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IS THERE A PROMOTION OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PRACTICES IN HIGH SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION?

Introduction

In a healthy school, students learn-through lessons and through example-to value their own health and that of the environment. Achieving this vision will require: Providing safe and healthy places to learn and play. School should offer a qualitative PE classes with resources included, licensed and accredited PE teachers, reasonable class sizes, affordable playing fields, (indoor and outdoor), facilities and financial support. The inactive lifestyle of daily living is very unhealthy for population in general, but especially is dangerous for children and adolescents. The health habits the teenagers develop in adolescence time will have positive long-term effects on their health and wellness. School setting is very important source, when students learn basics of healthy lifestyle („Healthy behavior“). Practicing healthy behaviors by making a physical activity (PA) part of the daily routine, eating well-balanced meals and healthy snacks and getting plenty of sleep so they will have enough energy during the day are the key elements of choosing to live healthfully. Schools represent important institutions promoting PA as they reach all age cohorts of adolescents. It has been suggested that school PE, particularly, has been suggested to play an important role in motivating students towards a physically active lifestyle (McKenzie, 2007).

Methods

(a) In-depth Interviews. Two types of semi-structured interviews were employed as the main mode of data collection: face-to-face interviews with four PE and sport teachers of public secondary schools in Kosovo.

(b) Document Analysis. This study used curriculum content, lesson plans, class time-tables, and other documents relevant to the research in order to gather more insight on the topic under investigation. This study have benefited immensely from direct observations of PE classes.

Sampling

In this study; four public school PE teachers (Amy, Bob, John and Mike) were interviewed. Each of the teachers has taught for at least 5-42 years and in more than one school Patton (2002) confirms that qualitative studies normally use small samples and even single cases are accepted.

Analysis of data

In current study was used Moustaka's modification of the Stevick-Collaizzi-Keen method as explained by Creswell (2007). The next step was to develop a list of significant statements from the interviews and other data. These are statements concerning how the informants are experiencing their teaching and addressing the challenges.

Overwhelmed challenges of The PE teachers in secondary schools (Kosovo case)

While PE and sports are acclaimed as having immense benefits for young people as well as adults, it is ironic that PE continues to be a marginalized subject in school curricula throughout much of the world. In many schools in Kosovo, PE class time is used as a time to take a break from serious class work. Therefore, PE teachers feel they have to continually provide justification for the existence of their subject and to plead for actual control of the time they are allocated. In an international survey, which did not cover Kosovo but did investigate some African nations, Hardman (2008) discovered that the status of PE was low and the subject was in grave danger of being sidelined. The problems ranged from reduced curriculum time and a lack of adequately prepared teachers, to the poor state of facilities and a negative perception from teachers, students and parents. Although many school principals and teachers appear to understand the importance of PE, they are also aware of the immense pressure for students to perform well in high stakes examinations (Di Fiore, 2010). Often, PE programs in Kosovo schools are not high on a school's agenda because they are not considered to be very important academically. This survey indicated that while government had committed themselves through legislation to provide for PE, little had changed in many schools all over Kosovo. Unfortunately, school principals, school board members, and parents in many cases are very prejudiced against the subject and most PE periods are instead used for other activities. The current study analysis confirmed that children in schools in Kosovo were still being denied the opportunity to experience the benefits of PE. There are many factors-(emerging themes) from in depth -interviews done with four PE teachers, among others: (1) infrastructure constrains (gymnasium, facilities, equipments),(2) social norms-perceived status of PE and its Teachers, (3) financial constraints (school budget allocated for PE) (4) time tabling (PE time allocations), and class sizes,(40-50 students per class) (5) Outdated curriculum (PE programs) and gender issues (equity challenges (cooperative vs. competitive activities and adapted physical activity APA (inclusive activities for special needs students) (6)School sport and extracurricular sport activities, (7) PE teachers networking (professional associations),

Barriers to the delivery of quality PE

In most Kosovo schools, the status of PE is perceived to be lower than that of other school subjects. In the PE curriculum, of great consideration are the aims of PE, the range of activities offered in PE programmes and their quality and relevance. PE

resources include teachers, classes, playing fields, facilities and financial ability. Generally, this refers to all that is needed to ensure the provision of PE in schools. Additionally, equity issues deal with the inclusiveness of PE in the areas of gender, school sport and disabled students. To sum up, partnership pathways refer to the networks that teachers form within their schools and outside too. These may include links with other teachers in the same school and in other schools, links with sports clubs, sports organizations and other outside school community providers. These partnership pathways may, to a large extent, determine the success of PE programmes in school.

