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RESEARCH

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Humanization of Physical Education in Early School Education

Humanizacja wychowania fizycznego w edukacji wczesnoszkolnej

Introduction

In Polish thought regarding physical culture, the prominent representatives of the interwar period dealing with issues of physical education saw this process not so much as physical improvement of one's body, but rather as shaping one's character. These included Władysław Osmolski (1928), who described the impact of physical activities on one's fitness, state of mind, as well as on the development of character. Nowadays, the key aspects of sport pedagogy for education are presented by Piotr Błajet (2010), who pointed out that the upbringing model developed by the ancient Greeks (*kalokagathia*) that has remained indivisible for many generations was torn apart during the Age of Enlightenment. This resulted in the creation of a dualistic understanding of physical education as well as sport in human development. He notes that the theory of physical education at the time broke off from the subject of pedagogical thought in favor of linking it with biomedical sciences. Undoubtedly, going

back to considering sports and physical activity from an axiological point of view is one of the challenges in modern education. As Arkadiusz Kaźmierczak rightly pointed out (2019), there are at least two reasons why this approach is important. First of all, he perceives such activity as an area of comprehensive education, which is the subject of pedagogy; second, he believes that sport in a broad sense refers to the basic canons of European humanism, i.e. the idea of peace and fair competition (Kaźmierczak, 2019).

Current problems that now affect the area of children's physical education not only relate to the issue of their health and physical fitness, which is associated with the well-known problem of exemptions from these classes, but also with the deepening crisis of values among young people (Białek, 2009; Kozdraś, 2014; Łobocki, 2010; Mariański, 2011). Therefore, in my considerations I am putting forward a thesis claiming that the perception of the idea of physical education by teachers in early school education, based on the combination of beauty and good in accordance with the ancient concept of *kalokagathia*, becomes crucial during physical education classes in school and may contribute to more effective social internalization of desirable values among children during the first stage of education.

In my opinion, adopting and applying the physical education category by teachers through the prism of two processes: physical training and physical upbringing is the key to the approach to educational practice among children at a younger school age. The former is responsible for technological competences related to improving one's body, acquiring motor skills as well as knowledge; while physical upbringing is responsible for axiological competences, during which prosocial and prosomatic attitudes are shaped (Madejski, Węglarz, 2008).

One of the models of physical education that fits in with the idea of combining upbringing and training is the concept of agonistic education, very widely described by Piotr Błajet (2008) in his publication *Outline of agonistic education*. Based on this concept's assumptions, as well as reaching for the broadly understood definitions of upbringing (Gurycka, 1979; Śliwerski, 2012), I describe the definition of agonistic education as „a complex process of preparing an individual for life through social, institutional, interpersonal, direct and indirect influences that lead to shaping such personality traits in a person that will allow them to use their natural internal strength (bravery) to manifest and implement valuable ideas, in spite of internal and external resistance” (Kozdraś, 2014).

The adopted definition allows me to state that bravery, which is triggered by sports competition (Błajet, 2010), which is often a part of physical education, as well as when the subject undertakes to overcome internal resistance to physical exercise, allows internalizing socially desirable values. Taking into account such specific nature of physical education classes, as well as the assumptions of agonistic education, I believe socially desirable values include: responsibility, righteousness, patience, kindness, modesty, reliability and courage.

Adopting such values is associated with the property of sporting competition, which on the one hand relates to the randomness of events (Błajet, 2010), as well as the constant dynamics of relationships arising between children during physical education classes, which in fact brings them closer to experiencing what they meet every day outside these classes. An example of such experiences is the joy of victory, sadness in the event of failure, but also the experience of receiving help from others, or undertaking independent actions on behalf of others, readiness to admit the truth, taking up the fight in times of doubt and many others.

It was the concept of agonistic education that fits into the paidocentric paradigm in pedagogy, which was the starting point in the developed research project, aimed at describing the state of humanization in physical education in early school education. At this point, I must emphasize, citing Dorota Klus-Stańska (2018, 2019), that the key issue for a child's development (in relation to the paidocentric paradigm) is to put them in situations of cognitive challenges and enable them to independently seek ways of thinking and acting. That is why I treat the search for ways to put pupils in a challenge situation during physical education classes as an opportunity to make them familiar of socially desirable values, and internalize said values among them.

