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INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with questions how physical education and its potential functions can attract social interest, and how physical education can regain its rightful position in the system of general education. The paper discusses first the juxtaposition of educational principles deriving from the ongoing contest between two educational paradigms: bio-medical and socio-humanistic. Then the author attempts to describe a biopsychosocial model of physical education. Potential relationships between physical education and holistic dimensions of health education and general education are presented. It is postulated that both mentioned dimensions should lead to a reevaluation of the existing educational and social functions of physical education.

The orthodoxy of sciences and the fervent conviction of scientists about the impossibility of intellectual mastery of the holistic knowledge of Man tear apart and polarize physical culture.
(M. Demel 1992, p. 77)

The 2008 education reform in Poland created an opportunity to profoundly change the social image of physical education. Physical education teachers are faced with an exceptionally difficult task. Not only must they meet all the requirements to maintain students' universal competences enumerated by the legislators, but also deal with the conceptual transformations of physical education. Physical education is to fulfill the fundamental obligation of schools to provide students with broadly understood health education. The official statutes stipulate that: "Physical education serves significant educational, developmental and health-related functions. It enhances students' physical, psychical, social and health development and helps them form a lifelong habit of engaging in physical

activity and being health-conscious." The PE teacher becomes a factual coordinator of the whole process of health education in his or her school; however, there are no formal coordinator's offices as yet. This new status of physical education places Poland in the lead of other countries which are aware of the health and educational values of physical education at school. It should be mentioned, however, that the actual position of physical education in Polish schools has been quite different from the one presented in official documentation. A similar problem exists in many countries, as one can be read in K. Hardman's review article [11, p. 8] devoted to the prospects of physical education worldwide: "The gap between official policy and regulations and actual practices

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is geographically widespread, and pervasive factors contributing to it are seen in the development of responsibilities for curriculum implementation.” Let us then try to define the basic challenges, which if perceived or met, could result in the development of new possibilities for physical education.

CHALLENGING THE STEREOTYPICAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

It is high time now to reject the existing rhetoric assuming physical education to be a rather specific course, strikingly different from other school subjects. This argumentation has been aimed at building up the self-esteem of PE teachers and demonstrating that teaching PE requires some special skills. This strategy has backfired. What can be observed is some sort of (self-)isolation of PE teachers from other members of the teaching faculty and common ignorance of issues of the Polish school or new pedagogical tendencies. The PE teacher, contrary to his or her own convictions, has become a sort of special teacher for school celebrations, official anniversaries, trips and sports events – very helpful in maintaining school discipline. According to K. Hardman, similar problems occur in many countries. Serious debate about educational problems in school, in particular, about raising teaching standards and results, has been going on largely without any active participation of PE teachers. There is a widely held belief (tacitly shared by PE teachers themselves) that physical education has little in common with students’ learning achievements, and that it simply enhances students’ restitution necessary for their intellectual efforts in other classes. K. Hardman [11], who has studied these problems in different countries all over the world, observes that PE is often treated in schools as a secondary subject by students, parents or even school principals. PE classes are often cancelled and school gyms used as examination halls or venues for various cultural events.

CHALLENGING THE SOCIAL IMAGE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

According to a world report [10] on the state of physical education in different countries, tradi-

tionally understood physical education in schools is facing a crisis and starts disappearing from school curricula in many countries. On the basis of observations of thirty-five professors from different parts of the world M. Gerber enumerates the most important problems of physical education: low status of the subject, insufficient goal attainment, competition with existing or new school subjects, discrepancy between the didactical and societal expectancies, etc. [6]. Fortunately, this state of affairs is bound to change globally, but it still varies from country to country. “The political will and concerned consensus to reverse earlier cutback or marginalisation trends have resulted in implementation of positive programs and good practices in PE in countries and regions across the world” [11, p. 22].

Nevertheless, a peculiar effect of “dissociated personality” can be observed in the social and educational praxis. On the one hand, the physical culture community is still dominated by the ethos of the human body derived from ancient Greek tradition supported with modern biological and medical arguments. On the other hand, numerous works of philosophers, sociologists and some pedagogues of physical culture strongly indicate the relationships between the human body and culture [14, 3]. In general, however, these observations and argumentations are purely theoretical, dispersed, extensively abstract, overgeneralized and hardly related to the educational goals expected by the society at large. In effect, the educational practice and social awareness are dominated by an approach to physical education based on the development of body fitness understood as a condition of one’s good health.

