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Federation of the Sports Pedagogues of the
Republic of Macedonia

Gradski park, Sala KK "Rabotnički" b.b.

1000 Skopje, Macedonia P.O. Box 5,

Phone: + 389 2 3220 750

Tel/fax: + 389 2 3220 750

e-mail: fsprmk@yahoo.com

URL: <http://www.fsprmk.mk>

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STUDENTS INTERESTS FOR WRESTLING AND OTHER MARTIAL ARTS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Preliminary communication

Biljana Popeska, Trajco Dimkov and Snezana Jovanova – Mitkovska

“Goce Delcev” University, Stip, Macedonia

Abstract

The study was realized on a sample of 918 examiners, pupils from third, fourth and fifth grade in five primary schools in the municipality of Stip, Republic of Macedonia, recognized as a city of many athletes included in martial arts, mainly in wrestling. Students were interviewed using a questionnaire specially designed for the purpose of the study. According to the results, 91% of students declare that would like to participate at regular physical and health education classes, 86% of pupils share the opinion that physical activity at PHE classes is useful for them and improves their well-being. From the aspect of their interest for PHE contents and possibilities for learning new sports, 72 % of the pupils stated that they are willing to try new and different sports. From the list of several sports including martial arts, the most unfamiliar sport for primary school children is badminton, followed by ping-pong and artistic gymnastics. Only 3% of the pupils are not familiar with martial arts. Martial arts were also quite popular between students. From the suggested list of sports, 312 pupils are interested in karate, 223 pupils in wrestling and 136 pupils selected judo. Based on these results for student's interests and the positive effect and benefits that wrestling and other martial arts have on children's development, we suggested several forms of implementation in current PHE curriculum.

Keywords: martial arts, badminton, ping – pong, artistic gymnastic, combat sport, judo, motor development

INTRODUCTION

The time spent in physical education and extra-curricular sport activities are recognized as vital for children's education and health (White Paper on Sport, 2007). As integral part from the educational system, physical education has important role in overall child development. According to the Berlin declaration from 2013, physical education is recognized as “most effective means of providing all children and youth with the skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding for lifelong participation in society” (UNESCO, Quality physical education, 2015, pp: 6). The values of physical education are also recognized by the European Commission and as underlined in the White Document for Sport (2007) “Values obtained through sport empower the development of knowledge, motivation, abilities and preparedness for personal achievements. Time spend in sport activities in schools and universities enables an educational benefits that should be improved” (European Communities 2007).

Based on the UNESCO guidelines for quality physical education (2015) that provide directions for quality PE in schools, quality PE curriculum is recognized as one of the key aspects for effective PE teaching process. According to the guidelines “A quality PE curriculum should promote equality and inclusion, equal opportunities. It should be with clearly defined aims and learning outcomes, to provide opportunities for enhancement of knowledge, understanding and movement skills in a broad and balanced range of activities that celebrate cultural and traditional heritage. A curriculum that promotes the development of physical literacy. A curriculum that promotes both cooperation and healthy competition, recognizes the range of differences that exist between learners and that provides diverse and challenging activities relevant to all pupils, the school, and the community setting. It should promote knowledge, skills and understanding required for maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle throughout the life course; to presents opportunities for pupils to develop core skills, such as, leadership, communication, and teamwork (UNESCO, Quality physical education, 2015, pp: 76).

Some of the directions suggested in guidelines for quality PE are implemented in national curriculum for nine – years compulsory education in the Republic of Macedonia (Bureau for the development of education, 2007), but yet, more things and changes

should be done. The current curriculum for the first stage of primary education – classroom teaching (1st to 5th grade) is composed by compulsory and optional thematic unions. Activities for proper motor development and body shaping, basics of gymnastics, basics of athletics, movement games and basics from sport games: basketball, handball, volleyball, football are realized as contents of compulsory thematic unions. Following contents: Activities on water, Activities on snow, Driving – bicycling, rollers; Activities in nature - hiking, picnics; Mini tennis; Badminton; School sports; School projects and school competitions/sport workshops are realized as optional thematic unions. These thematic unions are realized in cooperation with parents and local community and their realization is related with possibilities of local environment, natural resources and material facilities in cooperation with the local community. Also different sports and sport activities are included as compulsory or optional contents, yet it is notable that many sport activities are still missing and the children have no possibility to try or practice them. Martial arts and wrestling are one of them.

But why martial arts and wrestling?