Adopting the theoretical basis of agonistic education situated against the background of the paidocentric paradigm gives me premises to ponder returning to the practice of combining physical upbringing and physical training in one process – physical education. This is particularly vital in the context of the possibilities that school physical activity gives us when it comes to internalizing desirable, universal values among young people, as well as building strong relationships between them, which are the foundation in creating a society that understands the importance of community, tolerance, as well as responsibility for oneself and others.

Methodology

The theoretical assumptions made me examine the assessment of the state of humanization of physical education at the first stage of education, using the strategy of quantitative research in pedagogy. First of all, I focused on diagnostic tests, the purpose of which was to assess the state of humanization in physical education in relation to the frequency of externalization of the values tested by early school education pupils. These studies were also intended to show the frequency of teacher responses to observed children's behavior in the context of supporting value interiorization among the surveyed pupils. I accepted the following question as the main problem of my research: *What is the state of humanization in physical education in early school education in relation to the desired values resulting from the assumptions of the concept of agonistic education?* I have distinguished four detailed questions. The first of these concerned pupils and how often they externalize the described values during physical education classes – *To what extent do pupils at the first stage of their education manifest such values as: responsibility, righteousness, patience, kindness, courage, reliability, modesty during physical education classes?* The second detailed question related to teachers and the frequency of their response to observed behavior among children participating in physical education classes – *To what extent do early childhood education teachers use physical education classes to internalize values among pupils at the first stage of education?* The third detailed question involved assessing children's behavior during the observed activities in terms of their attitudes (desirable or undesirable) towards the situations during these classes – *Which behaviors during physical education classes dominate among pupils at the first stage of education?* The fourth detailed problem concerned indicating the dominant way the teachers react (desirable or undesirable) to the observed behavior of children during physical education classes – *Which responses of early childhood educators to the children's behavior observed dominate during physical education classes at the first stage of education?*

I assumed the value of dependent variables in all specific problems to be an indicator of the state of humanization in early childhood education. Thus, I tried to show how often the values are manifested by pupils during physical education classes, by observing them in relation to the operationalized descriptions of pupils' behavior; and also indicate which kind dominates

among them. The value of the second dependent variable was the frequency of responses on the part of the teachers conducting classes in relation to the children's behavior observed, as well as their dominant type.

To solve the research problems I used the observation method applying the categorized observation technique, covering the comprehensive physical education classes, which is a unit observation (each pupil randomly selected for the sample was observed separately), direct, explicit and passive (without the observer's interference in the course of classes). The tool of the conducted research consisted of an observation sheet containing seven categories of values, and each of these categories was described by four subcategories that were assigned to specific descriptions of children's behavior during physical education classes. I have assessed the occurring behaviors by determining whether a pupil's behavior was desirable or undesirable (taking into account the category of values in the understanding of upbringing theory) (Łobocki, 2010). I adopted a two-point scale for both behavior types – standard behavior and uncommon behavior. The observation sheet also allowed noting the situation in which a pupil undertook a specific behavior, as well as information about whether the teacher reacted in some way to the situation involving the pupil.

Figure 1. Illustrative fragment of the observation sheet for the value: *responsibility*, used during the research

No.	Category	Description of pupil behavior	Assessment of behavior presented						
			Desirable behavior			Undesirable behavior			
			Standard (Pupils adopt commonly known behaviors)	Uncommon (Pupils undertake activities that go beyond the teacher's expectations)	Teacher's response	Occurrence of a situation that requires a specific pupil attitude	Teacher's response	Standard (Negative commonly known pupil behavior)	Rare (Behavior that requires a firm response and temporary isolation of pupils)
1	rationality	In a situation of uncertainty, they ask about the correctness of performing the task assigned by the teacher							
	prudence	Performs exercises ordered by the teacher, taking care of their safety	1			1			
	reason	Responds to situations that pose a threat to exercisers							
	forethought	Anticipates situations that pose a threat to them and their exercise partner							

Source: Author's own work.

