

Physical education and sport in pedagogical concepts - historical context

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Summary

The postulates of outstanding representatives of pedagogical thought presented since the time of the Hellenic pedagogy on physical education and sport have contributed to the inclusion of their content in the education system, and have become a source of creative inspiration in building the theory and practice of physical education and sporting activity. Remarkable thinkers of their eras; Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Saint Thomas Aquinas, J.Locke, J.J.Rousseau, T.Arnold, P.Coubertin, W.F.Froebel, H.Spencer, M.Montessori, C.Freinet and J.Dewey, in an exceptionally mature way emphasized the universal values of physical education and sport in the process of education and training of the young generation.

Keywords: historical context, theory of physical education and sport, pedagogical values, physical activity

Introduction

Pedagogical and educating values of physical education and sport have a many century-old history - as distant as human culture exists. The concept of pedagogical and educational values of physical activity has over the centuries distinguished representatives who perceived

the practice of bodily exercises and sports not only as the system of hygienic and health treatments shaping the level of physical fitness, but treated the movement as an important element of social life with a special indication of general and educational values.

Objective of the work

In this publication the author will present in a historical dimension the views of outstanding representatives of the world of pedagogy on the educational functions of physical education and sport.

Historical context

The ancient paideia, being the source of the Hellenistic culture of its ideology, aimed at the harmonious development of man. Physical fitness, beautiful body and knowledge of noble arts and literature created the advantage of the Greek ideal - a beautiful and good citizen. A master striving for the perfection of beauty and goodness, so-called kalokagathia, was the great thinker Aristotle - widely known as Plato. He obtained a thorough education which, according to Greek principles, involved bringing up for the harmony of spirit and body (the so-called kalokagathia), thus including both education and shaping of the human body [1]. This great sophist, in many of his writings covering 35 dialogues, taking up sports topics, referred to two skills of human nature; music and gymnastics. In the Third Book of "State", the postulate of the comprehensive and harmonious education of man, both in physical and intellectual terms, was presented in the following words;

"[...] music and gymnastics; for temperament and for love of wisdom. Not for the body and the soul, except only side-ways, but for these two elements, to harmonize with each other" [2].

Plato's concept of man - according to many researchers of his thoughts - illustrates the human aspiration for self-liberation in the pursuit of harmony of body and soul, health and virtue. Plato's concept of order, typical of ancient Greek thought, has made an unusual work, creating a timeless educational ideal - kalokagathia, i.e. a noble and wise man (agathos) and a fit and brave man (kalos) [3].

Aristotle (384-322) who for 20 years was a student and collaborator of Plato, claimed that a perfect man should have equal four virtues: courage, wisdom, prudence and justice. The advantages can only be achieved through the process of raising a human being, in which he

identified three basic areas of action: developing physical forces, moral education and mind training [4]. Physical activity, in the Aristotle's approach was an important means of achieving harmonious human development, thus shaping moral and intellectual abilities. This greatest educator of Hellenic times brought his thought to the idea of kalokagathia, referring to the rule of " the golden means", i.e. he recommended moderation in the use of physical exercises, referring to common sense and avoiding excessive treatments in the exercise of his own body. Aristotle also criticized the schematic Spartan upbringing and sought to protect the Athenian school from such educational practices. The aim of physical exercise is to shape the harmony of body, mind and grace, not brutality;

[...] "It is crazy," he wrote, "to raise athletes with dumb heads, as the Spartans did" [5].

Both Plato and Aristotle thought that competition in the process of upbringing played an important role in acquiring aerte. They emphasized the necessity of rivalry between people in various spheres of social life, including sports competition (the Hellenistic games) as an area of verification of the achieved level of development.

Similarly, the views were presented by Plutarch from Cheronei (50-125), who wrote;

[...] but you cannot neglect physical exercise, boys should be sent to the gymnastics school so that they can practice and develop flexibility and strength of the body"[6].

Plutarch in his educational system praises building up the body's resistance (diet, bath, simplicity of life) and points to wrestling, discus and javelin throw as particularly useful physical activities. He was one of the first proponents of physical education of girls (dances and ball games), recognizing female competition as an exciting performance [7].

The description of the role and importance of physical activity (gymnastics) in some of the ancient educational concepts proves that depreciating physical education in general education consequently leads not only to health or physical infirmity, but may also be the basis of insufficient social development by disrupting the harmony that should exist in the mental - physical nature of man [8].

In the pedagogical thought of the Middle Ages, there is little information regarding sports activity and its importance in the upbringing of children and youth. This negative state filled with the ideology of mortification demanded contempt for the needs of the body, which in consequence meant the rejection of all forms of hygiene and positive behavior towards all physical activity [9].