Social norms- Perceived status of PE and its teachers

PE has been deemed to be a marginal subject in schools, with low status of subject and teachers. This inferior status is partly attributed to its practical nature in educational contexts that consider intellectual activity to be more superior (Macdonald & Brooker, 1997). Although PE is considered as being less important than the other subjects in Kosovo schools, it is still allocated the mandatory 80 minutes per week. Frequent cancellation of PE lessons is not reported because schools adhere to the government's mandate to ensure that all timetabled subjects are taught. Therefore, even though PE may have a low status, it is timetabled, taught and assessed in Kosovo schools. According to Hardman (2008), the actual legal and perceived status of PE and its teachers compared to other subjects and their teachers is a highly contentious issue. Even in countries where all subjects are weighted equally, somehow the status of PE and its teachers is placed at a level lower than in the traditionally academic subjects. Results of the current study indicated that this situation is especially worse in Kosovo education system where PE is ranked lower on the subjects list of priorities because school principals, parents and students concentrate more on the more important academically subjects.

Marginalization of PE in Kosovo Schools

PE in Kosovo has a very low status and PE teachers are often regarded as being of a lower standard than other teachers. PE teachers in this study share this opinion about PE teacher status in Kosovo schools (Mike) PE teacher with 42 years of work experience stated

“ PE teacher in Kosovo schools is considered as someone who is physically fit, but,... not necessary smart enough, because of that they are PE teachers, aren't they? strong and fit, that's all what they are supposed to be !... we do feel really very marginalized, because I must say that we do feel disadvantaged and underestimated teachers, especially we do feel this kind of discrimination from school principals too whenever I used to work I got more or less the same label, “..You are like a Tarzan...” , (my past experience from 4 different schools)... I felt really, on professionally basis for sure discriminated“, I can share with you my experience that PE teachers do not enjoy the same respect as teachers of compulsory academic subjects do, in conclusion the status of most PE teachers in all over Kosovo , particularly, in the secondary

schools with no gymnasium, leaves much to be desired ” The frequency of cancellation of PE classes is very high in Kosovo and is done by academic subject teachers who use allocated PE time to supplement that of their subjects. During times of adverse conditions or when extra time is needed for academic or other school activities, PE periods are often the first to be re-allocated. Regarding timetabling, other subjects are positioned on the timetable with the highest priority, with PE often being placed on the timetable as the last lesson of the day, at a time when both students and teachers are tired and in many cases two (40 minutes) in row. In Kosovo PE is hardly taught and while in some cases it is taught, teachers of academic subjects especially at secondary high schools get angry with their students who attend sports activities (representing school sport teams), in regard to this issue (Bob), said *“..One of my best players of the school football team gets punishment with lower grade in Maths due to the fact that he was absent, due to the reason that he was part of football school team by representing school on tournament organized for country Independence day - Reason for punishment was; because they take away from real academic work and „waste their time playing sports they get punished, that’s our reality“!?.* In Kosovo there is still much work to be done on developing teacher competencies, updating assessment methods and introducing new ways of organizing student centered teaching. Curriculum change is under way, and while good progress has been made since now, but this alone is not enough. Teachers and school principals are essential agents for curriculum implementation in the classroom. Their role represents a real challenge in the organization of learning where the capacities of teachers and school leaders are critical

Situation of PE in upper secondary public Schools-

Schools were directed to schedule PE twice a week, separate from after class games and sports, PE lessons were largely ignored for a long time. In addition the syllabus did not clearly show which activities were to be taught and engaged in at each level. Greater emphasis was placed on team competitive sports like football, basketball, handball, and volleyball. Students in Kosovo public schools still receive only two (forty minutes) of PE instruction per week. PE in Kosovo faces many problems, chief of which is lack of affordable and safe environment indoors and outdoors and failure of new national curriculum policy implementation. Since academic subjects are seen as key to a bright future, PE is regarded as a non-productive educational activity, a view that is shared by some teachers too (Marshall & Hardman, 2000). In fact while PE is compulsory in the curriculum, there is a big disparity between policy and implementation because head teachers timetable it only to satisfy school inspectors (Chapell, 2001). There remains a vast difference between official policy and actual delivery of PE in practice. Whipp, Anderson, Yeo and Tan (2006) say that objective assessment is necessary if the goal of PE is to enhance a student’s wellbeing, motor skills and knowledge about (PA) However, this means that teachers must be willing to frequently check students’ learning and to modify instruction to satisfy the students’ needs (Huebner, 2009)

