

# „Fresh Look” at Physical Education

## „Świeże spojrzenie” na wychowanie fizyczne

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### Abstract

Every rational, goal-oriented action should be based on thought, which will lead to this goal the easiest way. A variety of guidelines are helpful in these intentions, usually from decision-making circles, which determine their expectations, what effects should be achieved. In school reality, such guidelines are contained in the core curriculum, which determines the scope of competences that a person being educated should possess at a specific stage of its education. Nowadays, the core curriculum is the basis for teachers and pupils to create original syllabuses containing content that can be implemented in specific school conditions. It is important that this content takes into account the expectations of the environments that create and implement this process.

**Keywords:** contents of teaching and education, educational expectations

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### Introduction

The title for these considerations was taken from the Ministry of Education, which issued the core curriculum for all subjects in primary school. Physical education also has this basis. It includes, for the 2nd educational stage, on pp. 19–20, wording that physical education must meet the requirements of dynamic development of societies, which is why a “fresh look” at the process is needed. “Repedagogization” as education through physical culture to physical culture [1] is to be helpful in this.

Not everyone remembers that the postulate of “repedagogization” was proposed, almost half a century ago, by Maciej Demel explaining that the essence of modernity in physical education lies in the fact that one can get to the juvenile not through the body to personality, but through personality to the body. Physical education was then harnessed to the pedagogical process (hence “repedagogization”), and the essence of its modernity were to be the following phrases: permanent education, prospectus, humanization, individualization, intellectualization, auto-education and extended and community school [2]. Over the next decades, based on these phrases, there was creation of a humanistic version of physical education to which the following persons contributed: Janusz Bielski, Waclaw Gniewkowski, Henryk Grabowski, Tadeusz Maszczak, Wiesław Osiński, Andrzej Pawlucky, Seweryn Sulisz, Roman Trzeźniowski, Danuta Umiastowska, Krzysztof Zuchora, Zofia Żukowska and many other theoreticians and practitioners of physical education. Therefore, it is difficult to speak of a “fresh look” since in the

theory and methodology of physical education for several decades this view has existed, developed, matured to finally reach the level of the complete version.

### Assumptions vs. reality

Getting into the justifications contained in that document, one should note with satisfaction that there are many apt proposals in it, consistent with contemporary views on physical education. Statements such as: education with care for the body, encouraging lifelong physical activity, individual approach to students due to their diverse possibilities, proper look at assessment criteria, knowledge transfer, team cooperation, health-promoting behaviors – confirm the intentions promoted by the contemporary theory of physical education. And listing of the positive sides of that document should end now, because the rest is a register of expected student competences, which, according to the principle of grading of difficulty, should increase with their advancement in education.

The expected student competences remain basically unchanged. They had to remain unchanged, because this is the achievement of our physical education over the last decades. Team sports games, athletics, basic gymnastics, games and mobility games – are their foundation. They include everything that would be difficult to eliminate from physical education and replace it with something new. However, by reading deeper into the records of that document you can see that such an attempt is taking place. There are proposals that are astonishing, as they

introduce exotic forms of movement to the core curriculum, e.g. *kabbadi*, *capeira* or *sumo*, which in our reality will be difficult to implement. For example: *sumo* is a Japanese national sport with a magical ritual, unfamiliar to our culture. The competitors are specially nourished and their diet is in conflict with the principles of proper nutrition. Building a place for such competitions with clay and rice straw at school would also be a big problem [3]. Therefore, it is difficult to expect that such forms of physical activity will gain recognition in the community of teachers whose competence to teach them is none. We would have to organize training for them (in case of *sumo*, probably only in Japan). An example of how difficult it is to adapt new ideas in the school reality is the attempt that was made in the 80s of the last century in Lower Silesia, experimentally introducing American football to several schools. A lot was invested, because the syllabus was created, teachers were trained and schools were provided with equipment. The experiment, however, did not bring the expected results and collapsed because school kids did not accept this game. It seems that globalization, which has become part of our reality, will tell what can be attractive and interesting for persons being educated. Therefore, it would be better if the decision was left to teachers and pupils rather than to enter this *sumo* as a canon.

