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Professional paper

FROM PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED TO COMPETENCE-BASED PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SLOVAKIA

Preparing young people both to successfully face the challenges of the information society and derive maximum benefit from the opportunities it provides has become an increasingly important objective of education systems in Europe. It has led those in charge of education policy to review curricular content, and teaching and learning methods. This has inevitably led in turn to heightened interest in key competences, namely those competences considered vital for a lifetime of successful participation in society.

It is clear from the definition of „**competence**” that it is a „**general capability**”, which is based on knowledge and skills, practical expertise, values and predispositions of an individual. Competence should accordingly be understood as an ability to activate, apply and transfer the system of knowledge, skills, capacities, values and attitudes onto individual situations in life.

„**Key competences**” represent a transferrable and universally employable set of knowledge, skills and attitudes inevitable for everyone’s personal satisfaction and development, for his/her active life in a society and successful employability.

In 2003, the European Commission, in its effort to unify the numerous attitudes to competences, defined **8 areas of key competences** for the elementary stage of education:

1. Communication in mother tongue,
2. Communication in any foreign language,
3. Mathematic literacy and competences in natural sciences and technology,
4. Competences in the area of IKT,
5. Learning to learn (competences for life-long education),
6. Social and civic competences (intra-personal and inter-personal),
7. Entrepreneurial competences (motivating changes, reacting to them and reaching the objectives and take-on the responsibilities for their behaviour),
8. Cultural competences (awareness).

From the point of view of health-oriented physical education and sport, **the European Commission's proposal does not include any motor competences and the ones for health and life protection**. In order to support our opinion that it is **necessary to add this competence area** into the initially selected 8 ones, we present the model of different types of intelligence by Gardner (1983), which includes also bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

The Seven Types of Intelligence (Gardner, 1983):

Psychologist Howard Gardner has identified the following distinct types of intelligence in his Multiple Intelligences Theory („MI Theory”) in the book „Frames of Mind.”

1. Linguistic
2. Logical-Mathematical
- 3. Bodily-Kinesthetic**
4. Spatial
5. Musical
6. Interpersonal intelligence.
7. Intrapersonal intelligence.

We think **that the current discussion on key competences is focused mostly and predominantly on job market and forgets the meaning of competences for the personal life of a man.** It is just the complacent personal life, for which the school should prepare a young prospective person. A standard health state gives prerequisites for a successful acquisition of competences. However, health may not be considered an obvious and a definitive status, on which we can build up other competences. Health must be protected and cherished by means of well-planned programmes. **Every individual should acquire knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes, which would form a prerequisite for acquiring new competences for oneself.** Being healthy and knowing how to protect one's health and life and take care of them, are the key competences of an individual. Moreover, it is a preferred competence for the society from the point of view of the care of a citizen. The quality of individuals characterizes the quality of the whole society.

Life-long acquisition of motor competences and the ones of taking care of one's health are reached also through education in schools (as well as out of schools), while the subject „Physical Education” is one of the key ones in the whole system.

The new **Act on Education** No. 245/2008 Coll. was adopted in May 2008 and has been implemented in Slovak schools (in 1st grade of elementary = ISCED 1 and secondary schools = ISCED 3, and 5th grade of elementary schools = ISCED 2) for already three years. It replaced the old law from 1996. Nowadays, 3rd year of the

reform is in progress and it is being implemented in 4th grade of ISCED 1, 7th grade of ISCED 2nd and 3rd grade of ISCED 3). The reform will be completed within the next 2 years.

The new **School Act** brings along:

- Free last year in kindergartens
- Reducing the number of pupils in classrooms (1-4 grade max. 25, 5-9 grade max. 28)
- Obligatory first foreign language started from year 3, obligatory second language started from year 6
- State published books only free
- Reducing the number of obligatory classes
- Change of the curricula
- 10-years of compulsory school attendance remains
- Free education at elementary and secondary schools remains.
- Education is provided at 5 levels according to the ISCED classification:

ISCED	Level of Education
ISCED 0	Pre-primary education
ISCED 1	Lower-primary education
ISCED 2	Upper-primary education
ISCED 3	Secondary education
ISCED 4	Post-secondary education
ISCED 5	Higher education

Based on the new act, school subjects were reorganized and grouped into 8 educational areas (Tab. 1).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EDUCATIONAL AREA: HEALTH & MOVEMENT

The subject Physical Education & Sport provides basic information on biological, health and social elements of a healthy life style. Pupils develop abilities and acquire knowledge, skills and habits, which are a part of a healthy life style not only during the school attendance, but in adulthood as well. They will acquire skills and habits for effective spending of their leisure time and at the same time knowledge on health effect of the skills and habits adopted.