Tertullian (160-230) was known - in the negative sense – as a representative of the pejorative attitude of Christianity to sport and all forms of activity connected with it. In his treatise *"On spectacles"* combating idolatry, he disapproves of the struggles of gladiators,

circus races and sports spectacles in stadiums, because they are the source of all evil and remain in the human minds for life. The apologet is of the opinion that Christians should refrain from such spectacles, not only because they are the object of desacralization, but their brutality inadequately affects the upbringing of disciples and all believers of faith in Christ [10].

It is well-known that in the Christian Middle Ages, the concern for proper physical prowess was exhibited by the knighthood. In the upbringing of the paladins, courage and high physical fitness were inseparable elements of obtaining the full rights of a citizen of the knight community. Analysis of works and treatises written from this period, the authors of which were Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Augustine, argues that the canonized Christian Church was also keenly interested in the physical sphere of the human body, extremely often using symbols and comparisons in their works indicating their considerable knowledge and awareness of this subject [11].

The theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) claimed that the body results from human nature and should be cultivated and shaped accordingly, while indicating physical exercise as an important factor for human development. Thomas Aquinas often emphasized in his work the necessity of conscious work for the body;

[...] Body exercise perfects the body and makes it an efficient tool for the action of: intellectual, moral, religious and artistic virtues” [12].

The need for movement as a formative factor was not questioned by Aurelius Augustinus (354-430). This acknowledged scholastic of the Middle Ages, the author of the work "On the State of God" strongly polemicizes with feudal "contempt of the body", also recommending gymnastics in the religious state [13].

In the mid-seventeenth century, the trends of the Enlightenment created a model of a liberal-rational man, with high moral and intellectual values. The ideologist of the new style of thinking was John Locke (1632-1704), who in his program postulated the upbringing of future gentlemen coming from the aristocracy and rich townsmen. The main purpose of J.Locke's pedagogical assumptions is the comprehensive mental, physical and moral development of the pupils to be a model for the lower-class layers. The message of J.Locke taken from the phrase of the Roman poet Juvenalis emphasizes the essence of interdependence between the physical and mental nature of man [14];

[...] "In a healthy body, healthy spirit - here is a brief description, but a full description of the happy state in this world. One who has both these things cannot wish much; to whoever one of them is missing, will not be able to compensate for it "[15].

In his pedagogical considerations included in the work "Thoughts about upbringing" with undisguised sensitivity and diligence, he refers to physical education. It indicates that the mind is the most important part of our being, but one should not neglect body culture, because a healthy, strong, and most importantly, a capable person is able to overcome the difficulties of everyday life and has greater potential to adapt to the surrounding environment [16]. He recommends starting physical education from birth, using hardening treatments and regular physical exercise such as swimming, horse riding, fencing and wrestling. Physical education in J.Locke's concept ceases to play a separate role of a hygienic-fitness nature, becoming an important link in the overall development and education of man.

[...] The temporal happiness - writes J.Locke - depends on the good shape of the mind and on physical health. [...] Whoever has no good reason will never find the true path to happiness, whose body is fragile and unhealthy, will never go far "[17].

The most important influence on shaping the pedagogical views of the French Enlightenment was the remarkable representative of naturalistic education, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). In the novel "Emil, so about upbringing," he postulates taking into account the child's upbringing, respecting his developmental rights and creating the possibility of independent mental and moral improvement in a naturally shaped external environment. Upbringing must be progressive, tuned to the natural, free (physical and mental) development of the child [18]. J. Rousseau, saw the educational aspect in the physical activity, thinking that it was an important area for shaping the mind and character. He made a lot of reflections on the importance of physical exercise in education in the book commissioned by W.Wielhorski "Remarks on the Polish government and the variation, that is, the reform proposed by it" published in Warsaw in 1789;

[...] Finally, passion for physical exercise - writes J. J.Rousseau - distracts from dangerous idleness, effeminate delights and intelligent excesses. Above all, the body should be trained for the soul: this is what our wise men do not know "[19].

J.J. Rousseau faithful to the principle that the mind can successfully develop only in a strong body, recommended walking, running, jumping, throwing, swimming, horse riding, playing, dancing, and postulated the revival of competitions (games) in the competitive spirit in national sports. To implement the above activities, he proposed the school environment, including teachers, especially indicating the need for physical education in physical exercise areas. It is worth noting that the work of J.J.Rousseau filled with love and respect for man, especially the child, in his quest for the idea of a natural, joyful upbringing gave a new look to the values of physical activity [20].

