

*Elena Karpuszenko*

## **UNDERESTIMATED EDUCATION THROUGH SPORT**

Nowadays, the emphasis is on searching for solutions to support education and development of children and young people. However, more attention should be paid to the comprehensive benefits of sport and recreation since physical activity has a multifaceted effect on development of a person. With regard to physical development, physical activity improves fitness and physical capacity, whereas in the area of mental development, it helps develop constructive methods to cope with stress and tension and it improves self-esteem, teaches persistence, responsibility and consistent work. Sport and recreation cannot be underestimated also in the area of social development as they help develop a number of social skills, principles of community life and healthy competition and satisfy the needs for adventure, e.g. through survival training. All these benefits of sport and recreation are particularly important from the standpoint of working with difficult and socially maladjusted young people.

**Keywords:** sport, recreation, comprehensive development, youth at risk, prevention.

The main focus of the discussions on contemporary reality, including those in the field of the humanities, is on the negative manifestations observed in social life. The researchers in the field of pedagogy emphasize pathologization of family life and the increasing problem of parents not taking enough responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children. Furthermore, schools ceased to be supportive in their upbringing function while it continues to pass on knowledge. A number of scientific publications have described profiles of young people pictured as socially maladjusted, lacking in role models to follow and using wrong (from the standpoint of the adults) systems of values. This picture of young people is supplemented by the reports on excessive consumerism among young people, their over-susceptibility to the effect of media and peers, dominated by violence and psychoactive drug abuse.

The above description of young people is based on the reports from the surveys, thus presenting a reliable part of the reality. However, it is surprising that while seeking solutions to current problems, the measures and means used are becoming more and more radical. The need for more effective prevention is being emphasized in different domains of the pedagogical practice. And, if this measure fails, resocialization or therapeutic methods are often regarded as necessary.

In many cases, in fact, it is necessary to take concrete actions. However, it seems that more emphasis should be on upbringing, which is one of the most fundamental tasks for both pedagogues and parents, and its effect on young people. There are a plethora of definitions of upbringing present in the literature. They have been formulated from the standpoints of various sciences that deal with this problem and result from different perception of humans and their roles in the process of education.

In general, upbringing is considered in both broader and narrower contexts. The comprehensive approach to upbringing encompasses «any influence on a human that helps them develop personal individuality» [M. Nowak, 2008, p.189]. The broader understanding of upbringing encompasses both positive and negative manifestations of the effect of social, family, peer and school environments or media, on humans.

The narrower meaning is understood as «any influence on a person in care planned with a particular purpose and in a particular situation [Ibid., p.190]. With the narrowest approach, upbringing is understood to mean «an intended influence on the emotional and volitional domains of an individual or striving for inculcate particular attitudes, skills or personality traits in young people [Ibid., p.191]. The above approaches to upbringing point to its intentional and purposive nature and even to the effects one aims to achieve.

Given the specific nature of contemporary social reality, it is essential to adopt a particular concept of understanding humans and the related approach to upbringing, since it is possible in the post-modern society that a number of role models and patterns of conduct might co-exist at the same time. Depending on the selected approach, upbringing is generally understood as: a process of development, which takes into consideration the activity of the young person; interpersonal relationships that lead to mutual modification of behaviours or conscious activity which is aimed at helping young people acquire a varied repertoire of behaviours and attitudes [Ibid., p.192-197]. However, regardless of whether upbringing is considered as making the desired changes in the development or as assistance during development of an individual, it appears essential to facilitate young people functioning in their future adult lives, taking into account their needs and expectations.

Due to the complexity of psychosocial development of a person, the theory of education distinguishes between the following domains: intellectual, moral, physical, health and religious education. Without going into theoretical details, one should emphasize sport, recreation and general physical culture as examples of the educational means. A number of studies have demonstrated that young people at different age often prefer recreation and sport activities over other forms of education [B. Fatyga, 2008, p.3-11].

