

Modern Curricula in Physical Education and Sports and Their Relationship with Pragmatic Philosophy

Hanna El Hachemi¹, Chikh Mehdi², Hizoum Mohamed³

¹Laboratory of Cognitive Dimensions and Practical Perceptions in Sports Training Sciences Through Multiple Approaches, Amar Telidji University of Laghouat (Algeria), E-mail: h.hanna@lagh-univ.dz.

²Laboratory of Cognitive Dimensions and Practical Perceptions in Sports Training Sciences Through Multiple Approaches, Amar Telidji University of Laghouat (Algeria), E-mail: e.chikh@lagh-univ.dz.

³Laboratory of Cognitive Dimensions and Practical Perceptions in Sports Training Sciences Through Multiple Approaches, Amar Telidji University of Laghouat (Algeria), E-mail: mh.hizoum@lagh-univ.dz.

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Abstract:

The study aimed to identify the nature of the relationship between modern curricula in physical education and sports and the principles of pragmatic philosophy by determining the foundations of these curricula and linking the inputs and outputs of the subject curriculum in accordance with the objectives and goals of the educational process. This process is fundamentally based on investing in human capital by preparing individuals physically, psychologically, and socially in complete balance. This perspective aligns with the views advocated by pragmatic thinkers through various theories and approaches they presented, which provided arguments and evidence that sports practice in educational settings must achieve both individual self-interest and the broader societal good.

Keywords: Modern educational curricula; Physical education and sports; Pragmatic approach.

1- Introduction and Problem Statement:

The philosophy of physical education and sports forms a crucial foundation for developing school physical education curricula. It involves research, critique, analysis, and reflection on the values, meanings, experiences, and skills that should shape the objectives and

content. This approach aids in choosing the most logical and appropriate materials, activities, programs, and competencies to be addressed. Furthermore, it provides clear guidance for curriculum development, implementation, and assessment. The philosophy of physical education is not primarily concerned with the minutiae of scientific and educational facts but rather with the methods that organize these facts to imbue them with meaning, justify their existence, and apply them in the educational context.

Upon examining various philosophical approaches and educational theories underlying physical education and sports, one finds diverse perspectives among Western thinkers, philosophers, and scholars. These perspectives represent a collection of human opinions and ideas proposed to organize educational relationships within their societies, aiming to prepare individuals in all areas of life—physically, psychologically, and socially—in a balanced manner. A review of relevant sources and references demonstrates that these physical education and sports theories often originate from materialistic philosophies. Many of their pioneers and philosophers held materialistic orientations, generally depending on human ideas and visions that served their creators' interests within specific environmental contexts. Some of these views are based on earlier theories from ancient times. For example, physical education and sports are sometimes linked to naturalism, which views the physical education teacher as a guardian of nature and a developer of human personality. This perspective is led by philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who called for elevating nature's value and returning to a life free from artificiality and pretense. Rousseau emphasized educating children according to their natural inclinations and needs within natural laws and conditions.

Some believe that physical education should be primarily associated with the idealist doctrine, a philosophy founded by Plato. This philosophy posits that ethical values and ideals are transferred from sports to life in society, based on the principle that educational sports

practice influences behavior. For example, it shapes an individual's attitudes towards fair play and sportsmanship.

New physical education and sports educational systems have prioritized updating curricula to keep pace with modernity and global scientific advancements. Given that the present era is characterized by considerable cognitive and technological changes affecting personal and societal life, specialists in educational sports activities are compelled to define learning objectives that allow individuals to compete, innovate, and demonstrate flexibility, among other traits. These should be critical outcomes of education, utilizing advancements in digital and technological developments. Consequently, teachers and specialists have had to reassess curriculum content and teaching methods, including lesson design and acquiring sufficient experience and competencies. This shift marks a transition from traditional thinking to modern pragmatic thought. Therefore, the idea for this research arises from the following question:

- What is the nature of the relationship between physical education and sports curricula and modern pragmatic thought?

