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OPINIONS ON EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATION
FOR LIFE THROUGH PHYSICAL EDUCATION MEANS

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Abstract

Nowadays, the need for education in general and life coaching for children in particular is more present than ever because of the population's decrease in interest for education. In this context, studies and publications reveal that some of the causes of this negative phenomenon are of several categories like: family, education system, curriculum, level of didactic tasks, even the whole Romanian society. As part of a larger project, the present paper aims to highlight the opinions of teachers and parents about the influence of dynamic games on improving motor skills, self-confidence and group integration, support for lifelong learning and an active lifestyle in the future. Dynamic games represent a very useful and pleasant part of Physical education. The questionnaire, as the main method of research, was applied to 40 teachers and parents of pupils from the "Alexandru Costescu" Middle School, Bucharest. The questionnaire has three sections and 14 items as follows: first, 5 items for education, second, 3 items related to education for life, and the last part, 6 items concerning Physical education and dynamic games. The results were synthesised and statistically processed by quantitative and qualitative analysis. Opinions are positive for movement in general and games recommended for children.

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Keywords: Education, education for life, physical education, dynamic games.



1. Introduction

In the context of the attention paid by the European Commission to the health and welfare of their citizens, a special place is taken by the raising, development and integration of children and youth through programs belonging to the education sphere. So, one of the European general objectives referring to education and life coaching is centred on the active citizen and the social cohesion by the integration of this citizen into community.

Education plays a highly important part starting with the pre-school level and going on throughout the entire life. The right to education is a fundamental human right stated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (article 26), according to which “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. [...] Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality” (United Nations, 2012). In conformity with this Declaration, Romania included a reference to the right to education in the article 32 of the Constitution: “The right to education is ensured by the compulsory general education, high school and vocational education, higher education and other forms of training and refresher courses” (Camera Deputaților, 1991).

Education - as a process and an outcome of all actions meant to develop the children’s and young people’s capacity for knowledge - is a field that entailed numerous studies and research. Actually, the importance and role of education in people’s lives, as revealed by research, has led to the extension of the periods allocated to education and to the lifelong diversification of education types.

Referring to the basic concept of education, Arung (2016) says: “Education is simply to humanise the human beings. This is crucial definition since people do not understand what education is. In fact, people see education for merely just a formal activity. They tend to ignore the basic concept of the education itself”. Starting from this reference, we believe that education for life is a significant component of the concept. It ensures the transfer of knowledge, skills and abilities created and assimilated in school to actions and responses required by concrete situations of real life.

In our opinion, the school and the teachers, through the specific teaching-learning activities and the extracurricular and complementary activities, have a decisive role in the identification and development of children’s potential “for personal growth and well-being, as well as in helping them to acquire the complex range of knowledge, skills and key competences that they will need as citizens throughout their personal, social and professional lives” (Council of the European Union, 2009).

In conformity with all the elements shown above, the “Alexandru Costescu” Middle School of Bucharest implements the “Education for life” program at primary and middle school levels. This is a program complementary to the compulsory school activity and gives the opportunity of formal and non-formal learning in order to consolidate competencies, implement remedial learning and accelerate learning by educative, recreational and leisure time activities. “Education for life” is a program that lends support to students and their families and to teachers and school as well. Our approach correlates with the purpose and objectives of the program, as we intend to highlight the influence of means specific to Physical education (especially dynamic games) on the full and normal development of schoolchildren, improving their physical and mental potential, taking into account the child’s own pace, emotional needs and fundamental activity

specific to the age. It is generally known that playing means to fulfil some established objectives by the means and contents appropriate to the age; it means to create situations similar to real-life situations by respecting certain rules. Speaking about the play, Buhler wrote: "The child who plays will learn to accept and fulfil a duty" (Todea, 2002, p. 11). Each movement has a clear role in the content of the dynamic games. "At the same time, they focus on the overcoming of different challenges or obstacles in order to reach the intended target in the ever-changing conditions of the game environment" (Motroc, 2009, p. 199).