Guided by the directions of QPE guidelines, one of the requirements from UNESCO for a quality PE (UNESCO, Quality physical education, 2015), quality PE curriculum should provide opportunities for enhancement of knowledge, understanding and movement skills in a broad and balanced range of activities that celebrate cultural and traditional heritage. Martial arts like karate, judo, taekwondo wrestling and others are some of the sports that reflects the traditional heritage and are closely related with humans struggle for survive and later for freedom and independence. They all reflect the characteristics of the place where they have been created. Considering that wrestling is the one of the martial arts that has been closely related with Macedonia and has roots on Macedonian territory, our paper will be mainly focused on wrestling. Worldwide, wrestling is closely related with the beginning of humanity. It is as one of the very first sport disciplines practiced at the Antic Olympic Games and continued this trend at the Modern Olympic Games as well. But wrestling is more than just an Olympic sport. It is a cult, legend, obligation but also and exam for each member of the society in the past.

It has no named founder, or a country of origin, or period or geographic point of creation, as many other sport disciplines. Wrestling is known among all humans and nations worldwide. It is connected with the essence of human existing, the culture, military preparation and inner needs of the human. The wrestling was created and developed as general human and historic process, polycentric all over the globe where the humans live. The very first notes for wrestling are recorded 5000 years ago.

Macedonia is not exception from this. Furthermore, it is noted as an ideal place for development and popularization of wrestling among the people. Related with continuous fight for surviving, the historic suffering of Macedonian people and their hard life, fight for justice and liberty, the unbreakable fighting spirit of Macedonian people as answer to all occupations as well as the tradition, folklore and heritage, wrestling is deeply connected with Macedonian people and their national identity. Wrestling is spread at whole territory of Macedonia and Stip is one of the most mentioned cities in relation with wrestling, together with Tetovo, Radovish and Skopje.

But, what are the benefits of wrestling and other martial arts? They are going much higher than just the tradition, heritage and fight for liberty and surviving. Wrestling empower the development of whole personality. The systematic work in wrestling helps creating a physically and mentally strong person and healthy person. Practicing different techniques of wrestling and other martial arts improves children's motor performances, their motor abilities and movement skills (Yaneva, 2016; Okiljević, Stojiljković, & Piršl, 2016; Toskić, Lilić & Toskić, 2014). Speed, agility, coordination, strength and spatial orientation are highly developed in wrestlers. Different tactic tasks that should be realized during wrestling have a positive impact on cognitive and conative development, attention, mental focus and concentration. Many famous philosophers and thinkers such as Plato, Socrates, Avicenna, Tolstoy, Lincoln and others, have underlined wrestling as tool for physical and spiritual strengthening. Practicing martial arts also improves health - related behaviors (Boguszewski, Grzegorz Adamczyk, Buda, & Białoszewski, 2013). As one of the founders of the German gymnastic schools, Jan Fit said "nothing can increase the power of muscles, like the fight man to men". Wrestling includes not just activation of muscles and brain but also all senses, the will, the confidence and the courage. It has a huge health, functional, aesthetic and educational role and impact toward development of the whole human being (Yockey, 2005). Wrestling will able students to achieve certain abilities and values such as: cooperation, communication, respecting the roles, respect for the others, abilities for problem solving, fair play, discipline, trust, leadership, accepting the win and lose, acceptance of the opponent, respect for the effort and effects from it, socialization, solidarity etc. Considering this influence of wrestling toward overall development and the positive effects that it has for the children, wrestling is included in physical education curricula of many countries such as USA, Japan, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Turkey Iran and others.

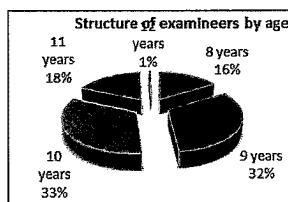
Considering their positive experiences with the implementation in the curriculum as a tool for proper development and introduction in the bases of this sport and later the effects that this early participation in wrestling had on achieving results in this sport, we decided to study the familiarity of wrestling in Macedonian perspective. Based on this we designed this study which aim is to determine the familiarity of Macedonian primary school students with martial arts, including wrestling and to determine their interest to participate in it.