To better comprehend the research topic, it is necessary to introduce some linguistic, conceptual, and procedural definitions associated with the study variables, as follows:

- **Educational Curricula** refers to the deliberate organization and planning of student activities, whether inside or outside the school, relating to educational or training aspects. (Kawthar Hussein Koujak, 1998, p. 11)
- **Physical Education and Sports:** According to Feri, physical education and sports are integral to general education and address the motivations for activities within each individual for emotional and adaptive development. (Ibrahim Meghni, 1996, p. 38).

Physical education and sports are integral elements of the educational system, representing a segment of general education that seeks to

prepare individuals physically, psychologically, and socially in a balanced manner.

Pragmatic Approach:

3- Study Theoretical Background:

First Section: Modern Curricula in Physical Education and Sports:

3.1- Objectives of Modern Curricula in Physical Education and Sports:

- Utilizing cognitive achievements and motor skills in several situations and domains.
- Developing an independent and balanced personality in all physical, cognitive, and social aspects enables individuals to make appropriate decisions based on different situations.
- Enhancing desired competencies and instilling values.
- Deepening and diversifying learners' education across all areas, contributing to comprehensive knowledge and specialization.
- Fostering positive attitudes towards learning in students.
- Ensuring that curricula are modern and advanced, adhering to the precise scientific objectives of educational units while considering the conditions of the educational curriculum in analyzing facts and fulfilling the desired competencies through physical education and sports classes.
- Basing teaching methods in physical education and sports classes on student interaction, where students perform the required movements, observe objectively, gather and analyze data and facts, derive necessary conclusions, and develop severe and practical ideas. (Ben Ser, 2018, p. 17).

3.2- Foundations of Building Physical Education and Sports Curricula:

The term "foundations" refers to the core principles that influence the development and enhancement of curricula. These foundations impact the identification of curriculum goals, content selection, organization, and the choice of appropriate methods, activities, and assessment techniques (Al-Sar, 2018, p. 50). They encompass philosophical and

religious, cognitive, social and cultural, and psychological aspects, as follows:

A. Philosophical and Religious Foundations:

Every physical education and sports curriculum is grounded in an educational philosophy derived from and closely linked to society's philosophy. Several philosophies have emerged in physical education and sports, each offering its perspective on curriculum development. The main philosophies include idealism, realism, naturalism, pragmatism, existentialism, and Islamic philosophy (Nadji & Ben Brika, p. 17).

This perspective views life as a path leading to human perfection, which is fulfilled in the bliss of paradise. It considers humans as creative forces and ascending spirits progressing from one existential state to another. This philosophy encourages using reason and reflective observation to reach the truth.

There is no universal agreement on curricula and their content, but generally, the curriculum is divided into primary and higher levels. The primary curriculum includes the Quran, religion, writing, poetry, and grammar. The higher curriculum is categorized into religious and scientific subjects. The religious curriculum covers jurisprudence, grammar, rhetoric, prosody, and testing, while the scientific curriculum encompasses medicine, astronomy, mineralogy, mathematics, chemistry, and sports. It emphasizes including fixed truths and evolving concepts that keep pace with life and its development (Al-Zaydi, 2018, p. 25).

B. Cognitive Foundations:

The cognitive perspective sees curricula as developing and constructing mental structures through learning. It includes promoting thinking and its frameworks, with knowledge encoded as schematics contributing to integration. Piaget argues that educational curriculum standards encompass the following:

- Selecting and organizing curriculum content aligning with the learner's cognitive development involves presenting experiences in language appropriate for their level.

- Ensuring that curriculum experiences contribute to the learner's cognitive development, helping them reach the next developmental phase.
- Organizing curriculum content according to the learner's previous fulfillment level (Al-Sar, 2018, p. 74).