2. Problem Statement

2.1. Description of the investigation aspects

This study is part of a larger research on the influence of dynamic games on the personality and behaviour of primary school children. In the current context, we believe that the education system should be updated in order to achieve its objectives, and data resulting from scientific studies should be used to find appropriate means to support the people involved and to take action if the social and economic conditions are poor.

The reviewed literature and our own experience have helped us find out that, in the "Alexandru Costescu" Middle School, which accepted to participate in this study, there is a low interest in raising the education level of primary school children; so, it is necessary to identify some possible efficient measures of preventive and remedial intervention to fight this phenomenon.

Physical education and Sport is a component of permanent education and was chosen for this study due to its specific means and benefits for children's growth and development, minds and attitudes towards tasks in educational situations. The goals and objectives of Physical education and Sport are subordinated to the goals and objectives of general education and are imposed by social needs (Triboi, 2009 p. 11)

Our concern for success, by developing the action means and systems specific to Physical education through extracurricular activities organized in school, is demonstrated by the diversification and improvement of educational services offered by the "Education for life" program. "Participation in organized sport and physical activity should be made equitable and accessible for all" (Active Healthy Kids, 2016, p. 14).

"To be successful takes creativity, flexibility, self-control, and discipline. [...] Diverse activities have been shown to improve children's executive functions: computerised training, non-computerised games, aerobics, martial arts, yoga, mindfulness and school curricula. All successful programs involve repeated practice and progressively increase the challenge to executive functions" (Diamond, & Lee, 2011, p. 959).

2.2. Description of investigation tool

The investigation tool used for this study was the questionnaire. This one is formed of 3 sections, each one including several items, as follows: section A, with 8 items, referring to the subjects' opinions about education in general, about its contribution to the development of students' personality, creation of behaviours, ensuring the students' social integration and life quality; section B, with 3 items and 18 derivatives, referring to the subjects' opinions about education for life, issues regarding success in life, necessary conditions for success, opinions about students' training for life within school; section C, with 6

items and 16 derivatives, referring to the subjects' opinions about the influence of dynamic games (means specific to physical education) on children's personality and behaviour in primary school, existence and type of rewards, contribution of physical education and dynamic games to the education for life of primary school students and level of parents' involvement in the sporting activities of their own children. The assessment of an opinion was performed by means of the 4-point Likert scale. The subject has the task to tick off, for each item of the questionnaire, one of the following response variants: "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Agree" or "Strongly agree".

3. Research questions

Our study was based on the following question: What are teachers' and parents' opinions about the impact of dynamic games on both the body and personality of schoolchildren participating in the study, and also on their ability to use what they have learnt in various life situations?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to highlight the teachers' and parents' opinions on education and its contribution to children's education for life, extracurricular sports activities and the dynamic games programs in the instructional-educational process meant to improve their performances in terms of school results and personal level as well.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Research method

The method used to collect data is the questionnaire-type investigation; the quantitative and qualitative analysis is used to process these data. The questionnaire has a total number of 17 items, out of which 5 have derivatives.

5.2. Subjects of research

The study was conducted on 40 teachers and parents aged between 28 and 56 years, having different professional levels. All of these persons had a connection with "Alexandru Costescu" Middle School of Bucharest, Romania, and agreed to participate in the study.

6. Findings

6.1. Results and discussions

The results were synthesised and statistically processed by quantitative and qualitative analysis. Regarding the results obtained, it can be said that they are only on three steps of the scale. The first step, "Strongly disagree", has 0 responses (and points) to all questionnaire items. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative analysis shows its findings on this perspective. Each item of the three groups has responses and points. The quantitative analysis shows a variety of opinions included between 0 and 33 responses for the

same item, from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”. Table 01 presents the minimum and maximum values of responses/items per group.