PE timetabling (Time Allocation), Class sizes

Most schools have PE slotted on the timetable but hardly implement it. Unfortunately, while there have been many education reforms since the end of the war (98-'99) these reforms have impacted negatively on PE because PE time allocation has continued to decrease in many schools in regard to inappropriate school infrastructure (gym, outdoor playing places). In Kosovo policy requires that secondary schools allocate two periods (40 minutes) a week to all pre university levels of education. Often these two periods 40 minutes are not utilized well because of the lack of school infrastructure, much is left to the teacher to decide regarding use of this time. Many PE teachers find it very challenging to teach meaningfully within such a limited time frame and class sizes of 40 to 50 students per class. PE teachers face the challenge of teaching these large classes with minimal facilities and equipment and other facilities to ensure that PE is taught adequately. To illustrate this situation (John) stated *“a class of 40-50 students would need a considerable investment in sport equipment actually my school principal said to me more than once,” ...Dear Mr. PE teacher I hope I've made myself clear in the beginning of the school year we got budget cut ,we have no more donations from any international organizations, please take care of these sport equipment what we actually have, I do believe that you understand that all over the world countries are facing financial crisis and we are affected too, we have no budget to support your request for some additional sport equipment and requisites that you asked for... we have to manage with actually school budget from the beginning of this school year until the next one, do your best and keep on eye on your students as they play, please?!).* However this depends on the financial resources at the disposal of the respective school and the willingness of the school principal- to spend money on such equipment.

PE Curriculum in public secondary Schools

Although there is an official school syllabus, it is often not adhered to and individual schools determine PE programmes with huge variations in content and practice depending on the resources at the disposal of each school. While this diversity may be regarded as a positive thing, lack of proper supervision makes it difficult to determine the relevance and effectiveness of such programmes. In the sporting arena schools in public sector can only provide the basic and less financially demanding sports like soccer, basketball, volleyball and athletics. Facilities and equipment are very necessary for PE to be taught properly because the level of provision of facilities can be detrimental to the quality of PE programmes. The facilities and equipment also need to be provided in the right quantity and quality, apart from being well maintained. However, all these factors depend on availability of adequate financial resources.

Equity (Inclusion), Adapted Physical Education, School Sport issues

Therefore, PE teachers in Kosovo acknowledge that girls enjoy PE just as boys do, but their ways of doing things are different and this needs to be valued and

respected within PE and sports. Current school playgrounds and classes in Kosovo do not provide teachers with opportunities to construct positive attitudes towards gender and members of the opposite sex. In addition PE teachers should balance between cooperative and competitive activities; provide environments that are safe; and make decisions about content in consultation with the students. Despite all International investments on teacher training Inclusive education these efforts, the biggest challenge that disabled students continue to face in Kosovo schools is inadequate provision of adapted facilities, equipment and trained personnel. School sport in Kosovo is elitist since only the best students get to play in a school team. This means that average students rarely get a chance to participate in inter-school competitions because winning is the ultimate goal, schools always strive to present their best teams for competitions. Kosovo's education system does not give students time to build on their sporting talents because as soon as competitions are over, the focus reverts to the strenuous academic curriculum. PE teacher (Amy) stated, (*sport in Kosovo has not proved that it can create employment and this forces most talented students to choose between sport and education... Therefore, most talented players cease to participate in sport once they leave school, especially if they are a female athlete, they must choose leave it or take it?*). In Kosovo there is no any Sport body, professional organization, association governmental or nongovernmental one who coordinates talent identification and development programme which tests students and identifies which sport suits them and develop their talents.

Overcoming challenges faced in public secondary schools in Kosovo

By listening to teachers and knowing their experiences, the study goal is to better understand the current position of PE in Kosovo secondary upper schools. Furthermore, if appropriate quantities of equipment are not available, School infrastructures has influence the way PE teachers, plan , design instruction and asses their students Well designed high quality PE curriculum require the following steps; proper equipment and facilities, reasonable class sizes, PE classes taught by qualified PE specialists according to international standards, adapting to the different types of barriers. Unfortunately, currently most in-service PE teachers in Kosovo do not have the competencies and knowledge in teaching health and wellbeing, it's hard to believe that PE can promote healthy, active lifestyles, provide children with a significant proportion of their recommended physical activity, increase physical fitness levels, and teach generalizable movement and behavioral skills. Schools have recently recognized as the most widely used and cost effective setting (especially in countries where compulsory education, primary and secondary level are cost free) for promoting of active healthy lifestyles among adolescents during PE. Knowledge and understanding of teachers' experiences may in turn help education officials, curriculum coordinators and school boards to know how best to support PE teachers. Further research for increasing teacher promotion of healthy lifestyles during PE is needed.

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The objective of this study is to better understand the current position of Physical education (PE) in Kosovo upper -secondary schools. The participants of this study were four PE teachers (males=3; females=1) from four secondary schools, with 5 to 42 years of PE teaching experience. This research used a qualitative approach to identify concerns, causes and possible teacher-proposed interventions to address the school –based PE issues. In-depth Interviews, document analysis and observations were the methods used to collect data. Results of the study indicates that the lack of facilities and sport equipment (Gym and sport requisites), lower priority given to PE by schools are main concerns of the PE teachers involved in Kosovo' Education system. Currently most in-service PE teachers do not have the competencies and knowledge in teaching health and wellbeing based on the new National Curriculum Framework and according to international standards. These findings of the study can assist all Kosovo schools in identifying the importance of PE in high schools, and students' needs in order to implement their healthy lifestyles.

Key words: *Healthy lifestyles, Physical education (PE), students, teachers*