METHODS

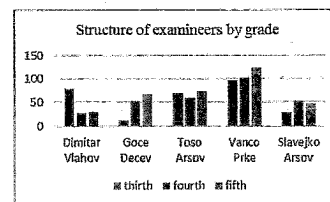
The study was realized on a sample of 918 examiners, pupils from third, fourth and fifth grade in five primary schools in the municipality of Stip, Republic of Macedonia. Following primary schools were included: primary school "Dimitar Vlahov", primary school "Goce Delcev", primary school "Tosho Arsov", primary school "Vanco Prke" and primary school "Slavejko Arsov". From the total sample of examined students, 52% or 480 are boys and 48% or 438 are girls. The study was conducted in May during the school year 2015/2016. Students were interviewed using a questionnaire specially designed for the purpose of the study. The metric characteristics of applied questionnaire were determined and they are presented in other separate study. Beside the general information related to gender, years, school and grade that they are studying, the questionnaire contained six other questions related to the object of study. Four of the questions are three item questions and two of them have more than five choices. The obtained answers were analyzed using basic statistics parameters, percents (%) and frequencies (f).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the total number of children included in our study, 52% are boys and 48% are girls. According the age, most of them or 33% are 10 years olds, followed by 32% of pupils at the age of nine, 18% at the age of eleven and 16% at the age of eight years. Only 1% of the children included in the study are 12 years old children. The structure of examiners by age is presented in Graphic 1., while the structure by grade is presented in Graphic 2. According the distribution of the children by grade, 37% are pupils in fifth grade, 32% are pupils of fourth grade and 31% are pupils in the third grade. Based on analyzed parameters for gender, grade and age, we could not prove the existence of balanced and equal distribution of study sample.



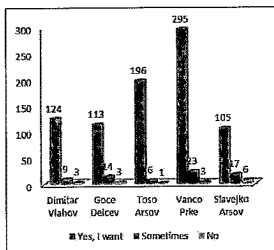
Graphic 1. Distribution of examiners by age



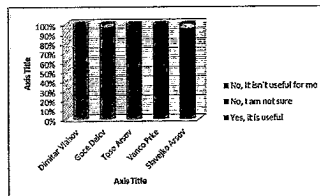
Graphic 2. Distribution of examiners by grade and school

Regarding the questions in the questionnaire related to the object and the aim of the study, students were interviewed by six different questions that refers to their interest and participation at physical and health education classes, willingness to participate in new sports and manners to do that. From the total sample of students included in the study, 91% declare that they want to participate at regular physical and health education classes, 7% declare that sometimes they want and sometimes they don't want to participate at this class, while only 2% have negative attitude and interest for PHE. The distribution of answers by schools on this question is presented in Graphic 3. This participation is also followed with positive opinion for the impact of physical activity at PHE classes of the children's well-being considering that 86% of interviewed pupil declare positive for the question: "Does exercises and physical activity are useful for you"? For the rest of the students, 13% are not sure for this and only 1% declare that they don't find useful of being physically active (Graphic 4.). The very high percent of students participating at PHE classes is a very positive moment but yet it could be also a result of the organiza-

tion of primary education where all students are obligated to attend all classes with their primary school teachers (classroom teachers). This positive moment should be used in a sense to make classes more interest and attractive to children so the obligation to be present to be also a willingness to be there and to have an active participation. The teachers should find different ways to use PHE classes in order to motivate and teach children for the positive impact that physical activity have on their health and overall well-being and also to implement various guidelines for the proper hygienic procedures that are involved before and after PHE classes.



Graphic 3. Interest for participation at PHE classes

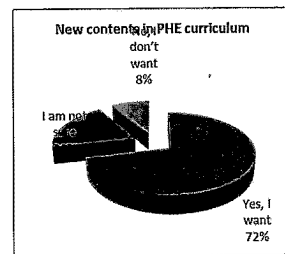


Graphic 4. Effects of being physically active

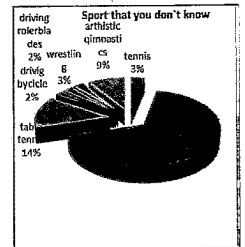
One of the basic requirements for effective PE teaching process is to be in accordance with student's interests and needs (Kukulj, 2006; Popeska & Mitevski, 2016). The current PE curriculum for primary education in Republic of Macedonia is created in 2007. and it includes realization of athletics, gymnastics, movement games, sport games – football, volleyball, handball and basketball and optional realization of outdoor activities such as hiking, swimming etc. Yet, many popular sports and different forms of physical activities are not included in any form. Therefore, one of the questions that we were interested at was whether the children are willing to try different new forms of physical activities and sports as a part of PHE curriculum such as bicycling, tennis, badminton, martial arts etc. From the total number of interviewed students. 658 pupils or 72 % declare positive, 182 pupils or 20% declare that they are not sure, while only 8% of the pupils declare that they don't want to have any new contents in the PHE curriculum. The high percents of students that want to try new contents at PHE classes suggest the need of certain redesign of the current curriculum in a sense of implementation of some new and popular sport activities. In order to determine the general interest of children, we suggested some contents that are quite popular, easy to practice with primary school children and also easy to be implanted considering that some of them don't require special additional investment in facilities and equipment. We suggested tennis, badminton, table tennis, driving bicycle, driving roller blades, martial arts (wrestling, karate, judo) and artistic gymnastics. The question for the children was: "Which from the following sports you are NOT familiar with?". According the obtained results, the most unfamiliar sport for primary school children is badminton. It is unknown for 67% of the interviewed pupils. Next on the list is ping – pong (14%) and artistic gymnastics (9%). Only 3% of the pupils are not familiar with martial arts, particularly wrestling and driving roller blades.