Table 01. Summarised responses/ total items/ group

Items/ group	Values of responses	Scale			
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Items/ group A	min	0	0	8	11
	max	0	21	17	28
Items/ group B	min	0	0	12	3
	max	0	19	33	28
Items/ group C	min	0	0	8	4
	max	0	20	25	30

In group A, the numerically expressed opinions/ total number of steps of the scale range from 0 to 28. In group B, the numerically expressed responses/ total number of steps of the scale range from 0 to 33, and in group C, from 0 to 30.

In order to analyse the subjects’ responses, there were created, for each of the questionnaire sections (namely: “A - Opinions about education (schooling system)”); “B - Opinions about education for life”; “C - Opinions about physical education and its contribution to students’ education for life”), initial summary tables for frequency (number of choices per response for the whole group of participants). Afterwards, there were prepared percentage tables and also (for each of the questionnaire sections) summary scoring tables for performing the qualitative interpretation.

To that end, the subjects’ responses were scored according to the following scale: “Strongly disagree” = -2 points; “Disagree” = -1 point; “Agree” = 1 point and “Strongly agree” = 2 points (Table 02). Thus, a positive score recorded for an item of the questionnaire indicates the agreement of the subjects with the statement of that item. A negative score shows the disagreement regarding the statement in the targeted item.

The frequency of choices for Section A, “Opinions about education (schooling system)”, is shown in Table 02.

Table 02. Summary table for Group A responses – Frequency of choices

Code	Items	Frequency / Score				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
A1	Education is important for students’ personality development	0	1	12	27	40
A2	Education has a decisive contribution to the formation of students’ behavioural skills	0	0	14	26	40
A3	Education ensures the social integration of students	0	0	17	23	40
A4	For the quality of life, it is compulsory to cover all the education cycles	0	0	12	28	40
A5	Are the intellectual particularities of primary school students important in the educational process?	0	15	13	12	40
A6	Are the motor skills of primary school students important in the educational process?	0	15	13	12	40
A7	Are the life particularities and abilities of primary school students important in the educational process?	0	21	8	11	40
A8	Are the complex particularities of primary school students important in the educational process?	0	3	17	20	40

We will show hereby the percentage, score and rank for section A of the questionnaire, “Opinions about education (schooling system)” (Table 03).

Table 03. Summary table for Section A of the questionnaire, “Opinions about education (schooling system)” – Percentage, score and rank

Item code	Percentage (%)				Score (Points)					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Rank
A1	0	2.5%	30%	67.5%	0	- 1	12	54	65	3
A2	0	0	35%	65%	0	0	14	52	66	2
A3	0	0	42.5%	57.5%	0	0	17	46	63	4
A4	0	0	30%	70%	0	0	12	56	68	1
A5	0	37.5%	32.5%	30%	0	- 15	13	24	22	6.5
A6	0	37.5%	32.5%	30%	0	- 15	13	24	22	6.5
A7	0	52.5%	20%	27.5%	0	- 21	8	22	9	8
A8	0	7.5%	42.5%	50%	0	- 3	17	24	38	5

The table above shows the percentages and scores for each item, in each response variant, the score (“Total”) obtained for each item representing: the agreement of subjects with the content of the questionnaire items – if the score is positive, or their disagreement, if the score is negative.

In the opinion of the subjects, it is compulsory to complete all the education cycles in order to ensure the students’ quality of life (A 4), an item for which the strongest agreement was manifested (Rank 1). This one was followed by item A2, according to which: “Education has a decisive contribution to the formation of students’ behavioural skills” (Rank 2), then by item A1: “Education is important for students’ personality development” (Rank 3); rank 4 is occupied by the item according to which “Education ensures the social integration of students”, and rank 5, by the item A8, stating that “The intellectual particularities of primary school students are important in the educational process”. The next items show that intellectual particularities (A5) and motor particularities (A6) of primary school students are important for the educational process (both with rank 6.5); the item that has received the smallest agreement from the participants in the research is A7, according to which the life abilities of primary school students are important in the educational process (9 points).

