



RESEARCH ON THE COMPETENCIES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS CONCERNING THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION OF PUPILS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research is to establish the competencies of the pedagogical specialists working in the system of primary education regarding the methodology of teaching physical culture and to derive the respective conclusions and recommendations. The methodology used in this research is based on inquiry among pedagogical staff. Diagnosing the competencies of primary school teachers on the problem would help to develop and implement a system of methods for raising the qualification of pedagogical specialists on the methodology of teaching physical education in primary schools. The increase of the levels of physical capacity of the students at primary schools directly correlates with the professional training of the pedagogical specialists. The urgency of the problem stems from the fact that in recent years there has been a tendency to increase the levels of hypokinesia among students, which in turn leads to an increase in body mass index and respectively to many diseases of both the musculoskeletal system and internal organs and systems. In conclusion we consider that primary school teachers need a better qualification in the field of physical education.

Key words: sports, methodology, education, pupils

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced daily life, an increasing number of pupils from an early age suffer from various modern diseases related to hypokinesia, a major problem of physical education. A main goal of physical education is to ensure balanced physical, mental and social development of man, which is the main element for social and cultural development in modern education. In the physical education and sports classes, the problems related to strengthening the health, physical and mental development of pupils as well as the development of motor skills are largely solved. The various elements of a physical

lesson are not only a means of achieving good physical shape and improving health condition, but also one of the best educational methods. They are a means of moral, aesthetic and intellectual improvement of the personality. For this reason, training in physical education and sports takes an extremely important place and is of great significance for the Bulgarian educational system and in particular for the primary school. The most important element for the implementation of a successful sports pedagogical process are the teachers of physical education and sports in the educational institutions. Sports pedagogues ensure the sports education in educational institutions. In the primary school very often the primary teachers teach the physical education classes. A main task of primary school teachers teaching physical education and sports is, together with the development of students' motor skills, to increase

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their physical and mental stability as well as to create lasting interests and habits for sports activities, both in class and after school. For this reason, the quality of physical education in school largely depends on increasing the knowledge, skills and competencies of primary school teachers who teach physical education and sport. The problems related to the methodological training of primary teachers in this discipline are an extremely pressing concern. Options are constantly sought to support them from a technical and methodological point of view (1). The relationship between the development of the teacher's personality and the qualification process is directly related to the external influences in the "entrance" of the qualification process and the internal states of the personality, already formed ideas, concepts, attitudes, emotions, interests and abilities. (2)

The competencies of the pedagogical specialist teaching physical culture mainly concern his preparation for organizing and conducting the educational process, the means, methods and approaches for teaching the planned educational material in primary school and others.

In order to ensure a quality educational process by primary school teachers, it is necessary for them to periodically participate in a number of qualification courses related to the methodology for teaching physical education and sports at school. The qualification of the pedagogical specialists is left entirely in their hands, each teacher decides when, how many and what types of training to attend in order to upgrade and supplement their professional competencies. The external factors of the continuous qualification process create conditions for the development of the teacher's personality, but the source of this development remains primarily the internal contradictions: between the new tasks and the acquired ways of thinking and behavior; between needs, interests and aspirations, as well as the development of abilities; between the acquired opportunities and the objective relations to the environment and society. (2)

Apart from the qualification of the pedagogical specialists teaching physical culture in primary school, many other factors that influence the educational process in physical culture are extremely important, for example the sport

facilities, teaching tools and instruments, the various curricula and many more. The high qualification of the teachers, teaching this subject, is a factor that leads to the building of students' values and orientations for a conscious and positive attitude towards physical exercises and a healthy lifestyle. With the right approach in education and upbringing, the young person acquires the ability to think independently, to cope with the tasks assigned to him, to get to know himself and the reality around him. (3)

The main function of the subject physical education in primary school is to lay the foundations of students' sports and health culture. The educational goals of the physical education programme in primary school are aimed at improving the naturally applied movements and at mastering new skills for performing combat, general developmental exercises and games. The process of training in physical education in primary school is mainly of a practical nature. The legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria introduces an additional third class of physical education and sports in the primary school curriculum. This provides a wide range of additional opportunities for the introduction of non-traditional sports and attractive physical activities for a better physical development of the body of adolescents, as well as to improve their health. Through the introduction of additional physical activities, by teachers in primary school, the students' motivation increases, their physical culture is improved, interest in sports is formed. The methods and means of physical education help to counteract many challenges facing modern society, some of which are: aggression, hypodynamics, diseases of the musculoskeletal system, obesity and many others. Today's students are impatient. They look for quick prosperity without much effort, show a lower degree of concentration and a high level of individualism. Young people are less likely to read books, they use computers and portable electronics on a daily basis, spend hours on the Internet and often show hyperactivity. (4,5) The main goal we set with this research is to diagnose the competence of primary school teachers for teaching physical education and sports in school. With this research, we also found out to what extent the pedagogical specialists from primary school are familiar with and how they apply the

ordinance for assessment of the physical capacity of the pupils from first to fourth grade.

