a complete theoretical contents programme in which the sports way of life and ways of taking responsibility in the development of their sports career are described. The starting points of this project are also upgraded in the project „Experimental elements of specialist sports grammar school”.

THE FOOTBALL CLASS SHOULD START WITH „BREATHING”

The students are taught to reasonably organise the time left after finishing classes, football trainings and satisfying other needs. This project became a necessity when teachers, coaches and supervisors suddenly faced inadequate knowledge standards of students, their skipping classes, rejecting dormitory rules, lack of interest in classes and training, injuries and illnesses. This project has developed as a need to protect the goal and purpose of college football classes. It is useful in a different schooling system and different environment, too.

AN IDEAL IMAGE OF A SPORTS STUDENT

According to experts, the qualities necessary for a successful sportsman are good physical condition, technical knowledge, stamina, speed, strength, accuracy, suppleness, skilfulness, intelligence, the ability of complex and analytical thinking, maturity, psychological preparation, being focused on work or match, stability, positive aggressiveness, fighting spirit, consistency, reliability, ability to adjust and work in a team, mental strength, emotional stability, trustfulness, self-confidence, orderliness and wish for progress. It is hard to expect brilliant results in both, school and sports field if the youngster does not develop adequate motivation for work, if he does not accept systematic work and he does not endeavour to build up his personal characteristics.

CURRENT SITUATION, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

The concept of college football classes is in its basis different than the concept of other sports classes at our school. There are 22 students in each class, only boys, who spend five days a week together in the classroom, football field and dormitory. Their daily schedule is carefully worked out. It includes everything from classes, training, studying, meals to the evening „leisure activities”. The time for getting up and going to sleep is also defined. The nights out and staying up late are not allowed, watching TV or computer games are rather an exception than a rule. Many students have considerable problems adjusting to such a way of life. Students are expected to respect order at school, during training and in the dormitory. If the rules are broken, different measures are taken. At first, the students who manage to get a place in this class are proud of their success and try hard to be ideal students and sportsmen. But only after a few months, some students show the first signs leading to failure. They do not do their homework, or they do it superficially, they prepare badly for testing and grading, they are inattentive during classes, they do not take notes, they doodle, play with their mobile phones, chat, come late to lessons, go to the toilette during lessons, have headache, or stomach-ache, etc. In the dormitory they sleep during

studying hours, in the evening they are unwilling to go to the bathroom, they wander to other students' rooms, leave the dormitory with no excusable reason, they do not tidy their rooms, etc. Students have the fewest problems at trainings, but gradually, the consequences appear there, too, for example, not being motivated enough for exercises. Especially in the third and fourth year there are a lot of students who are injured and train less intensively. Unsuccessfulness is intensified and shown in all fields and most often the students cannot find a way out by themselves.

Where are the reasons? We can look for them everywhere. Because first year students are fifteen years old, which means in adolescence, because they are footballers, because they are boys, because they are not used to living without their parents, television, computer, mobile phone, because they did not have to learn in the primary school and now they do not know how to learn, because there is too much noise in the dormitory to learn, because they perceive school and dormitory as a prison, etc. Each of the above stated reasons has its causes. Many students come from environment (hometown, parents, primary school) where they were „young stars” of football. They were popular, praised, and on account of popularity they got good grades, did not have to follow the same behaviour rules and obligation standards as other students, their parents overindulged them, they did not help them develop working habits, they pictured them the wrong image of a successful and rich footballer to be. When they suddenly find themselves in a classroom with 21 such „young stars”, nobody stands out anymore, everyone is treated in the same way and all of a sudden, they have all the same rights and obligations. (Hidden) struggle for survival starts. Some of them cannot immediately adjust to new demands and conditions. They insist on old patterns, they are convinced they will sooner or later succeed. Because this does not happen, they face bad grades, they are disappointed and they try to prove themselves - or resist the system, because they cannot cope with the defeat. They resort to inexplicable virosis, headache, vomiting, nausea, etc., to breaking school or dormitory rules (doodling, texting messages during classes, chatting, contradicting teachers, watching through the window, etc.) some of them even become aggressive to their schoolmates or other students. Such a student, dissatisfied with himself, perceives school as hostile, his false self-image is being ruined, and soon the consequences of his emotional and psychological instability are shown also in the football field. In football, the student's acceptance of discipline and persistence as the condition for success is quite self-evident. In football, he can prove himself to others and to himself. Exaggeration leads to injuries and in such a way he may lose the ultimate support, football.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Football is something that a young footballer does for his own pleasure and is not obligatory but school is and it is also obligatory to grow up and become independent. There are four conditions to pass the final exams (Matura) successfully and to become good football players: motivation, sacrifice, discipline and persistence (Žorž, 1997). There is no result without effort. The major part of the effort is needed just because of sacrifice, because to accomplish one goal you have to sacrifice something else. Discipline and persistence are not inborn characteristics, they have to be imparted with a great deal of external pressure, for example with the help of teachers, coaches, supervisors and parents. There is a need for a considerable degree of consistency which should not change into rigidity. A rigid order enslaves and depersonalizes a person. But without order and discipline a man is not free either, he becomes the slave of his momentary needs, impulses, wishes or circumstances (Žorž, 1997).

We help students transform the false self-image brought from their home environment to their own needs, wishes and goals. They have to set it to their own capabilities, they have to be aware of themselves, to build „their own” self-image. Self-image is a system of an individual’s identifications, which enable the individual to become aware of himself. The real self-image includes attention to his internal needs, awareness of his own experiences, knowing his own capabilities. If it is complemented with awareness of objective environmental conditions, it forms authenticity. This authentic self-image grows, matures, develops in accordance with the maturity of an individual. In the process of growing up, the individual increasingly refrains from the external support (which gives him the false self-image) and replaces it with his internal support (Žorž, 1997).

We encourage and teach students to optimize the planning of their workday, we try to get them used to setting short-term goals to increase their persistence, we teach them to develop working habits, we educate them to take responsibility for their own actions. Every week we check their organisation plan and how they follow it. We help them if they fail to organise or carry out the plan successfully.

Beside daily plan, each student has to work out his long-term schedule or plan where he writes down all sports obligations, longer periods of absence, planned grade assessment at all subjects. In this way he can plan studying without time shortage. If a student is well-organised and follows the plan, he is almost always successful in both school and sports field.

CONCLUSION

Since this project started, we have noticed that soon after the beginning of the project the students' motivation for classes increases, better grades increase the students' self-confidence, improve the climate in the class, dormitory and their concentration in the football field, encourage the respect of values, diminish the need for punishment measures. The students have concluded that they also have more time for leisure activities.

The success in sport and successfully finished high school is a wish of every young sportsman. It is realisable only on condition that the young sportsman adjusts and accepts the responsibility of sacrifice when he is coordinating two such demanding areas. The wish itself is not enough for success, discipline and persistence are very important.

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ABSTRACT

Working with football college classes demands a specific approach, of which all people involved are aware. We are conducting different projects to enable students to carry out two demanding activities (grammar school programme and active football training) at the same time, to help them get through the adolescence years and educate them to become trustworthy and responsible sportsmen and future intellectuals.

Key words: *sports grammar school, Gimnazija Šiška, football class, education of a sportsman*