Table 1. Educational areas

Educational area	Subjects
Language and Communication	Slovak language and literature
	First foreign language
	Second foreign language
Maths and Work with Information	Mathematics
	Information Technology
Man and Nature	Physics
	Chemistry
	Biology
Man and Society	History
	Geography
	Civics
Man and Values	Ethics/Religion
Man and the World of Work	World of Work
	Technology
Art and Culture	Music
	Arts
	Art Education
Health and Movement	Physical Education and Sport

CONTENTS OF EDUCATION

Provision of the aforementioned competences is realized through the contents formed by elementary knowledge on the importance of movement activities for health, prevention of diseases, adequate way of living, sport activities and its organizing, motor performance and its assessment and means of movement.

AIMS OF THE SUBJECT PHYSICAL EDUCATION & SPORT

In the subject Physical Education & Sport a pupil obtains competences which should allow him/her to use them in their own life style in everyday life with the aim of health support. They are as follows:

Motor competences

- To be able to perform motor activities, which help to prevent from civilization diseases,

- To develop general motor performance with the focus on maintaining and improving health,
- To acquire adequate number of motor activities in selected kinds of sport, and to be able to apply them in their free time.

Cognitive competences

- To be able to explain reasons for performing motor activities in the life style with the focus on health protection.
- To use terminology of acquired motor activities and knowledge.
- To be able to explain and use warm-up exercises prior to the activity.

Communication competences

- To be able to express oneself clearly and comprehensibly.
- To use correct terminology.

Interpersonal competences

- To show positive attitude to oneself and the others.
- To effectively work in a team.
- To solve conflict situations in a rational way, mainly in sport.

Attitude competences

- To enjoy the activity being performed.
- To be able to win, but also to lose in a match and in life.
- To observe the principles of fair-play.

The curriculum of physical education and sport (Tab. 2 and 3)

The curriculum consists of two parts:

- a) state curriculum (state programme) – 2 lessons of PE per week
- b) school curriculum (school programme) – schools can choose another one, two or more lessons per week as an addition to the 2 lessons of the state programme. This allows schools to offer students PE lessons every day! However, in practice this is not so simple. The reasons are understandable: lack of money to pay PE teachers in schools, old-fashioned material base, lack of sport facilities, expensive equipment, and last but not least, children are discouraged by the difficulty of the contents of PE lessons given in the past (Chebeň, 2006a, 2006b). Today, teachers prepared at universities are taught in a new way – to offer a wide

variety of physical and sport activities with the focus not on top performance but on mass character of leisure activities to be used in the future life, and also on the social and non-cognitive aspects of the lessons.

Table 2. No. of lessons per week in the school curricula in Slovakia

Grade	2 nd grade of elementary school – ISCED 2					Secondary school – ISCED 3			
	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
State educational programme (No. of lessons per week)	21	23	24	24	24	24	25	23	22
School programme (lessons per week)	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	8	8
Sum of lessons per week	27	29	30	30	30	31	32	31	30

Table 3. Educational area: Health and Movement - ISCED 1 (years 1 through 4), ISCED 2 (years 5 through 9)

Health & Movement	SUBJECT	1 st year	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
State Programme	Physical education & Sport	2 hrs.	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
School Programme	Eligible subjects	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6

ISCED 3 (years 1 through 4 at secondary school)

Health & Movement	SUBJECT	1 st year	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
State Programme	Physical education & Sport	2	2	2	2
School Programme	Eligible subjects	4	4	7	15

Educational standards define the contents of education to be acquired by each pupils in the given subject

Educational standards are divided into:

- a/ performance standards
- b/ contentual standards

Below are presented examples of educational standards:

SPORT GAMES

COMPETENCE:

Pupil reaches such level of acquisition of game skills, patterns and systems that he/she is able to play a game according to the rules of competition.

PERFORMANCE STANDARD:

- to know how to correctly name, describe, practically show, and apply in a match the technique of basic skills, and to use game patterns and systems in a match,
- to know and describe players' functions in defence and offense,
- to know how to explain basic rules of competition of selected sport games,
- to know how to set up and do in practice the warm-up prior to a match,
- to know how to act as a referee (ancillary referee), recorder, time-keeper and to run a simple observation sheet on players' performance in a match,
- to know how to evaluate the real value of one's individual sport performance and the one of the team.