The frequency of choices for Section B, “Opinions about education for life”, is shown in Table 04.

Table 04. Summary table for Group B responses – Frequency of choices

Code	Items	Score (Points)				
	Group B – “Opinions about education for life”	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
B9	For you, the success in life means:					
B9.1	Level of education	0	0	12	28	40
B9.2	Starting and maintaining a family	0	3	14	23	40
B9.3	Social prestige	0	1	33	6	40
B9.4	Successful career	0	5	26	9	40
B9.5	Money	0	19	18	3	40
B10	In your opinion, the conditions necessary for success are:					
B10.1	Sustained effort	0	1	15	24	40
B10.2	Development and support of interpersonal relationships	0	2	28	10	40

B10.3	Perseverance and discipline	0	0	14	26	40
B10.4	Existence of education programs to this purpose	0	1	23	16	40
B10.5	Emotional balance	0	0	20	20	40
B10.6	Self-achievement aspiration	0	1	23	16	40
B10.7	Order in one's own activity	0	0	24	16	40
B10.8	Motivation	0	1	21	18	40
B10.9	Existence of short-term, medium-term and long-term action strategies	0	2	23	15	40
B10.10	Ability to make decisions and assume them	0	0	23	17	40
B11	In your opinion, the school trains students for life by:					
B11.1	School classes	0	1	18	21	40
B11.2	School after-school	0	0	23	17	40
B11.3	Extracurricular activities (camps, competitions, trips etc.)	0	2	16	22	40

The qualitative interpretation for Section B of the questionnaire, “Opinions about education for life” is shown in Table 05.

Table 05. Summary table for Section B of the questionnaire, “Opinions about education for life” – Percentage, score and rank

Item code	Percentage (%)				Score (Points)					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Rank
B.9										
B9.1	0	0	30%	70%	0	0	12	56	68	1
B9.2	0	7.5%	35%	57.5%	0	- 3	14	46	57	2
B9.3	0	2.5%	82.5%	15%	0	- 1	33	12	44	3
B9.4	0	12.5%	65%	22.5%	0	- 5	26	18	39	4
B9.5	0	47.5%	45%	7.5%	0	- 19	18	6	5	5
B10										
B10.1	0	2.5%	37.5%	60%	0	- 1	15	48	62	2
B10.2	0	5%	70%	25%	0	- 2	28	20	46	10
B10.3	0	0	35%	65%	0	0	14	52	66	1
B10.4	0	2.5%	57.5%	40%	0	- 1	23	32	54	7.5
B10.5	0	0	50%	50%	0	0	20	40	60	3
B10.6	0	2.5%	57.5%	40%	0	- 1	23	32	54	7.5
B10.7	0	0	60%	40%	0	0	24	32	56	5.5
B10.8	0	2.5%	52.5%	45%	0	- 1	21	36	56	5.5
B10.9	0	5%	57.5%	37.5%	0	- 2	23	30	51	9
B10.10	0	0	57.5%	42.5%	0	0	23	34	57	4
B11										
B11.1	0	2.5%	45%	52.5%	0	- 1	18	42	59	1
B11.2	0	0	57.5%	42.5%	0	0	23	34	57	3
B11.3	0	5%	40%	55%	0	- 2	16	44	58	2

The analysis of the results (depending on the score recorded) highlighted that the most powerful agreement (for the entire section B) was received by the item according to which the success in life means first of all: “Level of education” (68 points), then the items “Perseverance and discipline” (66 points) and “Sustained effort” (62 points) are the condition of success. The poorest agreement was related to the fact that “Money” (5 points) would mean success in life.

The review of the responses to item B9 reveals that the participants in this research think that the success in life firstly means: “Level of education” (68 points), followed by: “Starting and maintaining a family” (57 points), “Social prestige” (44 points), “Successful career” (39 points) and “Money” (5 points).