CHALLENGING THE THEORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION: THE ONGOING CONFLICT OF TWO PARADIGMS

There are two competing conceptions of physical education: bio-medical and socio-humanistic. Different studies have pointed to the complexity of classification of physical education as being a constituent part of natural science and social studies at the same time. According to H. Grabowski [7 p. 10], “The construct of a coherent theory on the borderline between natural science and social studies is immensely difficult (if

possible at all), considering the differences in research methods and exposition of the world of nature and culture.”

Since the times of Jędrzej Śniadecki¹ physical education in Poland has been associated with the extension of rational and empirically verified knowledge about man in his biological dimension, i.e. with natural science. In the context of physical culture sciences A. Pawłucki [15, 16] calls it “relation to nature.” The achievements of nature science have vastly contributed to the research on different conditions of man’s physical development, fitness of the human body and possibilities of application of this knowledge in work, sport, rehabilitation, etc. The huge amount of gathered data has been used in educational or medical institutions to facilitate the functioning of the human body. Defects of nature or consequences of accidents can be successfully remedied in the process of rehabilitation; “nature” can be also tested by record-seeking athletes. There are innumerable theories explaining the principles of development of motor skills, increasing the fitness level or mastering sport techniques with physical culture means. The limitation of physical education to the biological dimension only leads to the perception of the PE teacher as a helpful individual who can restore someone’s physical fitness after a developmental disorder or diminished motor function due to some disease. These are important competences but they confine the role of a physical education expert to a moderator of physical exercises at school or a physical therapist in a hospital. In a similar way the PE teacher uses his biomedical knowledge for the purpose of sport instruction. In all cases, the human body is professionally “cultivated” by the teacher, coach or rehabilitator. It is assumed that by shaping the body also personality traits are developed. Physical culture, and therefore physical education, remains in a sort of Cartesian dualism: mind and matter being fundamentally distinct kinds of substances.

From the humanistic standpoint the human body and health should not be perceived only through stimulation of man’s physical development and fitness with physical education means. The body becomes a value conveyed in the process of

education and socialization. For the advocates of the humanistic approach the aim of physical education is not only stimulation of the body’s physiological and biochemical functions, improvement of body build or enhancement of body’s functions to achieve sport success. It is also the development of one’s personality through physical education. There is a change in the traditional body-psyche relationship. The dominant idea is that it is not exercise which alters one’s personality, but on the contrary, it is personality which makes one concentrate on the care of one’s body. This change in the perception of the body-education relationship M. Demel [4] calls re-pedagogization of physical education, i.e. education to take care about one’s own body. Another important aspect is placing the body-psyche relation in the context of general education, i.e. achievement of psychical predispositions to function effectively in the world with the use of means of physical culture (not to be confused with the body’s physical fitness).

In this way the *body* acquires a humanistic dimension in the process of physical education without losing its “physicality.” The effects of physical education on man, not only in his physical but also in the psychical and social spheres, can be subject to assessment. The care for the body becomes then a pedagogical category immanently related to the process of personality development. The significance of this category in the cultural and pedagogical sense can be determined as:

- a constituent of one’s own axiological system;
- a priority in the process of physical education;
- an objective of biological and social quality.

A pedagogue and theoretician of physical education perceives the human body, first of all, in the cultural dimension. As A. Pawłucki puts it, “Man is born as a corporeal being, without perceiving his body as sensible” [16, p. 84]. The sense of one’s own body is developed through a cultural pattern called by Pawłucki the cultural matrix. It is a sort of frame of reference, since man “has the authority to make himself different and to change the nature of his body by filling it with cultural ‘sense maps’” [16, p. 72]. Man is able to do it as he possesses the so-called “axiological reason”, i.e. a set of values which are acquired and respected. It means that the free and potentially universal development of the care about the body results from an interaction between different factors of a cultural system and the “axiological reason.”

¹ Jędrzej Śniadecki (1768-1838) – Polish physician, biologist, chemist and philosopher. Apart from his great achievements in the areas of chemistry and medicine, Śniadecki was a promoter of hygiene and dietetics as well as a pioneer of physical education in Poland.