Throughout the history, physical exercise and physical activity have been always an essential factor in human development. In prehistoric times, physical fitness was a prerequisite for survival, although it was subordinated to learning specific skills that helped satisfy basic needs (food, safety, protection from cold etc.). In ancient times, both in the countries of the Far East and those in the basin of the Mediterranean Sea, physical education was an essential factor in preparation for social life and work and took an important part in education of children and young people. In the life of family and society, games and playing based on physical exercise that helped people spend their leisure time were very important. The physical exercise was approached as acquiring physical fitness competencies that could be during the fight (Spartan system) or as an element of comprehensive development of a person (Athenian system). Although in the

Middle Ages physical fitness was neglected, a number of forms of recreation (games and plays) were developed. The next periods of human history saw extensive development of knowledge about human body and, consequently, theory and methodologies of physical education.

From the standpoint of the objectives of upbringing viewed as a comprehensive development of an individual and preparing them for living in society, one should also emphasize inculcation, in young people, of the need for active participation in the culture, including the physical culture. In pedagogical activities it is essential to teach children how to spend their leisure time actively and take care of their own health. These tasks are performed by physical culture, which is understood to mean «...all the values which are connected with the physical shape and physical functioning of a human, both from their subjective point of view and in the socially objectivized picture. In general, these values relate to health, body build and posture, resistance, physical capacity, fitness and physical appearance. They are of dynamic character, form human views and attitudes, thus being a part of the outlook on life and human customs» [M. Demel, in: J. Bielski, 2005, p.31].

This approach emphasizes the importance of care for development, physical and mental health and its effect on formation of social attitudes. Inculcation of love of physical culture means physical education of children and young people. Therefore, it includes both acquisition of instrumental competencies and promotion of health values and physical activity. The forms of participation in the physical culture are sport, recreation and rehabilitation.

With traditional approach (biotechnical concepts), physical education was considered as «body shaping», while its more humanistic understanding relates also to the «...intended formation of a new set of attitudes, beliefs and values» [W. Osiński, 2002, p. 38-40]. In biotechnical terms, the primary aim of the physical education is development of physical competencies and skills and the secondary focus is on influencing other areas of personality. With the latter approach, the influence on the whole personality of a young person is emphasized. The influence is achieved through a variety of recreational and sports forms that take into consideration the developmental needs of young people. Therefore, it seems legitimate to understand *physical education* as proposed by Władysław Pańczyk: «... an emotional process and practical development of physically active lifestyles based on realization and meeting developmental and health-related human needs using means of physical culture» [W. Pańczyk, K. Warchol, 2008, p.61]. The main objective in this domain of educational influence is not only to support physical development of a person, but also that physical education should contribute to development of personality traits, values and views of a person.

The objectives of physical education include aiming at comprehensive development of an individual, acquisition of motor skills and abilities, and competencies in the field of caring for health and hygiene, stimulation of the sense of responsibility for your own development and treating your own health and psychophysical fitness as a skill. Therefore, they are consistent with the general objectives of education as they concern personality changes and acquisition of instrumental skills [J. Bielski, 2005, p. 42; W. Osiński, op. cit., p.53-54].

The following functions can be emphasized in physical education [W. Pańczyk, K. Warchoń, op. cit., p.64-68]:

- stimulation: this concerns human development stimulated by physical activity (biological factors allow for physical development, whereas the social factors are helpful in encouraging young people to live healthy lifestyles);
- adaptation: supporting adaptation of human body to variable conditions of living; this function is connected with strengthening of human body in both physical terms (e.g. toughening) and mentally (e.g. stress-related coping strategies);
- compensation: connected with compensating for the deficiencies in physical and psychosocial development;
- information: passing on the knowledge about physical culture, necessity of caring for your own health and knowledge about the relationships that occur between physical development and other fields of human functioning;
- being a role model: making young people realize the values of health and physical fitness and inculcating the awareness of the importance of lifelong participation in the physical culture;
- hedonistic and recreational function: ability to take pleasure and relaxation in physical activity.

Analysis of the functions of physical education points to the necessity of a broader use of sport and recreation in education of children and young people. There are a variety of changes that are occurring in social and natural human environments, which often have adverse effect on human development. Environmental pollution, chemical foods, climate change, new viruses and allergens force humans to adapt to current environmental conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the resistance of human body, with particular focus on children and young people that are just developing.