In the case of item B10, referring to the conditions required for success, the strongest agreement was manifested for “Perseverance and discipline” (66 points), followed by: “Sustained effort” (62 points), “Emotional balance” (60 points), “Ability to make decisions and assume them” (57 points), “Order in one’s own activity” and “Motivation” (56 points each of them), “Existence of education programs to this purpose”, “Self-achievement aspiration”(54 points each of them), “Existence of short-term, medium-term and long-term action strategies” (51 points). The lowest agreement was manifested for “Development and support of interpersonal relationships” (46 points).

For item B11, “In your opinion, the school trains students for life by...”, the strongest agreement was shown for “School classes” (59 points), followed by “Extracurricular activities (camps, competitions, trips etc.)” (58 points) and “School after-school” (57 points).

The frequency of choices for Section C, “Opinions about physical education and its contribution to students’ education for life”, is shown in Table 06.

Table 06. Summary table for Section C, “Opinions about physical education and its contribution to students’ education for life” – Frequency of choices

Code	Items	Frequency				
	Group C – Opinions about physical education and its contribution to students’ education for life	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
C12	Do you consider that Physical education contributes to the development of primary school students’ personality?	0	2	12	26	40
C13	In your opinion, do the Physical education classes help the primary school students to develop the abilities and competencies belonging to the education for life?	0	1	17	22	40
C14	Which would be the suitable reward at Physical education that is important in the education for life?					
C14.1	Grades	0	10	25	5	40
C14.2	Accumulated knowledge, abilities and competencies developed	0	1	16	23	40
C14.3	Diplomas, medals, cups	0	5	8	27	40
C14.4	Encouragements, praises, congratulations	0	2	16	22	40
C14.5	Image of the student within the classroom	0	3	25	12	40
C14.6	Money or other material rewards	0	20	16	4	40
C15	In your opinion, is there a connection between the dynamic games played during Physical education classes and the education for life of primary school students?	0	1	25	14	40
C16	Is it necessary to involve yourself in the sport or movement activities of your student/child?	0	6	22	12	40
C17	In your opinion, what are the attitudinal and motivational characteristics developed by Physical education through the dynamic games organized during the class?					
C17.1	Courage; Perseverance; Will; Discipline	0	0	10	30	40

C17.2	Motivation and self-motivation	0	0	19	21	40
C17.3	Management of emotions and self-acceptance ability	0	1	21	18	40
C17.4	Self-control in situations of success or failure	0	0	24	16	40
C17.5	Knowledge of one's own aspirations and limits	0	0	25	15	40
C17.6	Involvement in reality, proper behaviour (observance of the rules)	0	0	18	22	40
C17.7	Awareness-raising, control and self-control	0	0	19	21	40
C17.8	Integration into a group, good social presence and collaboration	0	0	18	22	40
C17.9	Spontaneity, emotional balance, competitiveness	0	0	21	19	40
C17.10	Resistance to frustration and stress	0	2	22	16	40

We present hereby the qualitative interpretation for Section C of the questionnaire, “Opinions about physical education and its contribution to students’ education for life” (Table 07).

Table 07. Summary table for section C, “Opinions about physical education and its contribution to students’ education for life” – Percentage, score and rank

Item code	Percentage (%)				Score (Points)					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Rank
C 12	0	5%	30%	65%	0	- 2	12	52	62	
C13	0	2.5%	42.5%	55%	0	- 1	17	44	60	
C14										
C14.1	0	25%	62.5%	12.5%	0	- 10	25	10	25	5
C14.2	0	2.5%	40%	57.5%	0	- 1	16	46	61	1
C14.3	0	12.5%	20%	67.5%	0	- 5	8	54	57	3
C14.4	0	5%	40%	55%	0	- 2	16	44	58	2
C14.5	0	7.5%	62.5%	30%	0	- 3	25	24	46	4
C14.6	0	50%	40%	10%	0	- 20	16	8	4	6
C15	0	2.5%	62.5%	35%	0	- 1	25	28	52	
C16	0	15%	55%	30%	0	- 6	22	24	40	
C17										
C17.1	0	0	25%	75%	0	0	10	60	70	1
C17.2	0	0	47.5%	52.5%	0	0	19	42	61	4.5
C17.3	0	2.5%	52.5%	45%	0	- 1	21	36	56	7.5
C17.4	0	0	60%	40%	0	0	24	32	56	7.5
C17.5	0	0	62.5%	37.5%	0	0	25	30	55	9
C17.6	0	0	45%	55%	0	0	18	44	62	2.5
C17.7	0	0	47.5%	52.5%	0	0	19	42	61	4.5
C17.8	0	0	45%	55%	0	0	18	44	62	2.5
C17.9	0	0	52.5%	47.5%	0	0	21	38	59	6
C 7.10	0	5%	55%	40%	0	- 2	22	32	52	10