The educational priority called “care of the body” must not merely be confined to the question of health, rehabilitation or achievement of good sports results. Although the care of the body should be developed on the pro-health grounds, its much broader objectives must be also taken into account. The aims of physical education include improvement of skills to effectively deal with the rapid changes of life in the 21st century, enhancement of self-confidence, ability to express one’s own rights, perceiving one’s freedom of choice, self-determination with regard to the habits of a healthy lifestyle, avoidance of risky behaviors related to addictions and crime, participating in cultural or national events such as traditional sports or dances and enhancing one’s feeling of national identity.

Such a declaration of the goals of physical education requires a redefinition of the traditional thinking of teachers (educators) as well as fostering the social awareness of children and parents. In school practice the aim of physical education is not simply the development of specific sport skills, but making the student aware that, for example, a specific sport feat is not an aim in itself. The purpose of an exercise for a student is to overcome fear and make an independent decision: I must do it because I have had often problems with overcoming my fear while performing various daily chores. This way of thinking about physical education makes us perceive sports skills as means necessary for developing psychological predispositions to function in the real world.

The biological model of physical education has greatly contributed to the knowledge about the biological conditions of the human body and health, but very little to education. It has failed to provide the answer to the question: What should one do to notice and use independently the means of physical culture to improve the quality of one’s own life? The model also fails to point to the significance of the relationship between physical education and the objectives of general education. On the other hand, the humanistic model of physical education is not any more in the sphere of dreams of a large group of people, who see the need to break the isolation of this branch of education.

As mentioned earlier, the new system of education greatly involves the social dimension of physical education. The school practice witnesses a concept of physical education encompassing to a large degree both the bio-medical and socio-pedagogical (pro-health, in particular) aspects. Accord-

ing to H. Grabowski, this type of approach to physical education can be called holistic. Therefore a theoretical framework should be established to describe the relationships between the elements of nature and culture constituting the entire system of physical education.

ACCEPTING (NOT ONLY VERBALLY) A BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

A biopsychosocial model of physical education should be adopted as the human psyche constantly interacts with the body, affected by the stimuli of one’s environment and work. The human body can be cultivated in the process of physical education thanks to its reactivity to physical stimuli. A personality which is favorably disposed to the body can be developed thanks the reactivity of the human psyche to social stimuli [8, pp. 9-11].

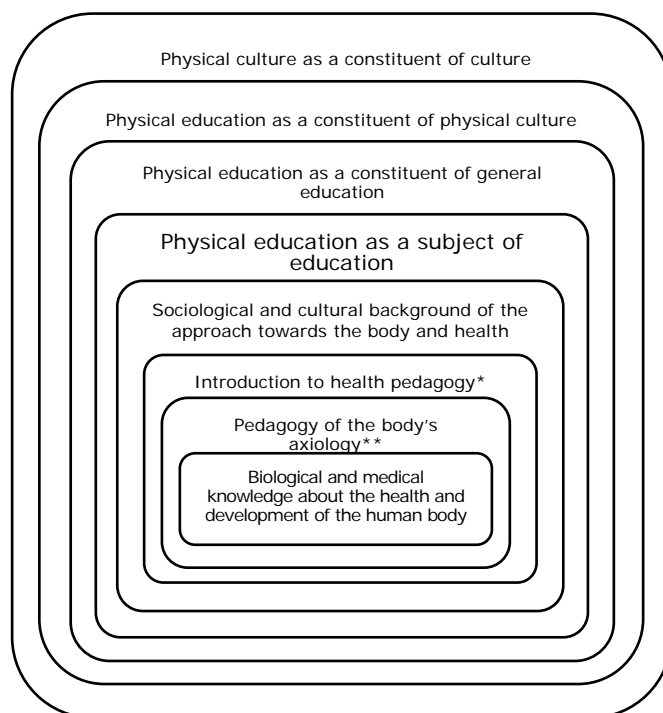


Figure 1. Physical education as a subsystem (constituent) of culture and education – organizational levels [12, p. 218].

* Health pedagogy and pedagogy of the body’s axiology are subsystems of physical education. Each constituent part can exert a different kind of influence and occupy a different position in the system, depending on its relationships with other subsystems.

** The term coined and developed by A. Pawłucki [16] as encompassing all the pedagogical aspects related to the human body defined by theorists of physical education.