Knowledge is a significant dimension of the curriculum. In the educational domain, there are two main perspectives on knowledge. Traditional thought sees knowledge as an end in itself, dedicating efforts to fulfilling this goal. Conversely, progressive educational thought views knowledge as a tool to prepare learners for life, thus focusing on experiences and their acquisition. Different types of knowledge in the curriculum include divine knowledge, intuitive knowledge, rational knowledge, sensory knowledge, and empirical knowledge (Al-Zaydi, 2018, p. 26).

C. Social and Cultural Foundations:

These are the social forces that influence the development and implementation of the curriculum. They include the society's cultural heritage, the values and principles that prevail, the needs and problems the society aims to address, and the goals it seeks to fulfill.

Since schools are inherently social institutions established by society for their continuity and to prepare individuals for their responsibilities, it is natural that they are affected by the surrounding society and conditions (Tamar & Ben Brika, p. 18).

D. Psychological Foundations:

Psychological foundations include two main areas:

- The first pertains to learners' features, developmental needs, and requirements.
- The second relates to the learning process and its factors. Essentially, this means that the curriculum should be designed, built, implemented, and evaluated based on principles of development and learning theories that align with the individual's

biological and psychological features and traits, as well as the developmental requirements at each phase of growth, by how individuals learn (Al-Sar, 2018, p. 64).

Significant psychological concepts influence the development of educational curricula, encompassing readiness, the ability to learn, and the students' need to acquire specific knowledge and skills according to their developmental phase (Al-Zaydi, 2018).

Second Section:

3.3- Pragmatism in Educational and Sports Activities:

Pragmatism is regarded as an educational philosophy because its most significant intellectual contributions are directed towards education. This is not surprising for a philosophy that views education not merely as preparation for life but as life itself. Pragmatic education emphasizes respecting students' interests, needs, and freedom of expression. It focuses on growth that leads to further development and on adapting the child to their natural and social environments through social awareness and interaction, ultimately culminating in experience. Experience is the essence of education, the source of knowledge, and the foundation of its methods. Pragmatism views values as subjective and variable, with no hierarchical scale of values (Tahani Abdselam, 2001, p. 52).

A. Pragmatic Educational Thinkers: William James and John Dewey are prominent figures in pragmatic educational thought. Dewey, in particular, has contributed significantly to ideas about physical and sports education, influencing the shift in concepts and perceptions toward pragmatic philosophy in this field. His ideas encourage athletes and practitioners to embrace natural laws and scientific generalizations to understand the universe and its phenomena. Some of Dewey's key contributions include:

- The principle of integrating play, work, and recreation in physical education and leisure activities.
- Collaborating with students or athletes through integrated educational frameworks, including projects or problems that

involve the field, library, laboratory, and classroom, all working toward a common goal.

- Promoting collective awareness by encouraging group decision-making through physical and recreational opportunities and discussing their effectiveness (training in participatory decision-making).
- Focusing on individuality and personal needs provides opportunities for freedom, democracy, and choice. (Mohammed Mahmoud Al Khawalda, p. 63).

B. Goals of Physical Education and Sports from a Pragmatic Perspective:

William James is recognized as a critical figure in pragmatic thought in educational and sports activities. He states the goal of educational sports activities for the individual: "To live a greater life and serve better."

These can be summarized in the following points:

- Pragmatic physical education is characterized by its utility, adaptability, and functionality rather than being merely formal or superficial. As American physical education leaders started to embrace pragmatic concepts, there was a growing call to focus on physical fitness after previously focusing on educational sports.
- The concept of integration between related subjects emerged, linking physical education with health education.
- Overall fitness emerged, surpassing physical fitness alone, based on providing children with the most significant opportunities for growth, adaptation, social awareness, and beneficial experiences.
- The movement towards systematic scientific research affected physical education, and all related phenomena were examined and scrutinized.