METHODS

The research includes 79 teachers majoring in primary school pedagogy aged between 32-61 years, practicing the teaching profession on a permanent employment contract, of which 6 men and 73 women. The studied number of teachers are from the cities of Razgrad, Popovo, Sliven, Sofia district, Silistra and Blagoevgrad district.

The research tools include:

- Survey
- Competency assessment test in PE

A survey was conducted to define the level of teachers' competence on various aspects of physical education in primary education, and it included 6 closed-ended questions.

The test for assessment of competencies includes one question concerning the legislation and four questions from the theory and methodology of physical education and sports. Each of the questions has a different degree of complexity, with the maximum number of points on the test being 85 points. A minimum of 40 points is required to be considered successful. The scale used to evaluate the test is as follows: from 10 to 40 points - low level of competence, from 45 to 60 points - medium level and from 65 to 85 points - high level of competence.

Descriptive statistics and content analysis were used to process the results.

The data from the research gives us the opportunity to make an analysis and on its basis to draw the relevant conclusions about the teachers' previous experience in the context of the research, to study their attitude to improve

their skills, as well as to make summaries of their sports-pedagogical process.

RESULTS

The first part of the survey concerned the profile of the surveyed teachers. To the question, from the survey among primary teachers, concerning their pedagogical experience, it is noteworthy that most of the respondents have more than thirty years of work experience and a very small part of them have up to ten years of experience - 17 of the surveyed pedagogical specialists. The data for the distribution of the pedagogical experience among the primary teachers is presented in **Figure 1**. Interesting is the distribution of the answers to the question concerning the acquired professional qualification degree Fig.2 where 50 of the surveyed teachers have the first two qualification degrees, and the larger percentage of these 50 teachers have a fourth professional qualification degree. We attribute this to the fact that these two degrees could be protected with the knowledge acquired in the higher schools in the respective specialty, while for the other professional qualification degrees the need for acquiring additional knowledge, skills and competencies is ascending to the level of professional qualification. We believe that this is the reason why only 4 of the respondents have the first professional qualification degree. The predominant positions held by the surveyed pedagogical specialists are respectively 15% teacher and 75% senior teacher. The distribution of the results regarding the acquired educational degree is relatively homogeneous. 56% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree and 44% have a master's degree.

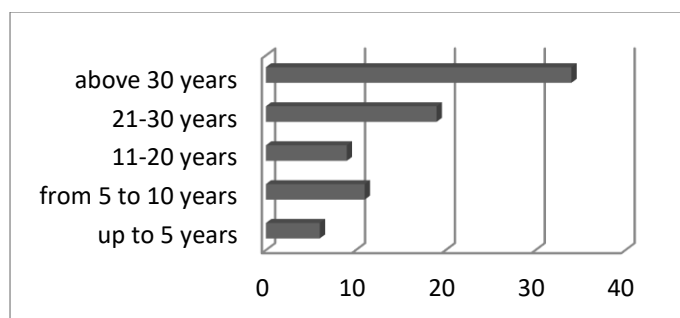


Figure 1. Pedagogical experience

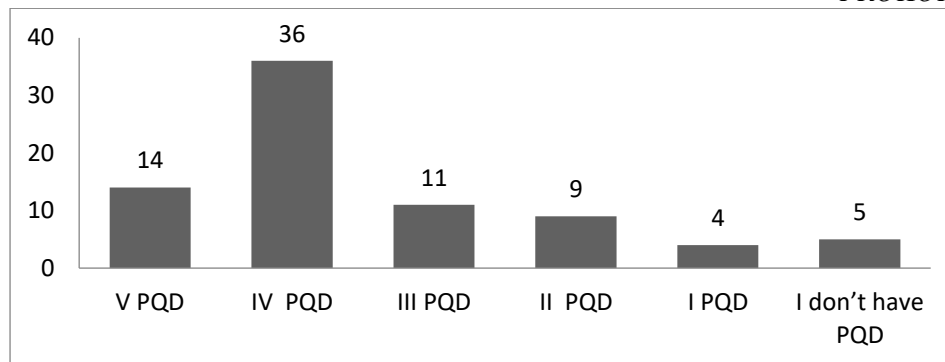


Figure 2. Professional Qualification Degree

The second part of the survey is dedicated to the professional competence of pedagogical

specialists in the field of physical education. **Table 1** presents the questions from the survey.