A procedure illustrating the application of the biopsychosocial model of physical education is systemic description, which allows removing the methodological barrier between natural science and social studies. Systemic description attempts to analyze all natural phenomena and complex processes as a hierarchy of systems, in which each system is a subset of another [2, 1, 17]. In this way, the relations between the psyche and the body, i.e. between the biological, educational and social dimensions of physical education, can be described. Within the resultant complex entity various subsets of traits and properties can be distinguished, which affect one another in a relatively isolated manner, forming the subsequent organizational levels of the system.

The relations formed between the levels of the system can be analyzed and assessed. The multi-level system also permits selective stimulations and corrections. In the case of physical culture, physical development can be stimulated or corrected by way of exercise at the lowest levels of the hierarchy and within the relations between particular motor skills or physical fitness of the body. One must not, however, expect immediate educational effects of such stimulations or corrections, but only a temporary improvement of the equilibrium within the body's biological structure or functions. It should be kept in mind that such corrections affect the "behavior" (adjustment) of the remaining levels of the system; they do not, however, determine the final changes at all other levels. The higher levels of the system generate properties which are not a simple sum of all the processes within the system, but at each level specific phenomena emerge (for the concept of emergence, see [2, 17]).

It means that at the level called "physical education" a synthesis of nature and culture can be observed under the influence of biological determinants of the body's development, which then modify each subsequent level of the system. Human biology is modified by socialization. Although the physical education organizational levels are formally concerned with education (essentially, an element of "culture"), they have a very specific dimension combining "nature" and "culture", i.e. the biological man and the social man. The process of education must constitute the essence of all these factors. Although the goal of education has always been the same, i.e. personality development, in this particular case it assumes

a specific form, focusing on the human body through pro-health reflection and social conditions of man's attitude towards his body. Only in this sense can we talk about the specificity of physical education as opposed to other aspects of education. A similar observation can be made in reference to any other type of education: it is never of universal character, unlike general education. It means that all types of educational intervention at the higher organizational levels of the system must involve stimulation of the body through activation of the psyche, and not the other way around. Only through activation of the psyche can the learner perceive the improvements in his body and health. When educational actions take into account the lower educational level, i.e. the socio-cultural background, they can become permanent elements of a lifestyle. This type of thinking strategy and pedagogical actions are involved in the "physical education" level in the system and required from the educator. This is the crucial difference between educational actions and corrective actions of an instructor or therapist at the lowest level of the entire system.

The whole system of physical education is therefore a kind of homeostasis combining biological and social processes affecting man's attitude towards his body. The balance of the system (like of any other system) can be influenced, provided that the weakest link (links) is identified and subjected to the process of education. The weakest link must be found and then improved at a specific organizational level of a structure or a function (i.e. of biological traits but also psychical processes or even social factors). The facilitation of balance makes the system more flexible and tolerant to extrinsic and intrinsic stimuli affecting the equilibrium. It can be referred to as dynamic balance – a process of incessant, directed influences of the physician, the therapist and the teacher on the human body and psyche. Nevertheless, only some actions are covered by the term *physical education*: those affecting the personality. The point is whether educators are aware of the challenges posed by this particular organizational level of the entire system.

Realizing and understanding the mentioned regulatory mechanism must not, however, result in concluding that all corrective actions of biological (optimization of human physical development) and medical (prevention, recovery, rehabilitation) types should consider (predict) the impact of these regulations on the final form of the system. Bio-

logists, physicians, therapists and – in some specific situations – PE teachers, focus on actions at a lower organizational level of the system, trying to ensure the equilibrium at this given level. They must, however, be aware of the aforementioned mechanisms in order to understand the sense of their own actions and their limited results. The equilibrium conditions are ensured in different ways on different levels of the system. The PE teacher would achieve balance differently when he or she merely aims at the optimization of students' physical development, and when he or she intends to affect the students' attitude towards their own bodies (finding himself or herself on a different organizational level). This all requires not only different means but also methods of action.

The ability to perceive and use these observations helps us note the role and function of our activities. It does not mean that actions on the higher levels are more difficult: they are simply complicated in a different way. The bio-medical actions require advanced and complex knowledge and skills different from educational activities aimed at the development of a lifelong habit of caring of one's own body and health.

It is obvious that ensuring the PE teacher's control over the course of student's physical development does not automatically lead to the student's achievement of the habit of caring about his body in any sense. It does not mean, however, that these actions are of secondary importance as serving only the developmental and sports purposes. It is because they play specific functions within the entire system and because they take place on a given organizational level of the system. Their impact on the higher organizational levels is not more ambitious in any way; however, it may require more interdisciplinary knowledge and different teaching skills. Nevertheless, without effective processes on the lower levels of the system, the whole system cannot be facilitated despite the mentioned homeostasis effects.

