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Published in the Russian Federation

European Journal of Contemporary Education

ISSN 2304-9650

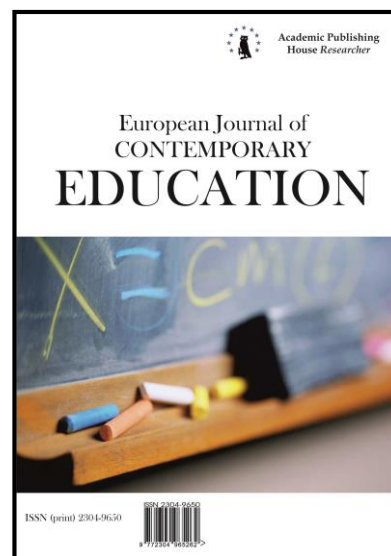
E-ISSN 2305-6746

Vol. 18, Is. 4, pp. 410-417, 2016

DOI: 10.13187/ejced.2016.18.410

[www.ejournal1.com](http://www.ejournal1.com)

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## Curricular Transformation of Education in the Field of Physical and Sport Education in Slovakia

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### Abstract

The study presents basic information on the curricular transformation of physical and sport education in Slovakia after the year 1989, which is related to the education process in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What is more, it points to the basis for modern transformation in relation to sports as well as to insufficient undergraduate teacher training and its consequences for the performance of newly qualified teachers. These findings are partially included in the grant VEGA no. 1/0376/14 Physical Activity Intervention for the Prevention of Health of the Population of Slovakia.

**Keywords:** Physical and Sport Education, Teacher, Transformation, Education, Pupil.

### 1. Introduction

One of the priorities of every person is taking care of their health. Health is a category protection of which is embedded in law. In the Slovak Republic, it is the Act No. 355/2007 on Protection, Support and Development of Public Health. Unlike in the past, these days individual responsibility for one's own health is being more and more emphasized. In the past, health was determined largely by an influence of biological factors. However, today it is being more and more affected by social factors. Health cannot be gained as a genetically determined and constant condition. The genetic basis is only a biological potential that can develop in a positive or a negative way (Bendíková, 2014).

The contemporary lifestyle has become hypokinetic. Insufficient physical activity may lead to "lifestyle diseases", which can have far-reaching effect on health in the school population in Slovakia. As a result, the curriculum transformation process at primary and secondary schools has been more intensive since the beginning of the millennium. This process includes changes in the content and concept of the physical education syllabi. Nowadays, teaching of physical education at schools in Slovakia falls behind other subjects in terms of quality and quantity. However, this is the problem that also other European Union member states are facing. This is related to civilization

development and process in which physical activity is becoming neglected due to other priorities such as individualism, new technologies and inactivity. In this regard, health benefits of physical activity must be regarded as the basis for changes in understanding of physical and sport education in modern education process.

### **Materials and Methods**

The research method of the present study is the systematic review.

## **2. The basis for the modern transformation of physical education after the year 1989**

Transformation of the educational system in terms of curricula, organization and management required changes in education acts, related binding regulations and new legal rules in consideration of current international documents and recommendations regarding education and training. In the years 1991, 1994 and 1996, proposals of *the new concept of the educational system development* were made. However, they were not approved and implemented globally. In 2002, a new concept called *Millennium – National Programme of Education and Training for the Next 15–20 years* was approved as the basis for a new act on education and training in primary and secondary schools in the Slovak Republic (*the National Education and Training Programme, 2001*). Proposal of education law was a subject to open discussion and it was supposed to be adopted by the end of 2004. Even though transformation and innovation of the educational system was based also on several documents of the Commission of the European Communities and the European Council ([Lisbon, 2000](#); [Göteborg, 2001](#); [Barcelona, 2002](#); [Copenhagen, 2002](#); [Maastricht, 2004](#) and [the world summits on physical education in Magglingen 2005](#)), some long-term tasks were not fulfilled on time or were fulfilled only partially. The basic objective was for education and training to be a priority in practical policy of the state and to be one of the decisive factors of social and economic development. However, this objective was not attained. Despite establishment of self-governing bodies, it was not possible to achieve more efficient support from social partners of schools and their active participation in education and training and its management. The educational system did not receive enough funds to secure the required level of material and technical conditions for its development and operation. These funds were even reduced. As a result, the schools had run into debt and lacked especially modern information technologies. Salaries of teaching staff have fallen far behind and they do not reach average salaries in other sectors. Consequently, qualified teachers are leaving schools and the qualification structure of teachers and professionalism in teaching are deteriorating. Proposals of new educational concepts (1991, 1994, 1996) and proposals of new education law for primary and secondary schools were not approved and implementation of the Millennium concept was delayed. Scientific and pedagogical research and creative use of foreign knowledge and experience necessary for solution of strategic tasks of the educational system were not adequately developed either ([Bendíková, 2012](#)).