On the other hand, it is young people who are required to take a substantial effort connected with learning at school, prepare for studying at universities and becoming professional employees. Therefore, it is also essential to develop stamina. Another contributing factor is the modern model of living in society, where the emphasis is on being successful and achievement of better and better results while failures are viewed as decreasing value of a person. In this context, the fundamental factor in education of young people is development of resistance to stress and failure and learning constructive methods of releasing your negative emotion and stress (instead of taking drugs, psychoactive substances or moving to violence).

Another educational task is connected with the health status of children and young people. There are more and more reports on increased morbidity among children and young people, including the morbidity concerning diseases of affluence such as: obesity that results from improper diets and lack of physical exercise, allergies or neuroses. Insufficient care for hygiene of working leads to postural problems. Furthermore, parents who are focused primarily on their children's learning performance tend to help children get fake sick

leave so that they do not have to be absent during physical education classes, not to mention that they do not even encourage them to physical activity. It is also remarkable that physical education is given too little attention in the didactic and educational processes.

Another educational challenge connected with social transformations is establishing proper interpersonal relations and teaching social skills such as cooperation or collaboration. In the society oriented to competitiveness and being successful, human value is perceived through individual accomplishments, whereas the most values formed through upbringing include cooperation, understanding and being helpful. Furthermore, intensive development of media (virtual reality) and excessive involvement in work leads to weakening of social ties and disturbances in interpersonal relationships.

Therefore, one should emphasize the advantages of sport and recreational activities and opportunities of using them in education of children and young people as they have essential and comprehensive effect on physical, psychical and social development of an individual. Physical activity (exercise, sport or recreational activities) positively affects physical growth of young human body. Physical exercise helps develop muscular and skeletal systems, improve overall physical fitness and stamina of human body. During the period of adolescence, development occurs unsymmetrically, whereas physical exercise improves body build and motor coordination. Another benefit is improved self-esteem and self-perception of teenagers as very attractive.

Sport and recreation activities improve body's oxygen transport, capacity of the cardiorespiratory system and the body removes toxins more efficiently. The effort involved in physical activity will be conducive to general improvement of physical capacity and human body resistance. The educational aspects of sport and recreation also include learning proper diets. If young people (similar to adults) want to maintain good body shape and good health, they must follow properly balanced diets. An essential element in sports is proper performance of exercises so that they do not lead to injuries. These skills are also useful in everyday life e.g. during cleaning (stooping or lifting heavy things). However, in order to teach young people good habits in this field, it is necessary to show them the relationships between physical activity, nutrition and maintaining health.

It is important in sport or other types of physical exercise to properly manage energy and properly breathe. Learning proper breathing technique is the basis for relaxation exercises which «consist in a reduction in the inflow of impulses to the central nervous system and ensuring optimum conditions for relaxation» [T. Sidor, 2001, p.79]. There are a number of situations that cause stress or negative emotions in everyday life. Both young people and adults often seek «simple» methods to release emotions or stress. Consequently, they start taking drugs, drink alcohol, overuse psychoactive substances or become violent. Inability to release stress and frustration leads to neuroses, lack of acceptance of society or even problems with the law (since drugs are illegal and violence is a criminal act). From the pedagogical standpoint, one of the advantages of starting physi-

cal activity is increased resistance to stress and psychical fatigue [M. Konopczyński, 2006, p.243]. Furthermore, properly taught and interesting sport and recreation activities help young people learn constructive methods of coping with stress or negative emotions. Regular participation in sport activities shows that varied physical activity is an effective and socially acceptable method of releasing negative emotions. In addition, sport and achievements in athletic competitions necessitate physical fitness.

Among the psychical effects of the measures used in physical education is enhanced self-esteem of the adolescent person. During the period of adolescence, being a member of a peer group is very important. On the one hand, adolescence is a period of intensive interest in the opposite sex, but the attractiveness of a human is measured mainly by physical appearance: girls are attractive when they are slim whereas boys should be muscular and physically fit. Physical exercise helps shape the body and, consequently, improves self-esteem of a person. Furthermore, in peer groups, particularly among boys, good physical fitness and sport skills are highly valued. Therefore, young person's self-perception as a competent and effective person in this field will affect the change of the self-esteem and consequently improve interpersonal relations.