Perceiving, understanding and using the aforementioned relations constitute the starting point and condition of success achievement on each level of the system as well as in the entire system itself. It is incorrect that PE teachers perceive only the actions at the first organizational level. Unfortunately, this happens far too often in school practice. In this case we do not deal with physical education but body training (A. Pawłucki's term), which can

be positive, but is a competence of a movement instructor, operating on a single level only.

Each subject should realize that his or her actions constitute parts of a greater system, and that each system has a specific aim of achievement of the functional equilibrium. The mentioned system of physical education becomes perfect only when the balance between "nature" and "culture" is achieved through stimulation of all organizational levels of the system.

PERCEIVING THE BODY IN THE HOLISTIC DIMENSION OF HEALTH

The issue of integration between physical education and health education has not been present in the awareness of a great majority of PE teachers and some theorists. Despite numerous declarations, it has not yet found its firm place in the pedagogical theory. However, as mentioned in the beginning, the legislators decreed this integration compulsory in Polish schools during PE classes. A question remains whether this valid concept will overcome the existing incomprehension or even disinterested unwillingness of some PE teachers and trainers to follow this educational model. Their potential animosities towards the new concepts may be grounded in their subconscious fear of losing the existing reference framework in PE school practice as well as in their rather poor professional preparation in the area of health pedagogy, despite firm assurances about the relationships of physical education and health education. Teacher's health competences have been confined so far to the stimulation of students' body fitness, i.e. to the bio-medical activities aimed at optimization of the development of the human body or prevention of diseases. This approach has very little in common with the biopsychosocial model of health or socio-educational actions known as health promotion. The lack of reflection upon the interaction between human physical activity and lifestyle, or references to pro-health behaviors in PE classes inhibits the development of students' awareness of the role of health and its relationship with the process of physical education. This "traditional" physical education is a far cry from the modern objectives of health education, and is at best limited

to some aspects of prevention of sports injuries, safe play and “healthy” leisure pursuits².

Health in physical education must not be perceived only in the physical domain, or rhetorically in autotelic categories (“health for health’s sake”). Building the health potential in physical education must not be instrumental for sports purposes. The student’s understanding of the relations between physical fitness and modern lifestyle requires adopting a holistic approach to health at the onset of the educational process. The learner must understand that the care of the body and health in its physical, psychical and social aspects creates a greater possibility to achieve professional success, use the benefits of modern civilization and become more open to the surrounding world and society. In this way the traditional goals of physical education should be attained with pro-health considerations. Physical education in its utilitarian dimension of preparation for work, intensification of leisure, play or sport practice should facilitate fitness and hygiene as prerequisites to undertake certain actions or procedures³. The category of *health* is a plane for realization of physical education aims.

Health is not one of objectives of physical education, but it becomes a sort of matrix for the entire educational process with its numerous social (cultural) aims. None of the traditional aims of physical education is abandoned, but each of them acquires a framework of reference: its attainment must be made in a health perspective. In this way health is not simply perceived as an accompanying factor of the *care of the body*, but as the foundation of all educational actions towards the body with their fitness, utilitarian, agonistic, esthetic and hedonistic aims. Thus interpreted, the category *care of the body and health* (following the legislators’ guidelines) becomes a perfect ground for development of a wider humanistic and social prospect of

physical education. It should be emphasized, however, that the pedagogue, physician or nurse will only become health teachers, if their efforts are “filtered” through the personality of a student or patient.