Personalistic orientation, referred to by the creators of the core curriculum, focused on health, should necessarily include the creation of prosomatic attitudes in their records. This is the prospective goal of education in physical culture. The record that you should educate with care for the body coincides with the process of creating such attitudes. But the authors stopped there, although there was a great opportunity for it, when they referred to W. Osiński's textbook, which treats the structure of the process of physical education similarly to *Metoda Krakowska*® developed by H. Grabowski, i.e. it includes physical education (instrumental instructions) and physical education (motivational instructions) [4]. If the contents of the core curriculum were based on such a system, then matters of education would gain a rank at least equal to physical teaching. And yes, we still have a course of action "through the body to personality", because educational aspects, in principle, have been omitted in the contents. Although it was noted on page 11, that the purpose of teaching is to *shape personal and social skills conducive to physical activity* [1], but there are no references to pedagogical activities that should trigger motivational processes and a tendency to behavior that is characteristic of caring for the body. The amount of knowledge that a pupil should acquire is not entirely „prosomatic” because it primarily includes health (important!), safety and technology of body exercises. Once again, the opportunity was wasted, so that the education in care for the body would become the subject of in-depth reflection. All it was supposed to be done was to enter the phrase: "Shaping prosomatic and prosocial attitudes", so that the teacher, who creates

his/her own syllabus, would remember about it or would reach into the sources and explore their essence.

So the main question comes up: What will physical education be like after this "fresh look"? The answer is easy to predict – probably similar! It will be similar because that document does not bring such a "look", but rather consolidates the adopted schemes, still prefers the technology of body exercises and leaves a free will in the selection of content to the teacher who has so far "whistled at the body" every day. Our pedagogue will not benefit from the proposed *sumo* and rather remain faithful to his/her habits, and will abandon the important matter of health, which has gained priority, to teachers of other subjects and class tutors, but never to himself/herself. Also the intellectualization of this process understood as knowledge: *how and why you should take care of your body* [5] will also still be an empty record, because conversation with pupils in physical education classes is not present in our tradition. Many teachers, especially those with much professional experience, are instilled that a good class is one that is rich in exercise. In their opinion, conversation is a waste of time and negatively affects its intensity. The transfer of knowledge, e.g. about health, may be included in the syllabuses, but only so that the formalities are met. One of the reasons is the poor knowledge of physical education teachers in these fields. They did not learn it in college, because teaching syllabuses treat these issues only marginally. If the methodological guidelines of the core curriculum explicitly recommended that in the process of physical education it was mandatory to convey messages, even setting a time frame for them in each class unit – there could be a breakthrough. However, this will not be the case.

There will also be no breakthrough in the most important thing – the prospective role of the physical education process. What a pupil currently presents in terms of body fitness and knowledge is less important than what he/she will do with his/her body in the future. Building solid beliefs that the body is a value, and caring for it is a cultural duty, will probably be the most difficult challenge for a modern school. There is doubt arising whether this concept will cope with this challenge. The teaching objectives formulated on page 11 are not convincing, and 2nd goal is awkwardly formulated, because we have the word "encouraging" participation in sport and recreation [1]. It is difficult to call this "encouragement" a goal, because it is rather a method leading to the goal.

## Future perspectives

It is true that even the best syllabus does not mean much if there are no reliable and competent executors. It also happens the other way round – when average proposals have ambitious and creative implementers – they can give birth to new ideas and do a lot of good. All changes are usually burdened with many un-

knowns and usually have their supporters and opponents. There are also various circumstances that accompany changes, including those that are not subject to discussion. This happens when decision-making bodies are determined in their intentions and achieve what they intended in the legislative process. This is the case here. That is why the most important thing is, regardless of the realities created, to protect the achievements of several decades, described as a great project of renewal of school physical education, which was initiated by M. Demel who gave a new insight into this process. We know that everything that is most important will take place on the school playgrounds and gyms, and less on paper. The current core curriculum, whose name dates back to the 19th century, probably pleases its creators, but school reality will go its own way anyway.