Physical education, recognized as a significant educational value in the Renaissance, gained importance and found a permanent place in the concept of pedagogical educational systems of this age. It is worth noting that apart from the creative activity of the National Education Commission in Europe, there were also four main centers that popularized innovative pedagogical concepts in the field of physical education; the first - described earlier - ideas and French pedagogical system J.J.Rousseau (1712-1778), the second - concerned the activities of German philanthropists J.B.Basedow (1724-1790), Ch.Salzmänn (1744-1811) and F.GutsMuthsa (1759-1839) the third covered the views and reforms of the education of the Helvetic pedagogue J.H.Pestalozzi (1746-1827), the fourth referred to the Scandinavian traditions through the activity of a Danish pedagogue and physical education teacher F. Nachtegalla (1777-1847) [21].

A decisive role in popularizing physical activity and sport emerging in the field of European culture, played in the nineteenth century English public schools, in which sports games belonged to the basic forms of physical activity of children and adolescents. The indicated domination was the result of the positive attitude of English educators to games as an educational form shaping the ability to cooperate, comply with applicable laws and improve perseverance and decisiveness in everyday activities [22]. The activities of these schools are associated with the name of Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), a pedagogue, headmaster of Rugby school. The originality and greatness of his reform of the English school results from the assumption that for the achievement of the moral goal he used physical means with a special emphasis on team games. The model of physical education that he offered to pupils is different from the Swedish gymnastics system of P.H. Ling (1176-1839), physical education program of F.Amoros (1770-1848), or the assumptions of the Philanthropist school in Dessau, created by J.B. Basedow (1723-1790) In the model of physical education created by T.Arnold, there is no room for instrumental gymnastics nor exercises of the Swedish school model, his concept was based on sports games that in the school curriculum and extracurricular forms of classes were an important element of educational activity [23]. Confirmation of the educational role of sports games in the physical education program is the attitude of the Royal Commission for High Schools from 1864;

[...] Physical exercises that give health and activity to our body are based in English schools not on gymnastics, as it is on the continent, [...] but on sports games which, serving well physical improvement, also serve another purpose. Football and cricket are not only exercise and entertainment; these games enable the acquisition of the most socially valuable traits “[24].

In the educational curriculum, he focused the most on disciplining students. Eliminating from the team the boys who did not want to comply with the applicable requirements and regulations, was treated as an effective means to achieve the intended educational goals. English school sport along with the strictly observed "principle of fair and honest play" had a significant and lasting educational influence, shaping the moral attitude and personality of the younger generation of 19th century Europe.

In the nineteenth century, we observe the development of new kinds of sports. Sports associations and clubs were established, first locally and later also internationally. An example of such an international club was the Gymnastic Association called "Sokol", which was established in Prague in 1862, and soon the branches of "Sokol" began to be created all over Europe, including Poland. Amateurs practicing in sports clubs wanted to show off their skills to a wider audience, hence the idea of organizing sport competitions. The influence of Arnold's pedagogy had a considerable impact on a French pedagogue, social activist, Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), who managed to implement a pedagogical utopia and reactivated Olympic Games on the model of Greek agonism. Sports competition at the Olympic stadiums – conceived by P. de Coubertin - was a great celebration of international peace, friendly relations between nations, as well as the expression of humanistic values fulfilled in sports competition. His sports pedagogy refers to the pedagogical values of modern Olympism, i.e. the humanistic (autotelic) and educational (social) function of the Olympic sport [25].

A pedagogue, who was keenly interested in the issues of free physical activity of preschool children, was Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel (1782-1852). The main element of his innovative pedagogy was the task he faced in pre-school education, which concerned the comprehensive preparation of the child for systematic school education. In the years 1837-1850, he designed a model factory, calling it "children's garden" (Kindergarten), which is used today to describe a kindergarten. In his institution he used the principle of objectivity, versatility, accessibility and regularity. The important activities in the concept of pre-school education by F.W.Froebel were care for health and free physical activity in natural conditions. In his opinion, children should acquire the desirable characteristics of physical fitness through games, which was expressed in the work "Education of a man, the art of raising, teaching and learning";

[...] children should practice in a fun way and educate all their talents [...] and the garden should provide them with appropriate activities, train their bodies, and stimulate the soul to learn about nature and the surrounding world" [26].

A philosopher and educator Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) presented the progressive vision of physical education in the English society in the work "On mental, moral and physical education." He critically referred to the phenomenon of the dominance of mental education over the training of physical fitness, suggesting a balance in this respect. In his pedagogical concept, he gives physical activity a utilitarian domain, essential in overcoming life's hardships, during armed conflicts as well as in economic competition.

