
Health and physical education: a new global statement of consensus (from a Polish perspective)

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Summary

Physical education has found itself in a difficult position; increasingly more voices are questioning its legitimisation on school curricula. There is an obvious need for performance standards and ways to measure the impact of physical education. Linking the benefits and outcomes of physical education to 21st Century core learning areas such as critical thinking, problem solving, the ability to operate with agility and adaptability, the ability to analyse information, communicate effectively and the ability to act innovatively, will be essential. One of the ways of enhancing its social value (and recognition) might be including and relaying more on health education. This paper draws some lines of direction for the pedagogy of these both subjects in the 21st Century referring to the Global Forum on Physical Education Pedagogy 2010 (GoFPEP 2010) and presenting its *Statement of Consensus*.

Key words: Physical education – Health education – Health pedagogy

Introduction

Significant changes in physical education have taken place over the past 40 years with a transition from a traditional sports skill-orientation to a broader emphasis on health-related fitness and lifelong physical activity [2,9,11]. However, throughout the world, physical education programmes are being reduced, minimised and/or outright eliminated from elementary and secondary curricula [5,12]. It is increasingly apparent that the value of physical education programmes is being tested worldwide.

In an age of increased accountability, the lack of effective measures to demonstrate the importance of physical education in the development of learners is a serious challenge to the future of the profession [10]. Linking the benefits and outcomes of physical education to the 21st Century core learning areas such as critical thinking, problem solving, ability to operate with agility and adaptability, ability to analyse information, communicate effectively and the ability to act innovatively, will be essential if physical education is to continue to be valued as a part of the basic school curriculum [1]. If, in fact, physical education can be linked to such core

learning areas, then the importance of physical education will be more fully embraced. Can we demonstrate that physical education is as important as other basic areas, such as reading, writing and mathematics, as a necessary lifelong vocational and non-vocational requirement?

It is evident that there is a need to develop a more effective assessment leading to greater accountability. Physical education programmes must generate data that can make the profession's efforts much more accountable for programme interventions. The lack of accountability in physical education prevents programmes from becoming a part of the health care system of any community. There is an obvious need for performance standards and ways to measure the impact of physical education. The need for physical education programmes to enable students demonstrating their basic proficiencies is paramount in an increasingly standardised educational world. Just as there is a need to improve basic skills such as reading, mathematics and science, there is a need to justify the existence of physical education programmes. The physical education teacher is increasingly being called upon to demonstrate student's proficiency in developing the skills to achieve a healthy, active lifestyle.

We now live in a time when obesity and overweight, especially among children and youths, has become a major health concern on a worldwide basis [8,14]. It has been well documented that patterns developed in the childhood will, in fact, carry forward to one's adult life [4]. The emerging epidemic of obesity among children and youths thus becomes a concern for future adult populations. The challenge is a complex one that requires more holistic and multidisciplinary thinking to address the problem. Health, leisure and physical education professionals worldwide have a key role to play in formulating strategies to address this problem. There is a need to employ new forms of pedagogy, integrate health and physical education programmes in a more effective fashion, support the development of healthy, active lifestyles, explore ways to employ technology in the teaching of physical education, link school-based activities to informal community programmes and review the way in which physical education teachers are prepared [3].

These are, indeed, difficult and complex challenges, problems and issues that require multiple perspectives and, increasingly, views that are global, reflecting successful methods, strategies and procedures from throughout the world. The Global Forum on Physical Education Pedagogy 2010 (GoFPEP 2010) was established and structured to explore ways of rethinking, reforming and reframing health and physical education pedagogy as well as preparation of physical education teachers.

The Global Forum on Physical Education Pedagogy 2010 (GoFPEP 2010)

Organised to examine new forms of pedagogy, GoFPEP 2010 sought to review the use of technology, ways of linking practice to theory and the importance of contextually-based education embedded in community life as a way to reshape and redesign the future of health and physical education. GoFPEP 2010 explored several basic areas including the following:

1. Reframing health and physical education pedagogy internationally by promoting dialogue and discussion on critical themes and issues;
2. Exploring a new model of pedagogy for preparing health and physical education teachers which promotes accountability, builds community life, employs a greater use of reflection to improve practice and embeds learning in practice;
3. Examining the extension of health- and physical education-based school programmes into community life;
4. Reviewing the application of technology as related to the teaching of health and physical education;

5. Promoting the establishment of partnerships between the school, community, university, nongovernmental organisations and commercial enterprises;
6. Rethinking the relationship between health and physical education as a strategy for promoting lifelong active living; and
7. Stimulating forward thinking.