Group C contains the scores recorded for the items related to Physical education and its contribution to the development of students’ personality and their education for life. Speaking of the whole section C of the questionnaire, the highest score was received by item C17.1 (70 points), according to which physical education, through the dynamic games, contributes largely and very largely to the development of “Courage; Perseverance; Will; Discipline”; the lowest score was obtained by item C14.6, stating that

“Money or other material rewards” would be “the suitable reward at Physical Education that is important in the education for life”.

For item C14, “Which would be the suitable reward at Physical education that is important in the education for life?”, the participants in the research manifested the strongest agreement for “Accumulated knowledge, abilities and competencies developed” (61 points), followed by: “Encouragements, praises, congratulations” (58 points), “Diplomas, medals, cups” (57 points), “Image of the student within the classroom” (46 points), “Grades” (25 points) and “Money”(4 points).

Item C17 evaluated the opinions of teachers and parents related to the attitudinal and motivational characteristics developed by Physical education through the dynamic games organized during the class. The most powerful agreement was shown for “Courage; Perseverance; Will; Discipline” (this item was the most appreciated within the entire questionnaire, receiving 70 points), followed, in the order of scores, by the qualities: “Involvement in reality, proper behaviour (observance of the rules)”, “Integration into a group, good social presence and collaboration” (62 points for each of them), “Motivation and self-motivation”, “Awareness-raising, control and self-control” (61 points for each of them), “Management of emotions and self-acceptance ability”, “Self-control in situations of success or failure” (56 points for each of them), “Knowledge of one’s own aspirations and limits” (55 points). The lowest score at this item was for “Resistance to frustration and stress”(52 points).

7. Conclusion

This paper revealed the teachers’ and parents’ opinions about the importance of the education for life, especially about the implications of Physical education through extracurricular sports activities and dynamic games programs, in the modelling of students’ personality and their personal and school performances, in the case of primary cycle students of the “Alexandru Costescu” Middle School of Bucharest.

All items have recorded positive scores, indicating the participants’ agreement with the statements included in the questionnaire items. Taking into consideration the whole questionnaire, the highest score (namely 70 – Rank 1 at the level of the whole questionnaire) is obtained by the statement that Physical education, through the dynamic games organized during the lesson, develops the following attitudinal and motivational traits: “Courage; Perseverance; Will; Discipline”. The participants in the research also expressed a strong agreement concerning the following statements: “For the quality of life, it is compulsory to cover all the education cycles” (namely 68 – Rank 2.5 at the level of the entire questionnaire) and “In your opinion, the success in life means: the level of education” (namely 68 – Rank 2.5 at the level of the entire questionnaire).

The lowest rank in terms of the participants’ agreement with the statements of the questionnaire was item C14.6, stating that “Money or other material rewards” (4 points) would be “the suitable reward at Physical education that is important in the education for life”. (The positive score highlights that the participants in the research express their agreement regarding this statement, but, in comparison with the other items of the questionnaire, this is the smallest value). The last but one rank is taken by the statement: “For you, the success in life means: Money”.

Taking into account all responses to this questionnaire, we notice the general tendency of parents and teachers to appreciate more the mental traits (personality, character) and less the material factors.

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