The study group consisted of randomly selected third grade pupils from Opole primary schools. Sample selection was carried out observing the principle of typological representativeness, allowing the presentation of the state of behavior among both third grade boys and girls in primary schools in Opole. In the first stage, the multilayered draw included drawing schools (at the time of the study, there were 30 facilities in the city of Opole); the second stage involved drawing classes (there were three parallel third grade classes in

all randomly selected schools each); the third stage involved drawing pupils, five boys and five girls from each class (drawing without replacement). By means of the sample selection as described above, 15 boys and 15 girls were included in the observation, five representatives of each gender from three schools. Each pupil was observed once. The study covered 30 pupils in total, who were led by qualified teachers, and their classes took place at the gym in two cases, while one took place outdoors. Such sample selection allowed describing the state of humanization in physical education classes in relation to the entire population of third grade pupils (taking gender into account) in primary schools in Opole.

Results

The research results allowed indicating the frequency of occurrence of situations that required or provoked pupils to demonstrate specific behavior. In the first table I presented the results of the frequency of observed behaviors, broken down into desirable and undesirable behaviors in relation to the values tested.

Table 1. Frequency of occurrence of studied behaviors among pupils

Pupil behavior	Maximum number of recordable behaviors at N=30	Number of behaviors noted	%
desirable	840	225	26.79
undesirable		127	15.12
no situations requiring a specific pupil behavior from a pupil		488	58.10
total			100.00

Source: Author's own work.

Taking into account all behavior subcategories, as well as the number of people observed during three physical education classes, I was able to record a total of 840 behaviors in relation to the values tested. The results in Table 1 indicate that I have noted situations in which pupils undertook a specific behavior, thus externalizing their attitude to the values tested, 352 times. In the case of 225 (26.79%) behaviors, these were desirable, while 127 (15.12%) were undesirable.

Focusing on the results of behaviors observed among children, I then analyzed the frequency of their occurrence in relation to the number of teachers' reactions to these behaviors recorded.

Table 2. Indicator of the frequency of occurrence of observed pupil behavior and teacher responses during physical education classes

Total number	Assessment of behavior observed						
	Desirable behavior			Occurrence of a situation that requires a specific pupil attitude	Undesirable behavior		
%	Standard (Pupils adopt commonly known behaviors)	Uncommon (Pupils undertake activities that go beyond the teacher's expectations)	Teacher's response		Teacher's response	Standard (Negative commonly known pupil behavior)	Rare (Behavior that requires a firm response and temporary isolation of pupils)
	213	12	7	352	8	121	6
	60.51	3.41	1.99	100	2.27	34.38	1.70

Source: Author's own work.

In the case of the frequency indicator of observed pupil behavior in relation to the number of teacher responses to said behaviors, I have shown in the studies that the vast majority of teachers do not see them, or fail to see the need to respond to situations in which the tested values are manifested by pupils. Both in relation to desirable and undesirable behaviors, the frequency of teacher responses was similar - 7 (1.99%) times they reacted by reinforcing a pupil's positive behavior; Teachers behaved in an undesirable way towards the pupils' behavior, externalizing a certain value 8 times (2.27%). The results in Table 2 also indicate a positive aspect that relates to the distribution proportion of desirable behavior among pupils compared to undesirable behavior. Desired behavior (standard) was observed among pupils a total of 213 (60.51%) times; in the case of undesirable behavior, the number of recorded behaviors was 121 (34.38%).

Considering these proportions of children's behavior, as well as the adopted two-step scale of behavior evaluation, in the next step I analyzed the test results in relation to the point value of the behaviors observed. I assumed that each standard desirable behavior would receive 1 point, whereas an uncommon behavior would get 2 points. Similarly, standard undesirable behaviors -1 point and rare -2 points. This allowed calculating the median of desirable and undesirable behaviors, which is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Median point value of observed desirable and undesirable behaviors among children