*New education act in Slovakia.* In 2008, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic proposed a new education act, which was adopted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 22 May 2008. On 19 June 2008, the *National Education Programme (NEP)* was approved at the session of the Ministry of Education. This programme determined general objectives for schools, educational curricula and standards for individual educational stages specified by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) according to UNESCO, which is binding in the European Union and accepted also by other international organisations (e. g. OECD) ([Table 1](#)) ([Bendíková, 2012](#)).

On 1 September 2008, a new Education Act came into effect. This started the education reform in kindergartens and at primary and secondary schools. The national education programme for individual educational stages is published by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. According to the new education act, the national education programme is the hierarchically highest education project, which includes graduate profiles, curricula for individual stages and their particular syllabi. This programme is the first two-level framework of school participatory management. What is more, it is the basis for development of individual *education programme* for schools.

**Table 1.** International standard classification ISCED in Slovakia

<b>Stages ISCED</b>	<b>Educational stages- description</b>	<b>the Slovak educational system</b>
<b>ISCED 0</b>	Pre-primary education – all kinds of education preceding the primary educational stage	Education provided in kindergartens.
<b>ISCED 1</b>	Primary education – education at primary level	1 <sup>st</sup> stage of primary school (grade 1–4).
<b>ISCED 2</b>	Lower secondary education – education at lower secondary level. It is a continuation of primary education prior to higher secondary education.	2 <sup>nd</sup> stage of primary school (grade 5–9) and lower grades of four-year and eight-year gymnasia and music schools (until the grade that corresponds with the 9 <sup>th</sup> grade).
ISCED 2A	2 <sup>nd</sup> stage of primary school	
ISCED 2B	Complete compulsory education within incomplete vocational education	
ISCED 2C	Training in a particular field	
<b>ISCED 3</b>	Higher secondary education – education that follows completion of lower secondary education before entering the tertiary stage	Higher secondary education includes four-year gymnasia and higher grades of eight-year gymnasia (general education), secondary technical schools (including higher grades of music schools) and secondary vocational schools (vocational training).
ISCED 3A	Secondary (general) education with school-leaving certificate (gymnasia)	
ISCED 3B	Secondary technical education with school-leaving certificate	
ISCED 3C	Secondary technical education	

Besides the national programme, the model education programmes for schools along with methodology of their development were adopted. The national education programme should present approximately 70 % of the curriculum and it should be binding for schools. Education programmes for schools should present about 30 % of the curriculum and schools develop them according to their specializations, traditions, personnel and school-goers' interests (Antala, Labudová, 2006; Bendíková, 2012). As a result, every school has an opportunity to offer an education programme with its own structure of subjects and its own curriculum, which is approved by the subject committee for physical and sport education. The curriculum and the subjects are included in the school operation plan. Until now, all schools have followed the curricula adopted by the state. These curricula contained defined education goals and syllabi for individual subjects. The national education programme contains (curricular) fields of education (areas of educational content and development of key competences). The education fields have interdisciplinary character. The national education programme divides education into selected school subjects. Schools can add other subjects to individual fields of education. Lower secondary education comprises *eight fields of education*, which are based on definitions of curricula and key competences.