Persons being educated now live in a different world than when the attempts to repedagogize physical education were made. At that time, the school was the universe of thought and action, and in many places the only institution where you could explore the world, assimilate new and shape own competences, acquire models. It is different now, because this institution remained rather unchanged in its mission and the realities surrounding it are completely different. Contemporary school at some point has overlooked the important fact that the acquisition of knowledge and models has many sources now. There is also different way of knowledge transfer, which is much more attractive, that is, not at the blackboard, but e.g. with the use of a tablet. Nobody checks this "tablet knowledge" either, does not use disliked tests, exams, oral statements, etc. It is much more pleasant learning and self-teaching, although it raises many dangers, because the contents from such sources are not always true. The need to use media was noticed on page 20 of that document, because it was found that by *preparing students for lifelong activity, modern technologies and their use to promote and monitor cannot be omitted* [1]. This is a good step and in the right direction, but is modern physical education ready for such challenges? There are no universally structured files useful in transferring knowledge in school facilities that implement a physical education syllabus, e.g. recording and playing equipment. But there are physical exercises applied by teachers. Here, there was a great need for a "fresh look".

Also, wandering around the world of physical culture has now taken other forms. Activities organized by various institutions, clubs, facilities and centers that recognize the needs of the community and then offer forms that will meet the interest of not only children and adolescents, but adults also enjoy greater attractiveness than traditional physical education classes. They also run extensive promotional campaigns that lure candidates with great effects. Most of the offered activities are paid and this

fact motivates their participants, because what is already paid for, must be consumed. The traditional school curriculum is not competitive in their view, although we notice some symptoms of this competitiveness in optional classes. They provide a choice, although their offer is rather poor. It allows a pupil to choose only what he/she tolerates better and maybe he/she likes more.

## Reduced optimism

This text is not a review of the core curriculum, but only a personal reflection on what it contains and what happened suddenly with our education (in this case, physical education). It does not decide either whether the reform of the education system was the right decision or not. However, opinions prevail that it was an act made in a hurry, and therefore it contains many errors. Consultations with interested communities were cursory and not very effective. Curriculum matters were handed over to experts who, based on their beliefs and knowledge, created a fairly coherent draft of a legal act, which was signed and implemented. It is also not known what criteria were used to determine the composition of the team forming this core curriculum. This team lacks in many people who have contributed to modern physical education in a particular way, and were not only entitled, but even obliged to comment on this important matter. We do not know whether they refused to cooperate or were not invited to do so.

So this is not a cross-sectional opinion-proposition (now a binding document) of the whole community creating and implementing the process of physical education, but only one of the options that could arise. It seems that it would be better if a nationwide forum for exchange of views was first created before making final decisions. And it was worth listening to not only the thoughts of theoreticians and physical education methodologists, but also teachers-practitioners who organize and implement this process on a daily basis. Then a document that would satisfy all parties would be created. The opinion of direct participants of this process, i.e. children and adolescents, would also be a great addition. After all, thanks to the possibilities of electronic exchange of information, asking them a few questions on a national forum would not be a problem. It is possible that the proposals of the latter-ones would be an important contribution to positive changes. But this way, we have the *status quo*, because the records have been slightly redrafted, regrouped, "whitewashed", with the ornament, which is the *sumo already mentioned*. All this reduces optimism, because it is certainly not a manifestation of the "fresh look" at school reality, although we must recognize that the creators were able to finish the project in a short time. What effects will it bring – time will tell...

## References

[1] Podstawa programowa kształcenia ogólnego, z komentarzem. Szkoła podstawowa. (2017). Wychowanie fizyczne. Warszawa.

[2] Demel, M. (1998). *Szkice krytyczne o kulturze fizycznej*. Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego im. Bronisława Czecha.

[3] <https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumo>.

[4] Osiński, W. (2011). *Teoria wychowania fizycznego*. Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego.

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## Streszczenie

Każde racjonalne działanie, zorientowane na cel, powinno być oparte na namyśle, który najprostszą drogą skutecznie doprowadzi do tego celu. Pomocne w tych zamierzeniach są różnorodne wytyczne, pochodzące przeważnie z kręgów decyzyjnych, stanowiące ich oczekiwania, jakie efekty powinny zostać osiągnięte. W realiach szkolnych takie wytyczne zawiera podstawa programowa, która ustala zakres kompetencji, jakie edukowany podmiot powinien posiadać, w określonym etapie swojego kształcenia. Współcześnie, podstawa programowa stanowi osnowę do tworzenia przez nauczycieli i uczniów programów autorskich, zawierających treści możliwe do realizacji w określonych warunkach szkolnych. Ważne jest, ażeby owa osnowa uwzględniała oczekiwania środowisk, które ten proces tworzą i realizują.

**Słowa kluczowe:** treści kształcenia i wychowania, oczekiwania edukacyjne

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