Curriculum and Content:

The development or advancement of a pragmatic physical education curriculum should reflect the following principles:

- Physical and sports activities should be diversified as much as possible, as variety expands experience and addresses individual differences. Pragmatism favors dynamic, vital systems over static ones and indicates little regard for tradition per se, although it acknowledges the historical value of cultural origins as sources for curriculum content.
- All activities should be infused with a social spirit, even though this is inherently a feature of sports activities. Pragmatism prefers collective activities, team sports, and outdoor camps, with reservations about individual physical activities. Fostering fair competition, unleashing creative potential, and instilling purposeful social values such as cooperation, understanding, and social communication are essential.
- Pragmatism leans towards integrating activities within the physical education program to be meaningful, purposeful, and valuable.
- At the same time, it seeks to integrate the physical education and sports curriculum with other school curricula. The program's value lies in its contribution to offering experiences that foster adaptation and growth. Therefore, motor or cognitive skills in physical education extend beyond their abstract concept by impacting individuals' social lives and enhancing their behaviors.
- Assessment plays a significant role in physical education and sports programs, offering judgments about the effectiveness of the activity. This approach represents a core principle of pragmatism.
- Pragmatic education tends towards social assessment activities associated with physical fitness, weight control, nutrition, and health.
- The scientific pragmatic approach has contributed significantly to extensive physical assessment and measurement developments. It highlights the practical simulation of program content at all behavioral, motor, cognitive, and emotional levels through experimental and scientific research renowned in all dimensions of physical education. This forms the scientific basis

for the emergence of physical education theory or physical education as a study system.

3-4- Modern Approaches to Physical Education and Sports According to Pragmatic Philosophy:

We all agree that the competency-based approach is currently the most widely utilized strategy in physical education and sports, regardless of time and place. Educational systems in vibrant and innovative countries have moved away from the idealistic philosophies that were prevalent before pragmatic philosophy. These earlier philosophies introduced detached centrality from the realities of practical life. They were abstract ideas without practical, sensory, or utilitarian effects beyond mental and spiritual purity, making them more idealistic and introspective without real-world application.

With the appearance of pragmatic philosophy (utilitarianism), led by the prominent American thinker William James, and the concept of practical, applied education advanced by the renowned American educator John Dewey, education in general, and physical and sports education in particular, became linked to concepts of industrial development and economic efficiency with its productive and profitable outputs. This connection fulfilled social happiness and well-being.

Consequently, the United States and the developed and emerging world have linked every movement and development to six active and interrelated pillars: scientific and technological progress, industrial development, economic needs, and education. These components are intertwined in their structural essence and are inseparable. This connection has led to a continuous reassessment of the relationship between educational outputs and daily life, the principle underlying the competency-based approach. This approach utilizes the knowledge, skills, and abilities individuals acquire throughout their academic lives in various aspects of their daily lives. As a result, the competency-based approach in physical education and sports takes on a purely utilitarian dimension, establishing a direct and substantial relationship

between physical education curricula and pragmatic philosophy, reinforced by the convergence of their outcomes.

Conclusion:

The link between pragmatic philosophy and the outcomes of physical education and sports ensures the creation of situations where problems need solving, challenges must be faced, or behaviors require modification or acquisition through practical experience. The perspective of pragmatic philosophy stems from the necessity for students to interact with society through various channels, such as cooperation, communication, and resolving contradictions. Pragmatists regard these interactions as equally crucial as addressing students' basic needs, such as physiological and personal needs.

Physical education teachers must avoid authoritarian styles and adopt a leadership approach that utilizes various methods to stimulate motivation and interest, leading to better educational outcomes. Teachers should guide students in making wise and appropriate assessments in different situations and avoid teaching methods based solely on issuing commands. This approach helps achieve the desired goals and equips learners with the competencies needed for their academic and daily lives. Ultimately, it results in the development of a well-balanced student—physically, cognitively, psychologically, and socially—who embodies all the values of modern citizenship.

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