Logically, the next question was to determine what are the sports that children want to practice. Following sports were suggested: tennis, badminton, table – tennis, driving bicycle, driving roller blades, wrestling, karate, judo and artistic gymnastics. Children have an option to choose three sports from the list and to rank them where one (1) is for the most preferred one. Based on the ranking, most of the pupils, or 268 marked one for tennis. The next choice is driving bicycle followed by driving roller blades. From the martial arts, most

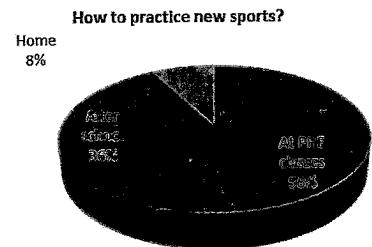
of the students are interested for karate (78 pupils marked it with one), followed by wrestling (selected by 68 pupils as first choice) and judo (selected by 28 students as first choice). If we calculate the three choices, karate is a selection of 312 pupils, 223 pupils selected wrestling and 136 pupils selected judo, what suggest that more than a half of the interviewed students are interested in martial arts as a part of PHE curriculum.



Graphic 5. New contents in PHE curriculum



Graphic 6. Unfamiliar sports for school children



Graphic 7. Manner to participate in selected sport or physical activity

Related with the form of participation in listed and selected sport, three forms were suggested: at PHE classes, as after school program and at home. Based on the obtained results (Graphic 7.), more than a half of the interviewed pupils prefer to practice the selected sport during the PHE classes (56%), 36% want to do that after school while only 8% of the interviewed pupils prefer to do that at home. These answers suggest that school remain the best place for implementation of new sports and forms of physical activity for children. This is also beneficial from several aspects. Some of them are: improvement of current curriculum and its development in alliance with children needs and real interests, equal access and possibilities for all children, educated teachers and trainers for work with children and possibility for impact toward the whole development of the children in a sense of possibilities for correlation with other school subjects and contents (Popeska & Jovanova – Mitkovska, 2016)

CONCLUSION

According the results, 91% of students declare that want to participate at regular physical and health education classes, 86% of interviewed pupil share the opinion that physical activity at PHE classes is useful for them and improves their well – being. From the aspect of their interest for PHE contents and possibilities for learning new sports, 72 % of the pupils stated that they are willing to try new and different sports, while 20% declare that they are not sure regarded this. From the list of several sports including martial arts, the most unfamiliar sport for primary school children is badminton, followed by ping – pong and artistic gymnastics. Only 3% of the pupils are not familiar with martial arts. From the list of suggested sports, most of the students selected tennis for sport that they want to in the school. Martial arts were also quite popular between the students.

From the group of martial arts, the most popular one is karate, followed by wrestling and judo. This is encouraging moment and

green light to find adequate forms and manners to work on promotion of wrestling among primary school students. The process of familiarization of children with wrestling could be done at several ways – as additional courses in schools in the frames of PHE curriculum or as an after-school program. The first approach is easy to be realized and it could be done as a course that will be realized during one week in which period, experienced wrestlers or coaches in wrestling will attend PHE classes and will present several wrestling techniques to the children. This approach will enrich the current curriculum and will be a possibility for all children to get familiar with wrestling during PHE classes in schools.

From the point of technical requirements for realization of wrestling in school, a space with mats with dimensions from 10 to 10 meters will be enough for realization of wrestling. The same mats could be used afterwards for gymnastics, acrobatics, judo and many other movement games. From the point of contents, several activities that are already in current PHE curriculum, mainly from the thematic union “gymnastics” could be also used as a pre – exercises for practicing wrestling. This means that wrestling could be easily added as an appendix to the current curriculum.

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Correspondance:

Biljana Popeska

University Goce Delcev

Stip, Macedonia

E-mail: biljana.popeska@ugd.edu.mk