CHALLENGING PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS PART OF GENERAL EDUCATION

One of the most burning questions concerning physical education is whether the amount of time and work devoted to this area ensures academic success (or getting a good job) and social and economic advancement? According to K. Hardmann and J. Marshall [10] parents endorse physical education in school, when it openly promotes health and facilitates students’ intellectual efforts. This opinion reflects the present situation of physical education worldwide. F.M. Daniel and S. Bergman-Drewe [3, p. 37] share the same opinion citing Mc Kay J., Gore J., Kirk D. (1990): *What is left out his technocratic (education) are questions about human goals and interests. Irrespective of how technically competent teachers can be made, technocratic education does not and cannot confront the political and moral questions and conflicts in which education is inextricably involved.* The traditional model of physical education can be certainly compared to the educator’s technocratic interest in the human body. The human body becomes subject to various manipulations (mostly kind and sympathetic) in school, military service or rehabilitation. Also during sports training the athlete’s participation is usually confined to a passive following of the coach’s instructions. There is no serious reflection of the teacher or the student about possible benefits for development of psychical dispositions in the course of physical education. This sort of physical education fails to arouse the student’s interest in his or her body as well as to contribute to general education. A real challenge is to gain social conviction that physical education is an element of education which greatly increases the possibility of professional and life success. What does this all mean in the context of the new system of education?

A great task ahead of the modern system of education is concentrating on the development of numerous skills necessary for everyone to move around independently in the more and more complex world. The foundation of this system

² It is not assumed that through physical education one can achieve health in all its aspects. It is not assumed either that the care of the body always requires pro-health reflection (considerations). It can be easy to imagine other reasons for the care of the body related to fashion, profession, etc.

³ We refer here to an educational process implemented with the means and methods of physical education, not to physical culture in general, where, considering the present-day social reality, keeping the mentioned prerequisites would be very difficult without over-idealizing them, for instance, in sport or military.

consists of the so-called life skills. The necessary condition to actively involve physical education in the educational process, which inhibits the atomization of school courses and their contents, is to create an educational system based on the development of life skills. Following B. Woynarowska's [18] analysis of WHO materials, *life skills* are skills necessary to equip one with positive adaptability patterns of behaviors, thanks to which he or she can effectively deal with challenges (tasks) of daily life. The life skills include a range of psychosocial skills (competences): personal, social, interpersonal, cognitive, affective and universal. The term *life skills* does not cover the "physical" skills necessary for man's functioning (motor skills, body care), which some authors propose to call "practical" or "health" skills. Life skills, according to the WHO, include a number of psychical traits and properties constituting the basis of one's personality. Regardless of the degree of their development they can be used to form practical, health and professional skills. The degree of their development determines first of all learning, working and social successes. Thus we can state that the main idea of modern education is development of life skills. It is not an observation made on the basis of the pedagogical theory, but, first of all, a challenge to pedagogical praxis.

The potential range of life skills developed in the process of education includes:

- understanding social norms,
- ability to reach compromise,
- conflict solution,
- negotiating,
- stress management,
- self-esteem development,
- ability to make decisions,
- ability to assess risk,
- ability to cooperate and compete,
- establishing one's own hierarchy of values,
- ability to evaluate,
- time management,
- survival skills,
- controlling one's own body,
- controlling one's own language.

A PE class is an exceptional time and place, where such skills are (or at least should be) developed as quick decision making, making the right choice and overcoming fear of the new and the unknown. This aspect must be used in the process of physical education, and the proper didactic process should concentrate on these

educational aspects, not only on the traditional arguments associated with physical development, fitness, sport results or leisure. In effect, physical education should entail an improvement of one's own ability to deal with everyday situations. This awareness is formed when the educator uses physical education to develop the learner's life skills. The means of physical education should reveal to the student his or her interactions with the outside world and their significance for his or her lifestyle.

Physical education understood this way makes one aware that through active participation in a PE class, sport or different forms of recreation, he or she enhances the relationships with the outside world, understands them better, and can more effectively operate different devices or vehicles (cars, computers, etc) thanks to the improved psychomotor regulation. The process of education must make the student aware of this as the student is not able to perceive it by himself.

The task of the PE teacher is to make the student aware that the main objective of his educational actions is constant restoring, adjusting and broadening one's relations with the outside world by means of movement. Elements of sport, play and games in PE classes merely accompany the student's experience of the effects of movement on his relations with the outside world. They should not be the only aim, although at some point they provide a great deal of satisfaction from successful competition with oneself or others.

Sport competition is inherently linked to the necessity to make decisions. The question remains, however, whether a PE teacher or a coach in their analysis of the course of the game can notice the above aspects of competition or merely confine themselves to a sport analysis. Physical training or learning any sports technique requires mastery of one's own body's weaknesses. Physical exercises are commonly associated with getting thinner, health improvement or boring school chores. Students are generally unaware of the association between the exercises and acquisition of particular skills. It is sometimes after many years that we see the connection between our participation in sports or physical recreation and our daily professional duties and contacts with the outside world. No one has earlier made us aware of these relations. One cannot be successful in team sports, if he or she does not know how to function within a team. Competition must be harmonized with cooperation.