*Compulsory subjects in individual fields of education* (for lower secondary education they are divided into eight fields)

FIELD OF EDUCATION	SUBJECTS
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION	SLOVAK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
	FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE
	SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE
MATHEMATICS AND WORK WITH INFORMATION	MATHEMATICS
	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
MAN AND NATURE	PHYSICS
	CHEMISTRY
	BIOLOGY
MAN AND SOCIETY	HISTORY
	GEOGRAPHY
	CIVICS
MAN AND VALUES	ETHICAL EDUCATION
	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
	PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL TRAINING
MAN AND CULTURE	ART
	MUSIC
	EDUCATION THROUGH ART
MAN AND WORLD OF WORK	THE WORLD OF WORK, TECHNOLOGIES
<b>HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>	PHYSICAL AND SPORT EDUCATION

Besides school subjects, the education programme also defines interdisciplinary topics that occur in all the fields of educations. These topics are obligatory components of education curricula. They can be implemented in several ways, for example as an integrated part of curricula for individual fields of education and adequate school subjects or as a separate school subject taught within extending classes (when schools are building their profile). Other effective and suitable forms are projects (their duration corresponds with the number of classes allocated to a particular topic) or a course. However, interdisciplinary topics and their teaching can become effective only when activating and interactive teaching methods are used. Every school decides on how and when the interdisciplinary topics will be taught.

The National Education Programme introduced the following *interdisciplinary topics* at the lower level of secondary education:

- *Multicultural education*
- *Media education*
- *Personal and social development*
- *Environmental education*
- *Traffic education – safety in road traffic*
- *Protection of life and health*
- *Development of projects and presentation skills*

There are seven fields of education for the higher level of secondary education.

*Compulsory subjects in individual fields of education*

FIELD OF EDUCATION	SUBJECTS
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION	SLOVAK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
	FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE
	SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE
MATHEMATICS AND WORK WITH INFORMATION	MATHEMATICS
	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
MAN AND NATURE	PHYSICS
	CHEMISTRY
	BIOLOGY

MAN AND SOCIETY	HISTORY
	GEOGRAPHY
	CIVICS
MAN AND VALUES	ETHICS/RELIGION
	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
	PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL TRAINING
ART AND CULTURE	ART AND CULTURE
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	PHYSICAL AND SPORT EDUCATION

The National Education Programme introduced the following interdisciplinary topics at the higher level of secondary education:

- *Multicultural education*
- *Media education*
- *Personal and social development*
- *Environmental education*
- *Protection of life and health*
- *Development of projects and presentation skills*

Teaching of physical education has undergone the following significant changes (Antala, 2009; Bendíková, 2012):

↳ *Change in the name of the subject.* Within the education reform, the subject physical education was renamed to physical and sport education (PSE) at the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of primary schools and at secondary schools, while at the first stage of primary education its name remained the same.

↳ *Curriculum of physical and sport education* was included in the field of education called *Health and Physical Activity*, which sets objectives of the subject as well as individual key and subject competences: *motor, cognitive, communication, learning, interpersonal, attitude.*

↳ *Diversity of the PSE curriculum.* Traditional content has been replaced by new modules. *The curriculum* is divided into four modules, all of which have their defined objectives:

1. *Health and its disorders.*
2. *Healthy lifestyle.*
3. *Fitness and motor performance.*
4. *Sports activities within the workout routine.*

The output of these modules should be motor competence along with an integrated attitude towards physical activity, sports and health care in everyday life.

*Changes in the focus and goals of physical and sport education.* As far as the goals of physical and sport education are concerned, there has been the shift from performance-oriented teaching towards development of individual competences, values and attitudes. Much more emphasis is being placed on health care and healthy lifestyle – physical and sport education should connect knowledge, habits, attitudes, abilities and skills regarding physical activity, sports, health and healthy lifestyle, which are developed through physical and sport education classes.