The GoFPEP 2010 invited international voices in a dynamic programme designed for educators, health professionals, administrators, policymakers and citizens the opportunity to discuss the future of physical education pedagogy. The forum provided unique opportunities for professional enhancement, drawing together leading educational and professional experts from throughout the world; GoFPEP 2010 saw 70 invited delegates from 25 countries representing 64 universities, institutions and schools participate in the event lasting two days that included keynote, invited presentations and workshops, and discussion groups.

The primary goal of GoFPEP 2010 was drafting a Consensus Statement focused on "Health and Physical Education Pedagogy in the 21st Century". The consensus statement was rooted in previous documents: International Charter for Physical Education and Sport adopted at its General Conference in Paris, 1978 [13], The Berlin Agenda for Action for Government Ministers, accepted at the 1st World Summit of Physical Education, 1999 [6] and the Magglingen Commitment for Physical Education approved in 2005 in Switzerland [7]. The uniqueness of GoFPEP 2010 was that it was deeply embedded in the actual context of a school setting and its community environment. This enabled a focused dialogue and discussion in real time as the school day unfolded, providing the opportunity for a more authentic analysis of challenges, problems, issues and solutions.

Each delegate to GoFPEP 2010 was asked to offer suggestions and recommendations formatted to poster presentations in advance of the event. Recommendations were sought in the following areas:

1. Innovative strategies employed in the teaching of health and physical education at the elementary, secondary and /or post-secondary levels,
2. Innovative approaches employed in the preparation of health and physical education teachers and
3. Three to five of their most important recommendations that could be used in formulating the GoFPEP 2010 Consensus Statement. Information from the discussion groups and poster presentations was analysed using the Qualrus qualitative analysis software package. In turn, this yielded subjects that were highlighted in the final drafting of the document.

The GoFPEP 2010 Consensus Statement provided multifaceted recommendations focused on improving physical education pedagogy and the preparation of physical education teachers. Recommendations advanced the importance of healthy, active lifestyles, integrating health and physical education, promoting good practices, advancing the knowledge and skills around physical literacy, assessment of students and teachers, and community partnerships. The core of the Consensus Statement (see below) calls for enhancing and maintaining the health and well-being of individuals. Actions of students, physical educators, health and leisure professionals, policymakers, citizens and business leaders were called for to provide programmes that would promote a committed effort, addressing the ever increasing worldwide concern of obesity and overweight among children and youths.

Physical education programmes in the 21st Century can inspire, motivate and prepare learners to live in an ever changing world, increasingly marked by the epidemic of obesity and overweight. Globalisation, explosion of knowledge and changing demographics have an increasingly significant impact on the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to live, work and play in the 21st Century. Children and youths will be required to gain critical thinking and problem solving skills, operate with agility and adaptability, effectively analyse information, communicate in various oral and written forms, reflect greater curiosity, imagination and innovation in their thinking, and develop healthy, active lifestyles.

Worldwide, physical education programmes, as well as physical education teacher preparation programmes, need to be rethought and reformed. Hosted by the University of Northern Iowa (USA) and the Grundy Center, Iowa (USA) Community Schools, the Global Forum for Physical Education Pedagogy 2010 (GoFPEP 2010) was organised to examine a new pedagogy for preparing physical education teachers, utilisation of technology to help teach physical education and the building of school, university, community and corporate partnerships. The GoFPEP 2010 drew 70 invited delegates from 25 countries representing 64 universities, schools, business and community organisations, as well as professional organisations and societies.

Conclusions

Despite global trends, the situation in various countries is influenced by regional (country-specific) conditions. This has been broadly researched and described in numerous reports which make it clear that countries and nations characterised as 'well-developed' and having a

high socio-economic status, i.e. high standards of daily living, are on the front line of civilisation changes. On the other side, countries like Poland, which underwent drastic changes in the living mode due to recent geopolitical turnovers, are only learning the rules of social and economic 'free society' living. Some areas, e.g. business, politics, culture, are catching-up quicker than other ones, e.g. education or health care, which are slow and difficult to change due to high financial demands, as well as to deeply rooted habits of individuals, used to be told how to live their lives accordingly to certain politically influenced philosophy. And although in both these areas the changes are progressing, this takes time; but looking at the frontrunners of democratic societies may help avoiding some 'blind paths' which well-developed countries have already tried out. Bringing Poland as an example of how the changes are happening and in what direction they are heading, may serve as a signpost for other post-communist countries.