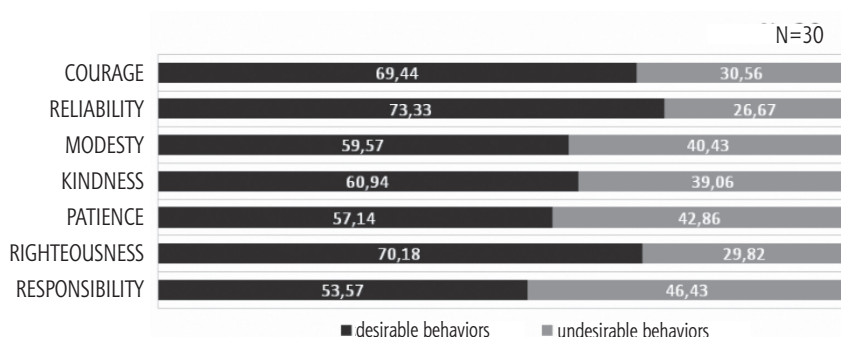
Values tested	Desirable behavior point value	Undesirable behavior point value	Median
LIABILITY	30	-26	2.0
RIGHTEOUSNESS	40	-17	11.5
PATIENCE	20	-15	2.5
KINDNESS	39	-25	7.0
MODESTY	28	-19	4.5
RELIABILITY	55	-20	17.5
COURAGE	25	-11	7.0

Source: Author's own work.

The medians for individual values presented in Table 3 show that the behavior of children is positive, which clearly indicates the dominance of desirable behaviors relative to undesirable ones. However, it may be worrying that only two values have achieved a median above 10 (righteousness, reliability). Additional detailed analysis of the points obtained in relation to the reliability category showed that such a high median result was due to the subcategory of obligatoriness, which was associated with the pupil's preparation for classes and their compliance with the rules prevailing during classes. The second subcategory that had the most impact on this reliability score was the accuracy subcategory, which described the accuracy of the pupil's performance of the exercise. As regards the lowest median, obtained in the case of responsibility, I must highlight that the main subcategory responsible for such a low evaluation of behavior in this category was forethought. This subcategory described the pupils' ability to anticipate a threat situation for the pupil themselves, as well as for classmates.

The obtained research results also show that the percentage distribution of the obtained point values, resulting from the observed behaviors, allows putting forward a thesis in which I consider that: increasing the frequency of occurrence of situations requiring specific behavior from pupils based on the described values to the level of 75.00%, as well as raising the frequency of the desirable teacher responses to the pupils' desirable behaviors, may contribute to more effective internalization of socially desirable values among pupils. I support this thesis with an analysis of the chart below, which presents the percentage distribution of point values acquired by children during physical education classes in relation to the values tested.

Chart 1. Percentage distribution of point values regarding children's behavior during physical education classes in relation to the values tested



Source: Author's own work.

Like previous results, Chart 1 shows that the dominant behaviors of children during physical education classes are those that may be referred to as socially desirable. The data included in Figure 1 also allow determining those values that require much more attention on the part of teachers in the design, planning and direct management of the physical education process. I am referring to the value of: responsibility, kindness and modesty. In all the cases indicated, the percentage of the point value of undesirable behaviors exceeded 40.00%. To some extent, these results may justify the theoretical premises associated with the individual stages of child development at the first stage of education (particularly moral and cognitive ones), but this insight should lead to a reflection on how to help interiorize these very values during physical education classes in early childhood education.

Discussion of research results and final conclusions

Considering the acquired research results, I can conclude that out of the 840 observable desirable children's behaviors in relation to the tested values, the obtained result of 225 (26.79%) should be considered low-insufficient, particularly considering the opportunities offered by physical education classes in relation to shaping socially desirable attitudes among children. Studies have also shown (Tables 1 and 2) that the teachers observed do not focus on creating situations that can provide an impulse to internalize the studied values, while also failing to strengthen those behaviors that could become a good example for other pupils and an affirmation for the right behavior of children affected by this behavior. Based on the results in Table 3 and Chart 1, I can say that the dominant behaviors among children was desirable ones, which I see as a chance for effective upbringing with values, provided that the number of situations in which children will have to take activities externalizing socially desirable values during physical education classes will increase. The research results also showed that in the vast majority of children's behaviors observed, teachers did not respond at all, demonstrating a passive attitude towards physical education, and only focused on the physical training of children (motor skills).