The values of using sport and recreation in education of young people includes acquisition of a variety of social skills in the process of physical activity. Physical recreation is generally understood to mean physical activity taken for pleasure and relax [T. Sidor, op. cit., p.78]. Different forms of physical activity (strength training, team games, a variety of excursions) help manage time in an attractive way and represent an acceptable way of satisfying a natural need for physical activity.

Young people are more and more often getting involved in new forms of physical activities (e.g. acrobatics, modern dance). However, regardless of a sport or a form of recreation, these classes help develop additional interests and meet the needs for being a member of a peer group and being accepted by the community. Furthermore, to young people, especially those exposed to risk of social maladjustment, the need for proving themselves in extreme conditions and experiencing intensive emotions is very important. Such conditions are offered by mountain hikes, canoeing, climbing or different survival camps.

However, the most important benefits of sport include acquisition of the social competencies which are also useful in everyday life. Team games, participation in camping trips, excursions or sport competitions necessitate cooperation and collaboration towards achievement of success. Regardless of the discipline, the principles of honest rivalry are used in sports. With internalization, the fair play rules are more and more often used in the everyday life. However, in order for this to occur, the attitude and a role model of a coach or a teacher is essential. Proper attitude towards winning and losing will influence performing social roles. Some components of competition are observed today in both schools and professional life. In societies which value only success, each failure is considered as a sign of incompetency, whereas sport competition teaches young people

that you do not always win and not always lose and helps enjoy the opportunities for proving yourself (without questioning competencies and skills) and spending leisure time together.

Physical activity is also a form of compensation for behavioural deficits. The problems with education of young people include the lack of life skills, insufficient socialization (teenagers increasingly show symptoms of social maladjustment), improper systems of values or improper relation to health. The interest of young people with forms of physical activity allows for compensation for these deficiencies. Furthermore, they learn self-discipline and postponing the rewards and gratification [A. Marzec 2008, p.67]

In order to conclude on the importance and value of using physical activity in education of children and young people, we use the words given by J. Nowocień, who argued that «... ideas of sport, organized within a system of norms and laws, used in the didactic and educational school processes, are conducive to formation of the attitudes of commitment, persistence, strong-mindedness, courage and decisiveness. This helps consider sport as an important means of socialization and upbringing» [J. Nowocień, 2006, p.923].

Furthermore, in order to effectively use sport and recreation in upbringing of young people, two types of changes have to occur. On the one hand, the attitudes to structured activities (physical education classes) by both students and teachers must be modified. This involves restoration of the upbringing function rather than only teaching function in educational institutions and ensuring attractive forms of physical activity for students. Although recent proposals of the Ministry of Education suggest changes in the approach to physical education and more freedom in organization of sport and recreation activities at school, more comprehensive changes in the system of education are necessary in order to effectively implement education through sport. The second type of changes is connected with changes in functions of the social system. This means in particular realization of the value of physical recreation and its importance to proper existence of human in society. Therefore, regular education of society aimed at health promotion is essential. On the other hand, it is important to create different attractive options for spending leisure time (fields, cycle routes, swimming pools etc.).

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Сьогодні ми шукаємо все нових і більш ефективних рішень, які сприяють вихованню і розвитку дітей і молоді, тоді як варто звернути увагу або скоріш нагадати про переваги і всесторонність спорту та рекреації. Фізична активність всебічно впливає на розвиток індивіда: у сфері фізичного розвитку покращує стан здоров'я і життєздатність; у сфері психічного розвитку навчає конструктивних способів звільнення від напруження і стресу, формує самооцінку, навчає витривалості, відповідальності і систематичності. Спортивно-рекреаційна активність відіграє значущу роль у сфері соціального розвитку індивіда – розвиває суспільні вміння, навчає принципів співжиття, здорового суперництва, співпраці, а також дозволяє заспокоїти потреби у пригодах, як напр. у випадку виживання. Усі ці переваги спорту і рекреації особливо важливі в роботі з проблемною і непристосованою молоддю.

**Ключові слова:** спорт, рекреація, всебічний розвиток, молодь групи ризику, профілактика.

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