In Poland, the changes brought a reform of the school education system introduced in 2009. A new curriculum has been implemented with new ideas for physical education and its organisation. According to the curriculum, two classes (45 min each) of physical education are included in the weekly timetable. Additionally, schoolchildren may choose two more classes of extracurricular activities, e.g. sports, from a range of activities offered by given school. This applies to primary and lower secondary schools. In upper secondary schools there is only one class weekly of physical education, two more classes being available in extracurricular time. A novelty in new curricula is health education, included in regular curricula of physical education in lower (13 – 16 years of age) and upper (16 – 19 years of age) secondary schools with a 30-h mandatory module to be included once over the three year period. In that module, schoolchildren will learn about health and health-enhancing behaviours, as well as learn to plan health-related activities, to cope with stress and to reduce negative emotions. Introducing such contents into teaching of physical education will require adjustments in the teacher training system of physical education professionals, which now deals with physical education as a school subject only! It will have to be extended to give new competences, skills and knowledge, enabling also teaching health education at schools (and possibly elsewhere). This concerns also teaching methods and techniques and also teaching styles, going more into the interactive ones.

The first institutions of higher education which will introduce these changes into their curricula will probably drain the market from the potential students, but sooner or later most of the universities certifying qualifications

in physical education will have to provide them also in health-related professions. The existing system of academic education (and the majority of staff) in East European countries, that want to maintain the present status (no changes in curricula, easy going atmosphere, relatively low academic criteria, in some cases the same teaching materials for years), will be disappearing from the map of higher education institutions authorised to issue certificates and diplomas. The changes have to be deep, but not just administratively; they would rather touch the didactic approaches, and new segments of professional needs of the labour market will have to be included. Open-mindedness and creative teaching of academic staff, though reflective in thinking, will be highly demanded. All that requires a clear sense of direction. Some changes concerning preparation of physical and health education teachers have already been implemented at the University School of Physical Education in Poznań. Linking knowledge (theory) with practice, involving a number of workshops where students exchange their ideas with in-service teachers, introducing new study options like nutrition, sport or active tourism and recreation, developing projects promoting local partners – sport clubs, city municipalities, educational boards and schools with teachers, children and their parents. New materials (guide books, manuals) are published, emphasising methodologies aimed at developing healthy and active behaviour patterns. Such changes are slowly taking place.

Statement of the Global Forum for Physical Education Pedagogy 2010: Health and Physical Education Pedagogy in the 21st Century

A STATEMENT OF CONSENSUS *Physical Education Pedagogy*

Focusing on content and methodologies to develop healthy active lifestyles for children and youth. This requires the integration of skill development, physical fitness, health, nutrition and planning for leisure.

Redesigning the physical education curriculum to promote active student-centred learning and empowering individuals to develop life skills that lead to lifelong, self-directed engagement in physical activity.

Accentuating the importance of co-operation of stakeholders in the community (teachers, administrators, parents, community members, business leaders and others) to advocate, promote, educate and develop individuals to incorporate physical activities into their daily life through formal and informal education.

Establishing physical education and health programmes as models of social justice which foster a safe learning environment, promote the joyful participation of physical activity with appreciation of cultural, racial, ethnic and social and economic differences.

Linking knowledge, skills and dispositions required by 21st Century learners with programme outcomes such physical competency (skills and fitness), health literacy and leisure planning throughout all subject matter and disciplines in the school.

Using technology to support individualised learning processes and assessment.

Re-conceptualising the strategies of assessment with appropriate measurable and performance-based goals and objectives tied to standards which promote greater accountability.

Ensuring that qualified professionals teach physical education and health, physical activities, and sport and leisure.

Physical Education Teacher Preparation

Emphasising the acquisition of teaching techniques and strategies for assisting individuals in developing a healthy, active lifestyle; one which recognises the importance of the integration of health and physical education.

Advocating policies and a broad continuum of programmes including healthy nutrition, weight management, physical activity and leisure planning.

Creating a positive learner-centred environment reflecting good practices to encourage students to become active participants in the learning process.

Promoting the development of partnerships with parents, schools and community organisations to embed and provide contextually based programme elements which enhance physical education teacher preparation.

Developing sensitivity for one's role in addressing racial, ethnic and cultural differences, socio-economic levels, funding levels, access to equipment and facilities, as well as approaches to mitigate these issues.

Including assessment and educational strategies which would provide programme accountability, as well as focus on educational processes and individual developmental outcomes.

Linking practice to theory, promoting the use of reflection and the use of effective technology to accentuate learning opportunities.

Linking the evaluation of students in physical education teacher preparation programmes to relevant knowledge, skills and dispositions directly tied to good practices.

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