↳ The latest education reform 2008 determined *the minimum number of two* classes for physical and sport education. That means that there are 66 classes in a school year cycle in all grades. The education programme provides a possibility to extend this number to three or even more classes per week (Antala, 2009) (Table 2).

In this regard, Bendíková (2009a, 2009b) draws attention to the fact that two compulsory classes of physical education were introduced under Maria Theresa's rule. The basis of the physical and sport education curriculum at primary schools is the thematic units divided into basic and optional, whereas at secondary schools teachers develop programmes for individual groups of students in each grade while implementing the following individual modules (Labudová, Nemček, 2009; Bendíková, 2012):

**Table 2.** Numbers of compulsory physical and sport education classes

<b>Educational stage</b>	<b>1990 number of classes/week</b>	<b>1997 number of classes/week</b>	<b>2008 number of classes/week</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> stage of PS</b>	3 classes	3 classes	2 classes + possibility of EPS
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> stage of PS</b>	3 classes	3 classes	2 classes + possibility of EPS
<b>secondary schools</b>	2–3 classes	2–3 classes	2 classes + possibility of EPS

Legend: EPS – education programme for schools, PS – primary school

*Health and its disorders* – students acquire knowledge continuously during school classes. Teachers can use one or two theoretical classes in each year for this purpose. Physical activity related to this module makes up about 10 % of the total education content.

*Healthy lifestyle* – students acquire knowledge continuously during school classes. Teachers can use one or two theoretical classes in each year for this purpose. Physical activity related to this module makes up about 10 % of the total education content.

*Fitness and motor performance* – recommended allotment for this module is up to 30 % of the total number of classes in each year and it is applied continuously or by means of block teaching. During the four-year study, all motor skills should gradually develop by means of different sports activities included in the fourth module.

*Sports activities within the workout routine* – this module makes up about 50 % of the total number of classes. In each grade, teachers choose at least two of the areas included in this module. They try to choose sports activities which their school is equipped for, which pupils are interested in, which are traditional for the school or which the teachers are specialized in. Outdoor sports activities should be done at least twice in four years (for example as a skiing or snowboarding course, advanced swimming course, etc.). All the four areas should be done in the course of our years. We suggest including different activities in the first and second term, especially in the first year, and using a wide choice of physical activities.

### 3. Discussion

From the earliest days until now, sports as well as physical education at schools have undergone plenty of social and economic changes the significance of which depended on a particular historical period. What is more, sport has developed into a dynamic economic branch making up three percent of the world market. Movement, physical activity, physical education and sports came into existence along with the man and they are changing and developing along with people in the way that is characteristic for each individual period. Problems related to sports in Slovakia are vague and their solution brings about long discussions about positive and negative effects on people and the society. Let us raise a question that regards physical and sport education at schools and professional sports. Is physical and sport education at schools a dominant and primary basis for professional sports? Isn't it a kind of Achilles' heel of sports in Slovakia? Professional sports develop from the base, in which many officials in charge do not look for innovations. They just try to implement the old system in a new form and with new terminology, which is also the case of the current education reform that was done hastily. Physical and sport education should support life philosophy, provide space for meaningful leisure time, help develop pupil's and student's personality in terms of health and social relationships and it should also help fight against intolerance, racism and drugs. If this is true, why are strong elements of centralism still prevalent in physical and sport education at schools? This centralism is a relic of the past and it is still insensitively transferred into the new modern environment without considering significant social changes in our country. Slovakia has naturally a limited base for sports. Therefore, its quality must be the highest possible. It is based on physical and sport education at schools, which is an (in) exhaustible talent pool for professional sports. As a result, it is necessary to synchronise physical



education at schools with the training of children and adolescents at centres for talented youth, which means to improve cooperation with sports associations in Slovakia.