Table 1. Questions from the survey

N ^o	Question	N ^o	Question
1	Do you think that the physical education and sports of primary school pupils is among the national priorities in school education?	6	Do you need additional qualification in the field of physical education and sports?
2	Do you think that the activities of physical education and sports at school are a factor for the development of the pupil's personality?	7	Do you prepare the annual thematic programme for PE yourself?
3	Do you know the regulatory documents for PE in primary school?	8	Which of the PE cores is the most difficult for you to teach?
4	Are you familiar with the theory and methodology of physical culture?	9	Do you run the extra - third class for outdoor sports activities?
5	Do you think that you are competent enough in the activities you perform in physical education and sports?		

On the first question concerning the place of physical education at a national level, 39% of respondents do not think that physical education is among the national priorities, 25% cannot express their opinion and only 15% are fully convinced that physical education is part of the state's priorities. On the other hand, almost 50% answered that physical education at school is a factor in the development of the student's personality. Question N^o3 of the survey refers to the knowledge of the regulatory documents concerning physical education. It is impressive that extremely small percentage of teachers, 13%, know the regulatory documents in details, 21% answered that they were partially acquainted and 33% that they were not aware of them at all. We assume that this is due to the teachers' low interest in regulatory documentation. Unfortunately, the results of the question concerning the knowledge of primary school

teachers in the theory and methodology of physical culture are distributed relatively in the same way. Almost 40% of the respondents have no knowledge in this area, 35% of the teachers are partially familiar with and only 12% have in-depth knowledge in theoretical and methodological terms. Obviously, the theory and methodology for teaching physical education is not well represented in the curricula of primary pedagogy in higher education. At the same time, over 60% of the respondents to question N^o5 believe that they are sufficiently competent in the activities carried out by them in the subject of physical education and sports. This is in stark contrast to the answers to the previous questions. Only 12% think they are not competent enough. We assume that the answers are due to the fact that in the primary education level, according to the primary teachers, mainly basic motor skills and qualities are developed. The results of the

first five questions are presented graphically in **Figure 3**. Extremely good is the fact that 50% of primary teachers answer positively to the question “Do you need additional qualification in physical education?”, which means that they are willing to upgrade their professional competencies despite the acquired teaching experience. 15% of teachers need only a qualification in the field of methodology for teaching physical education, which can be

explained with their desire to apply what they have learned. On the other hand, 65% of the respondents do not prepare their annual thematic programme in physical education and sports themselves but use ready-made one from the Internet or from a colleague. Only 15% are confident in their abilities and prepare their own annual programmes.

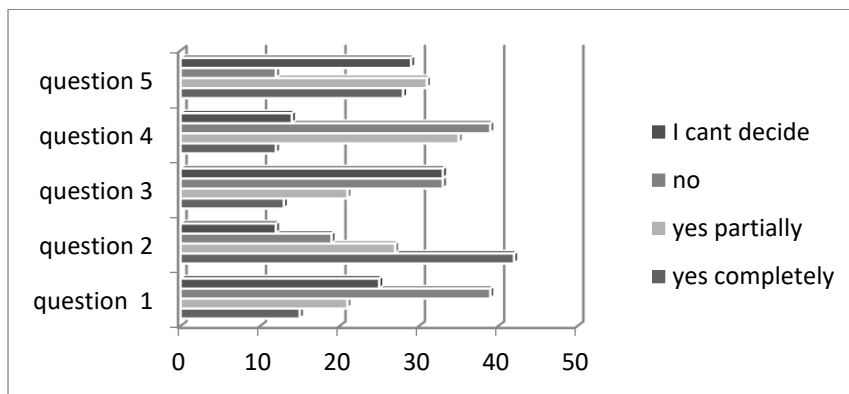


Figure 3. Answers to questions from 1 to 5

In **Figure 4** we have presented the percentage distribution of the areas that make it most difficult for primary teachers in their practical teaching. Quite predictably, 53% indicated that they are hampered by the additional cores, which we attribute to the lack of enough facilities and the difficulties in carrying out logistics for carrying out activities outside school. In second place with

21% is gymnastics, which requires specific physical training for the teacher, which we assume has led to difficulties for teachers. It is also interesting that 75% of the surveyed primary school teachers do the additional third class provided for outdoor sports activities, as 10% of the teachers prefer to trust a sports pedagogue and do these activities together.