This requires making constant compromises and mastering problem-solving skills. Negotiating is a permanent element in situations associated with making rules of participation in different forms of sport. Negotiating is an important life skill to everyone. It is often stressed that participation in sport should effectively develop the understanding and acceptance of social norms by the athlete and the spectator alike. Unfortunately, these observations and arguments are not used effectively in the context of pedagogical development of the aforementioned skills. Incidents on sports fields are not used as examples by PE teachers or coaches equipped with proper pedagogical means, but rather by the public authorities. Emotional situations on a sports pitch or during important sports events can serve to pedagogues as excellent teaching resources (without the emotional load). The sense of the teacher's actions is not only the attainment of a good sports result but – to the same extent – shaping the learner's social skills. It also applies to sports coaches, but in their case the public pressure on achieving good sports results limits their pedagogical perspective.

The same problem, without, however, references to the concept of life skills, was discussed by W. Lipoński [13, p. 155], *Sport is the best educational medium since it utilizes the learner's natural and spontaneous psychophysical traits as well as extra-sport aims. The latter are not only physical or health-related – as claimed by the advocates of the biological approach to physical education and sport – but also humanistic: moral, volitional, cultural and cognitive.* This point of view, represented for a long time by some physical education theorists, can be easily incorporated into the modern concept of general education and it directly refers to the process of development of life skills. This understanding of physical education affirms the earlier observations that actions aimed at the proper development of physical fitness are not the fundamental objective of physical education, although it would be rather difficult to contradict the statement that physical development and body fitness do influence good health or life or sport success. This apparent contradiction can be, however, explained. The experiences gained in the process of physical education, patterns of behavior, knowledge and skills facilitate the development of the aforementioned life skills. However, these life skills developed in the process of physical education allow the contribution of physical development

and physical fitness to a more active and healthy lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

The main question regarding the above deliberations is how to gain social interest in the potential functions of physical education, i.e. how to restore the rightful place of physical education in the system of education in general. It seems that the bio-medical arguments, although well-founded and highly significant to health and physical development, fail to arouse an interest in physical education in the modern world, apart from their verbal acceptance. It has been shown in a number of reports concerning the current status of physical education, e.g. H. Grabowski's [8] study *Co każdy powinien wiedzieć o wychowaniu fizycznym?* (What one should know about physical education?). The attractive presentation of physical education in its cognitive and educational dimensions has so far drawn little attention from the outside world of the physical culture community.

It is very difficult to convince many people to physical education in the era of computers and the Internet, using only the knowledge and views of the physical education community. New arguments must be sought outside the specialist ways of thinking. Extensive references to modern educational tendencies must be found, and the relationships between physical culture and current social priorities should be facilitated. It points, first of all, to the necessity to indicate the existing and possible connections between physical education and general education. Another, hitherto neglected but close to social expectations, aspect is the health dimension of physical education in the context of health promotion. These two aspects have redefined the educational and social functions of physical education in the new concept of general education. The system of physical education with its biopsychosocial characteristics and specific means should open up, like education in general, to people's various expectations.

The biopsychosocial nature of physical education imposes the necessity for teachers and students to perceive the educational process as a mixture of biological, psychological and social aspects. It means that the existing bio-medical basis should be extended, and the humanistic dimension of physical education should be accounted for. The main objective is to use physical education in the

process of versatile development of creative individuals, who aim for independence but also live in close relation to one another. Physical education should produce a person who develops his or her cognitive, emotional, volitional, and instrumental dispositions towards the body on the basis of health, in interaction with his or her social and cultural surroundings, in accordance with the accepted system of values. Physical education should not be regarded as an aim in itself, but as an important means in the development of the expected coherence of one's personality traits. Through physical activity and experiencing various forms of physical exercises one becomes aware of his or her body and improves the relations with himself or herself and the outside world.

Human physical activity has no humanistic value, if it merely leads to an improvement of physical fitness or temporary strengthening of one's health potential. Only if an individual establishes and strengthens his or her relations with the outside world and integrates with society through movement and physical activity, can the humanistic dimension of physical education be seen. The social perception of this dimension increases, but this vision of physical education still remains an intellectual challenge to teachers.

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