Research in Slovakia points to deteriorating general motor skills and physical condition and fitness of pupils as well as worsening health oriented fitness (Bendíková, 2012; Labudová et al., 2012; Labudová et al., 2015). Consequently, this might have a negative impact on economy as well as health and social policy of the state in several aspects. We, therefore, believe that the current transformation of physical and sport education in Slovakia, including education in modules, makes it possible for pupils and students to engage in physical activity aimed at improving their health and physical condition and mainly increasing their interest in physical activity (Antala, Labudová, 2006). This might be achieved by pupils' active attitude towards their own health, by giving them a chance to present their own opinions and physical activities as well as by development of individual fitness programmes. Such steps can lead to crucial cooperation between theory and practice, where physical and sport education directly or indirectly enables diversification and implementation of innovative curricula (Bendíková, 2009a).

Liberalized curricula of physical and sport education make teachers select new untraditional physical activities and, thus, diversify their choice. One of the benefits of the education programme for schools should be more diverse classes (exercise with fitness balls, overball, expanders, baseball and flowin, pilates, zumba aerolates, indiacca, tchoukball, floorball, speed badminton, rope skipping...), which have a positive impact on physical, functional, motor, social and mental development of pupils (health-oriented physical fitness).

In quality and quantity terms, the school is one of the decisive factors influencing preferences of its pupils (Bendíková, 2009b). Lack of interest in physical activity and physical and sport education at schools is also caused by insufficient revitalisation and innovation of the curricula. Consequently, there is a growing number of lifestyle diseases in school population. Physical and sport education and its development should reflect and respect leisure time preferences of children and adolescents. New concept of this school subject requires "breaking" of contemporary "traditional" management of the teaching process and changes in its structure. Effective methods of teaching applied along with traditional teaching techniques include creative activities and methods focused on experience, emotions, positive attitude towards physical activity as well as the role of pupils and students in a teaching process. Pedagogy based on positive experience and leisure time is gaining ground. Therefore, physical and sport education teachers should apply different types of motivation and emphasize health benefits of particular exercises while using adequately selected didactic methods.

Extent of curriculum liberalization depends especially on physical and sport education teachers, on their qualifications and theoretical and practical capabilities, their assertiveness in relation to other subjects, diversified choice and, last but not least, on pupils' interests. All these liberalization elements require further education of teachers and development of teaching materials and basic documents for pedagogical practice. Undergraduate education of teachers is focused on general knowledge that does not correspond with reality in the field of education and training. Furthermore, this education has its shortcomings that have been well known in theory and practice and at some faculties of teacher training in Slovakia they are accepted and remedied by new teacher training curricula and new organization of teaching practice. Validation and suitability of teacher training make space for revitalisation of study programmes, which are the core of professional identity and status of teachers. This process requires taking theory into practical physical education lessons. Therefore, undergraduate and further training of teachers needs to be reformed. What is more, practical experience shows that most of physical education teachers were not trained at universities how to apply experience-based teaching, since ten or twenty years ago teacher training was focused on delivering and measuring performance during physical education classes.

The concept of a new attitude towards the teaching profession should be based on a system that will ensure teachers' professional growth and increase their competences and quality of their performance. These are opinions expressed by graduates. Quality of teachers and support for their work are the most important requirements within the curricular reform. Nowadays, the teacher training focuses on competences such as goals of the teaching process based on questions "how, why, when ...", which should be included in competences of graduates from faculties of teacher

training. These competences ought to be connected with qualification, psychological and diagnostic, communication, diagnostic, planning, organizational, advisory, consultation and self-reflection capabilities.

#### 4. Conclusion

Even though the current reform of the school system is being implemented at different levels and has different forms, it will be necessary to add the latest scientific knowledge to mandatory curriculum of physical and sport education. Such knowledge can make education and training more effective, which should lead to improved competences of pupils with focus on their health. All these changes should result in modern education and training, where the school plays a decisive role in leisure time preferences of pupils along with the family and where motivation sets pupils for certain goals, orientation and physical activity and, thus, makes them follow their aspirations.

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