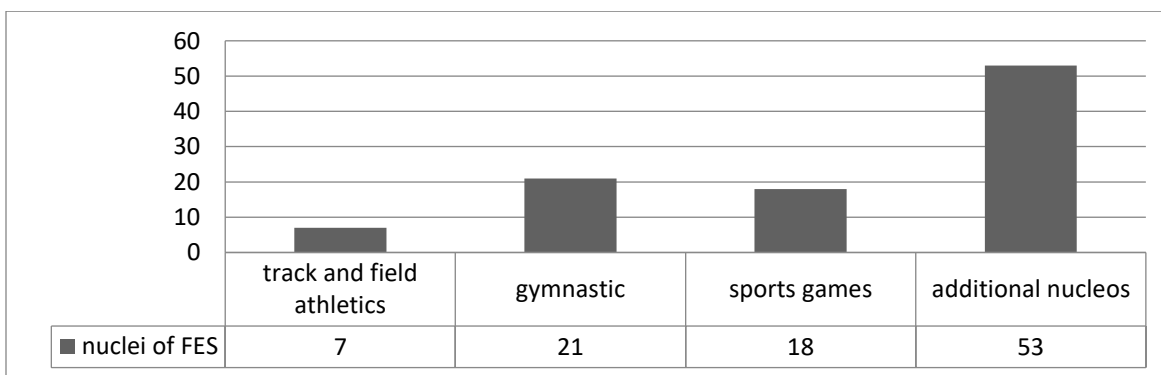


Figure 4. Difficulties in teaching physical education

In parallel with the survey conducted with primary school teachers, they had to do a test for specific knowledge summarizing the structure, content and methodology of teaching physical education at an early school age. **Figure 5**

presents the test results. There is a relative balance of the percentage of teachers with high and medium level of knowledge compared to teachers with low level of specific knowledge. However, it is worrying that 53% of the tested

teachers are not aware of the main parts of the lesson, as well as the theoretical and practical elements of teaching.

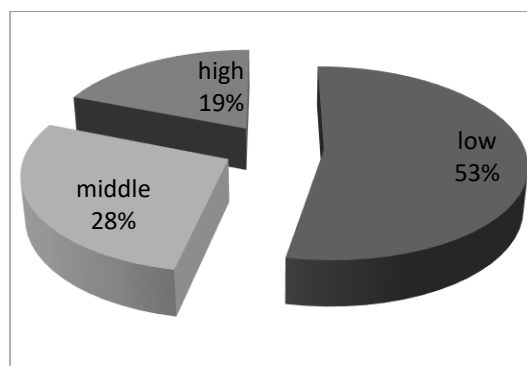


Figure 5. level of specific knowledge about physical education

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey conducted among teachers in primary school lead us to several important conclusions:

In general, teachers evaluate positively the requirement for work aimed at achieving the goals of physical education and sports of pupils in grades 1-4 through various educational activities.

The level of acquired competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of primary teachers in terms of the methodology for teaching physical education and sports is assessed as insufficiently satisfactory. Despite this assessment, teachers are willing to participate in activities related to the physical and health development of pupils.

The surveyed teachers encountered difficulties of different nature in their work in physical education and sports. The answers of the majority of teachers that they do not know the content of the regulatory documents, which are related to the development of physical and health competencies in the young generation, are impressive.

It is optimistic, however, that most of the teachers strive to increase their pedagogical training in the field of study through various forms of qualification. Primary teachers are faced with the extremely difficult task of creating a solid foundation among the younger generation in various fields of education and in particular physical education and sports. At the same time, there is a gap between the knowledge received

from them and the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need in pedagogical practice to conduct a full-fledged learning process in physical culture. The continuing qualification of primary school teachers in the field of physical education and health is not at a high enough level. It is necessary to focus on mastering the competencies of the teacher aimed at the harmonious and sustainable development of the student's personality and maintaining optimal psycho-physical condition of the body and developing personal qualities for communication and social integration.

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