The above analysis allows answering the main research problem, which involved the question: *What is the state of humanization in physical education in early school education in relation to the desired values resulting from the assumptions of the concept of agonistic education?* I am assessing the state of humanization in physical education at the first stage of education as very low. There are too few situations in which pupils are stimulated to resolve moral dilemmas in relations with other participants, and the teachers' activity in relation to physical education is too low, which is the main reason for such a critical assessment of the state of humanization in physical education in early school education. This is indirectly confirmed by global research, as presented in the paper: *Primary physical education (PE): School leader perceptions about classroom teacher quality implementation* - Timothy Lynch i Gregory J. Soukup Sr. (2017). In their considerations, they highlighted that a number of global studies on physical education, particularly in the first years of primary school education, critically evaluate the quality of education in physical education, and sees the main reasons for such assessment in the difficulties of overcoming

systemic barriers by teachers, low assessment of one's own competences among early childhood educators, as well as the lack of interest and willingness of early school educators to expand their competences in physical education.

Despite the critical assessment of the state of humanization in early school education, I see a great opportunity to improve this state by paying special attention to the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the theoretical assumptions of the concept of agonistic education, which are also the starting point for further research in physical education at the first stage of education. I believe it is necessary to develop (in line with the concept of agonistic education) a set of special exercises and games for early school children, which will naturally increase the frequency of situations requiring pupils to adopt a specific moral attitude towards their colleagues. This also results in conducting experimental research, allowing the verification of the thesis regarding the effectiveness of the developed exercises and games in relation to the effective internalization of socially desirable values. In my opinion, an important step is to create a procedure for teachers of early school education to respond to unstable situations (in accordance with the adopted paidocentric paradigm) that arise during physical education classes and are a chance for more effective interiorization of values among children. The final postulate, also in line with the conclusions of global research on physical education, is to take into account the issues of humanization of physical upbringing at the stage of preparing future teachers in early school education, and creating an appropriate training system that allows supplementing and developing the latest insights in the area of physical education.

Abstract: The article describes the possibilities offered by organising humanist-oriented physical education classes at the first stage of education. As part of physical education, which includes the process of physical upbringing and physical training, a teacher has the opportunity to influence pupils not only in terms of their physical fitness and health prevention, but also in terms of socially desirable values. In the research part of the paper, an assessment of the state of humanisation of physical education in early school education was undertaken, adopting the pupils' behaviour as a subject of research, which was in turn an indicator of the manifestation of values resulting from the assumptions of the concept of agonistic education. Adopting the quantitative research strategy, the paper presents the results of diagnostic studies during which

the observation method was used in the categorised observation technique to solve the main problem. The obtained research results show a low level of humanisation in physical education at the first stage of education; they also provide rationale for expressing the thesis regarding the legitimacy of organising physical education classes in accordance with the assumptions of humanisation, i.e. combining physical education and physical training in early school education.

Keyword: early school education, physical education, humanization of physical education, values, agonistic education

Streszczenie: Artykuł opisuje możliwości jakie daje organizacja humanistycznie zorientowanych zajęć wychowania fizycznego na pierwszym etapie kształcenia. W ramach fizycznej edukacji, która zawiera w sobie proces fizycznego wychowania i fizycznego kształcenia, nauczyciel ma możliwość oddziaływania na uczniów nie tylko w wymiarze ich sprawności fizycznej i profilaktyki zdrowia, ale także w wymiarze wartości społecznie pożądaných. W części badawczej artykułu podjęto się oceny stanu humanizacji wychowania fizycznego w edukacji wczesnoszkolnej, przyjmując jako przedmiot badań zachowania uczniów, które stanowiły wskaźnik uzewnętrznienia wartości wynikających z założeń koncepcji wychowania agonistycznego. Przyjmując strategię badań ilościowych, w artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań diagnostycznych, w trakcie których do rozwiązania problemu głównego użyto metody obserwacji w technice obserwacji skategoryzowanej. Uzyskane wyniki badań wykazują niski poziom humanizacji wychowania fizycznego na pierwszym etapie kształcenia, jednocześnie dają przesłanki do wyrażania tezy, mówiącej o słuszności organizowania zajęć wychowania fizycznego zgodnie z założeniami humanizacji tzn. łączenia fizycznego wychowania i fizycznego kształcenia w edukacji wczesnoszkolnej.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja wczesnoszkolna, fizyczna edukacja, humanizacja wychowania fizycznego, wartości, wychowanie agonistyczne

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