

BOOK REVIEW

Wiesław Osiński, *Teoria Wychowania fizycznego (Theory of physical education)*, Seria: Podręczniki, no. 64. AWF, Poznań 2011, pp. 409.

Recently there have been out quite few books on physical education in the English world of Sport Sciences to mention Contemporary Issues in Physical Education – international perspective, edited by K. Hardman and K. Green and published by Meyer&Meyer Sport in 2011 or Learning to teach physical education in the Secondary School. A companion to School Experience by S. Capel, published Routledge Falmer in 2005 or The Routledge Physical Education Reader edited by R. Bailey and D. Kirk in 2009. These books provide a reader with a broad scope of topics ranging from values and curriculum designs and contents to the methodological problems of teaching and learning in physical education (and sport) combined with health.

But it is not often when a similar comprehensive book is published by a non-English academic in Sport Science. Therefore, for the benefit of all the parties interested in physical education, it seems reasonable to share and exchange the most valuable ideas presented by the two parallel ‘worlds’ of sport sciences. *Teoria Wychowania Fizycznego (Theory of physical education)* a book published by highly recognized and reputable scientist – professor Wiesław Osiński – is a good example of such a unique compendium in the area of Sport Sciences. Osiński has been involved in the development of the theoretical foundations of physical education for almost four decades and in his latest book a reader can feel that perspective. His long-term experience as an expert in the field has enabled him to show an overview of the changing statues of physical education over the years (actually over centuries), and in various historical and political contexts. But Osiński goes even beyond that, when he presents developing concepts of physical education in Poland against changes taking place at the same time in this area in other European countries.

In eleven chapters, well-referenced and very well-edited, author goes from ancient philosophy of human education in Ancient Greece, with its *kalos kagathos*, to visions of physical education in the future. Chapter I unfolds history of development of academic teaching in physical education with setting of the first Polish University Departments of Physical Education in 1919 and goes to Chapter II, in which Osiński in a chronological order lays out the context of the development of physical education aims, research studies and definitions concerning the field. This brings a reader to Chapter III where Osiński explains how the term ‘physical culture’ should be seen and how physical education, recreation and leisure, sport as well as tourism fit in that overall scheme of physical culture. This is an excellent example of a well premeditated and neatly described theoretical framework for anyone willing to study meanders of Sport Sciences – rooted in the historical context, bridging the past and the future – is a ‘must’ for every young academic-to-be, should they want to have a solid foundation in what they are really going to research in their academic career. In chapters IV to VII authors evolves on the teaching-learning process in physical education, showing models and determinants influencing effective teaching. Chapters VIII and IX give a reader a broad scope of interactions between physical education and physical activity with its ‘pros and cons’ and how those influence one’s health statues and quality of life in more general sense, in main areas of effects – healthy lifestyle, prevention of diseases, coping with stress and therapy of disorders. Osiński describes types of physical activity and deals with such important issues in physical education as gender, age and morphological constituency. A western-bound reader would probably complain on not tackling racial and ethnical problems, but adding these to the book would be somehow artificial as, at least as for

the moment, those matters are not a real problem in Poland. Of course, with integrating Europe and all borders open, this may change in the future and even countries like Poland should be prepared ahead. Thus, there is something to improve on in that book, should there be the next editions. Final chapters deal the future of physical education. Osiński criticizes present model of physical education and gives arguments for the changes and indicates directions for the further development.

Publication of this book coincided with a reform of educational system in Poland, but changing the system and even providing teachers with appropriate resources and teaching manuals is always only a part of an evolution. Although good theory always should proceed good practice – it is easier said than done. Osiński concludes his book with a chapter on PE teachers, their professional training and teaching career. For those, who are willing to work in the field of physical culture, it may be important to recognize differences between a physical education teacher, a sport coach and a leisure instructor. Academic teaching (and studying) in Sport Sciences has also been included in that chapter to emphasize the importance of university studies in that area.

Although it is a book on theory it is an important voice in Sport Sciences in practice. Each chapter is supported with findings from well-designed research projects illustrated with numbers, graphs and situated in international perspective. All young (but also those experienced) academics from different countries should have a look into that book. Knowing also the western literature in that context, I can recommend it with responsibility and should anyone disagree – feel free to write to the author (osinski@awf.poznan.pl) – never mind the book is in Polish. Is there anyone left in this world, who doesn't know how to use the Google translators?

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