CONTENTUAL STANDARD:

Knowledge:

- systematics of skills, basic terminology,
- technique of performing the skills,
- game patterns and systems,
- game performance in sport games, assessment of performance,
- players' functions,
- elementary rules of selected sport games,
- organization of a simple competition (referees, time-keepers, recorders, etc.),
- principles of fair-play.

Based on these and other knowledge, teachers can develop the following abilities and skills in children:

Skills and Abilities:

- conditioning, elementary conditional and coordination abilities,
- describe and practically show correct technique of individual skills:
basketball – one-hand pass, dribbling, shooting, defending a player with and without ball
football – passing, ball damping, shooting, dribbling, defending a player with and without a ball
handball – one-hand pass, dribbling, shooting, jump shooting, defending a player with and without a ball
volleyball – overhand pass, pass after a movement, underhand serve, passing to a setter under the net.

Using the knowledge, skills and abilities during the lessons facilitates creation of the following attitudes of pupils:

Attitudes:

- to show permanent positive attitude to sport games,
- to show positive attitude to motor activities,
- to have positive relationship with team-mates and opponents as well,
- to stick to the adopted norms and rules,
- to observe the principles of fair-play,
- to manifest the effort of self-improvement, perseverance and bravery,
- to enjoy the performed motor activity,
- to be able to win and also accept a loss in a sport match as well as in life, to acknowledge the opponent's qualities.

Contents of Education

Provision of the given competences is realized through the contents of education. The contents of education are divided according to the so called topics:

Table 4. Survey of topics**a/ Basic topics**

General gymnastics
Athletics
Elements of gymnastic sports
Sport games
Swimming
Outdoor activities
Testing motor abilities
TOTAL: 66 hours

b/ Eligible topics

Non-traditional (for Slovakia) motor activities (badminton, table tennis, ringo, squash, etc.)
Ice-skating
Ice-hockey
Snowboarding
Bodybuilding
Aerobics, aqua aerobics
Martial arts and self-defence
In-line hockey
Dances (social dances, disco, folk dances)
Other activities

Initial surveys show (Tab. 5) that the majority of schools have not increased the number of compulsory 2 lessons of Physical Education and Sport (PES) for pupils at schools. This means that in spite of the proclamations of the Slovak Ministry of Education to support movement of pupils, the real situation is opposite. The reasons for not increasing the number of compulsory lessons of PES per week are various: lack of financial means to pay for teachers, lack of expert teachers, poor material provision of the subject, lack of gyms and other facilities, etc.

Table 5. *Statistic data on P.E.S lessons obtained by questionnaires*

				Percent
Total no. of schools	132	No. of schools which added at least one lesson of PE in the School programme	37	28%
		No. of schools which have not added any lessons of PE in the School programme	95	72%
Headmaster HAS got education in PE	Number of schools			
	33	No. of schools which added at least one lesson of PE in the School programme	11	31%
		No. of schools which have not added any lessons of PE in the School programme	22	69%
Headmaster HAS NOT got education in PE.	99	No. of schools which added at least one lesson of PE in the School programme	26	11%
		No. of schools which have not added any lessons of PE in the School programme	73	89%

CONCLUSION

Prior to the implementation of the new School Act in 2008, children at the second grade of elementary schools had only 2 lessons of Physical Education & Sport per week. After September 2008, only 28% of headmasters added at least one lesson into the School educational programme. This means that the amount of motor activity of pupils in school has not increased. One of the reasons is the lack of financial means to run and renew the equipment and facilities necessary for good quality PES process. Maintenance of objects also requires a certain amount of financial means, so headmasters choose „less expensive” solution – subjects which are not so costly (such as history, maths, etc.). One of the tasks of teachers of PES is to elaborate serious attractive, financially not demanding motor programmes for pupils and ask headmasters to incorporate these lessons into the curricula in the form of at least one lesson of PES for pupils per week. In order for PES teachers to be successful in this process, they have to be well prepared by the universities. Therefore, the urgent task of faculties preparing teachers is to educate flexible, modern teachers prepared to fulfil even the most difficult theoretical and practical tasks.

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ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the curricular reform in Slovakia and its impacts on the extent and contents of Physical education and sport in schools. The author suggests that motor competence is included in the 8 key competences of pupils. Based on the new act, school subjects were reorganized and grouped into 8 educational areas, including Health & Movement. The curriculum consists of two parts: State compulsory programme and School elective programme. This means that students can have not only two obligatory lessons of PE & Sport, but can add at least one lesson to the state compulsory programme. However, very few schools have made use of this opportunity. There are various reasons for that, financial insufficiency, lack of expert teachers, and lack of sport facilities being the most frequent ones.

Key words: competence, pupils, health & movement, state educational programme, school programme, questionnaire