In the H. Spencer's view, an appropriate way to provide physical education to pupils are games and motor activities in the open air. On the other hand, in his approach, artificial exercise (gymnastic) has a pejorative effect, which reduces the level of motivation and decreases the pleasure of the student's natural freedom of movement, leading to fatigue by physical activity. Special guidelines for caring for one's own body are directed by H. Spencer to girls, indicating physical activity as an attribute that provides an attractive appearance, success in life and healthy offspring [27].

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, representatives of the "New Education" movement propagated physical activity in their pedagogical theories, not only as a manifestation of the natural need and human activity, but also as a socially useful value in human development with a special indication of pre-school and school age. In the trends of pedagogical progressivism, the utilitarian role of physical education in the area of shaping the physical fitness of the young generation necessary for efficient work, fight and defense as well as interpersonal communication was clearly emphasized [28].

A similar view of the Froebel theory of play was represented by the Italian doctor Maria Montessori (1870-1952), the creator of the pre-school education system, referred to as "scientific pedagogy". The education system developed by her was based on the assumption of comprehensive development in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions, which also supported the freedom of choice and creative activity of the child. In the "Children's Homes" study, the author expressed the view that the child learned not only through play, but the basic form of the child's activity should be science that did not tire, but rather delighted and made them happy [29]. In Chapter VI, entitled "Muscle Exercise" she criticizes the current standards of gymnastics, rejecting their schematic and maladjustment to the child's health structure [30]. The gymnastic exercises of the Montessori's school divided into hygienic, free, educational and breathing gymnastics had general-conservative and preventive qualities. In addition to the obligatory gymnastics (rhythmic marches, singing exercises), she recommended any games that used, among others, rods, rope ladders, ropes, balls, buckets, rackets, shuttles, etc. It should be emphasized that M. Montessori was a

forerunner of the use in pre-school education of musical and rhythmic exercises, which together with her full educational system are successfully implemented in the contemporary education of a small child [31].

The free expression of physical activity of the child was the subject of research interests of the French pedagogue Celestyn Freinet (1896-1966). In his research considerations, he criticized the traditional school system, claiming that it enforces content and methods of work contrary to their natural needs, and furthermore limits the freedom to choose independent activities and to implement creative intentions. C.Freinet called for the renewal of the education system, for resignation from traditional, monotonously conducted lessons, which he replaced with content related to the life of the environment with its social and natural phenomena [32]. In his pedagogical concept, he promoted to the greatest extent the inclusion of forms of free expression in the didactic process: verbal, artistic, musical and movement carried out in the process of well-organized work. In order to stimulate the proper psychophysical development of the pupil, C.Frainet proposes school environment the important task of which will be to care for the health and vitality of the child, acquired through free physical activity and hygienic procedures using school work techniques [33].

The place and role of adaptation of physical activity to modern society were the subject of interest of an American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859-1952). He identified his educational activities with the liberation of individual abilities - based on the child's experience and interests - in order to achieve the social awareness of the genre. He postulated transforming the school into a living institution whose primary goal was to stimulate children's innate abilities, interests, enriching experiences, problem-solving skills and independent work. Physical education carried out in his own school (The Laboratory School) was only of useful nature , i.e. the education of fitness useful in the future professional activity of the child. J. Dewey was aware that the factor disintegrating the life of individuals in modern society is the heritage resulting from the natural need of movement. Therefore, in order to eliminate negative effects resulting from a passive lifestyle, he proposed physical re-education based on the use of purposeful physical exercise that provides greater opportunities for sensory and motor integration with the environment [34].

Conclusion

Educational and shaping functions of physical education and sport have a very long history, probably as long as the existence of human culture. The outstanding thinkers of the past epochs understood physical activity as a pedagogical and educational value and noticed

in physical education and sport an important element of social, political and cultural life. This approach was - for those times - an example of a modern understanding of the importance of physical education and sport in the process of upbringing and shaping conscious attitudes of life of the young generation

Summing up these achievements, it should be emphasized that the evolution of views on the role, function and content of physical education and sport proceeded from the concept of individual body exercise, through the concept of creating an educational atmosphere through physical activity, ending with an organized educational concept of caring for physical fitness and health.

It seems that the postulates of educators of the past eras in the field of physical activity and sport have contributed to the creation of progressive thoughts in this matter, and have become a source of creative inspiration not only in the area of theory of education, but also found their permanent place of rehabilitation and comprehensive physiotherapy of disabled people.

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