Goals of participation in physical education classes

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Annotation: The importance of physical education in school life and for health points to the need to better understand students’ goals in physical education classes. This study was an attempt to investigate students’ goals for participation in physical education (PE) classes. A 28-items survey was conducted to assess (a) demographics and (b) purposes for engaging in PE classes, on a 5-point Likert scale [23]. A panel of experts (n=10) reviewed the translated from of survey and provided feedback and comments on content validity of the instrument, and 50 student participated in pilot study. The analysis of the result indicated that the Individual development (the physiological efficiency and Psychic equilibrium) was rated the highest goal of participating in physical activity followed by the social interaction (the group interaction and cultural involvement) and the environmental coping (the spatial orientation and object manipulation). One-way Tukeys’ post hoc comparison revealed significant difference between groups of subject differentiated on the basis gender age, Junior/senior high school, physical activity out of school, school team member ships, and physical activity on summer & holidays as Independent factors. The multivariate effect of these factors on some of the student’s purpose was significant. The univariate analyses showed that these factors had a significant effect on some of goals. These findings indicate the importance of ranking of students’ purposes for engaging in PE classes. It is also necessary that these goals to be considered by the parents & teachers point of view.

Keywords: Goals of Participation, Physical Education (PE), Individual Development, Social Interaction & Environmental Coping.

Introduction.

Many countries with different cultures have expressed concern about the quantity and quality of school PE programs that provide students with an opportunity to be active in PE classes in ways that emphasize their lifelong health-related physical activity goals. It is physical educator experts’ roles to provide opportunities in the schools for students according to a theoretical and practical base that will bring enjoyment while teaching the essentials for successful participation. Therefore, the physical education activity program is one of the important parts of the regular school program and that the goals for this program are in accord with the mission of the school at large [19]. International aim of PE exists that emphasizes on individual growth and development. However, purpose for engaging in physical activity differs between nations and cultural groups. The research on the cross-cultural compare is one of the 22 purposes identified in the Purpose Process Curriculum Framework (PPCF) that revealed a number of cross-cultural differences in priorities among the purposes of PE among curriculum specialists & teachers in England, Japan, and the USA, focusing on cardio-respiratory efficiency, joy of movement, challenge and teamwork. Although, Pangrazi and Gibbons (2009) noted that the primary mandate of physical education (PE) programs in Canadian schools is to help students develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to be physically active throughout their lives, respondents from all countries indicated that cardio-respiratory efficiency and joy of movement are to be of high priority [15, 22].

Ram (1999) found that PE goals are constantly shifting together with guiding national values. The direction seems to be from cultural values mobilized to meet nation expectations toward a culture, which focuses on individual interests and needs. Thus, the part of the statement related to describe parents and students’ expectation regarding physical education’ aims and curricula [18]. Phillips and Carlisle (1983) indicated there is a variability of teachers to analyze student needs and provide appropriate instruction [17]. Some researchers such Bresson and wild (1998) emphasized the role of balance between teacher and student objectives and others emphasized considering the priority of physical education goals and objectives [3]. For example, Malina (1989) and Stratton (1996) focused on physical fitness, whereas Stork and Sanders (2000) focused on pleasure & fun [12, 24 & 25]. Canadian physical educators placed emphasis upon fitness and the development of skills for future lifestyles and British teachers attached more importance to fun and the promotion of team spirit as major physical
education goals. These collected data involved mainly the perception of researchers and teachers concerning the physical education goals. However, they need to pay more attention to students concerning the value and meaning of physical education objectives and their preferences [26].

Teacher and education class to be comparable to that of a system of social life, and students are activity on the center of the system (class). Grant (1992) stated that interaction of student should be positive and meaningful to teacher and curriculum [8]. The physical educator therefore makes an attempt to find out students purposes (Smoll & shunts, 1980), as well as teaching on a timetable basis [11, 21]. Students likely participate in various purposes in PE class and follow different purposes vs. physical educators’ objectives. Teachers must get more involved in planning and teaching with an increased focus on student needs (Ennis, 1992), and gain a clear understanding of students’ purpose, so that he/she can create maximum concord between the lesson plan and students’ purpose [5]. With this regard, Lambdin and Steinhardt (1992) hold that learning depends on clear and realistic understanding of curriculum and student objectives [10]. Burnett & Tonder (1990) concluded that majority of pupils experienced physical education as a school subject which primarily dealt with general health and fitness [4]. McKenzie, Alcaraz, and Sallis (1994) indicated that the children (fourth and fifth grade class) preferred skill-related over health-related activities [14]. In an interesting study, 255 students enrolled in the PE program to determine which PE objective student is considered to be the most and the least important. The results revealed that having fun, getting regular exercise, and keeping in good health and physical condition were the most important ones. In addition, the 24 participation motives loaded on four factors: (a) self-worth, (b) physiological parameters, (c) social affiliation and (d) lifetime use [1]. Blitzer (1994) in a case study of students’ perception of experience in a sport skill case reported that fun, enjoyment, and socializing were important to participants [2]. In Canada some researchers (Felton et al., 2005; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Pate et al., 2005; Schofield et al., 2002; Ward et al., 2006) have identified several key features teenage girls look for in their PE programs. These features include (a) a choice of a variety of physical activities with a focus on individual lifetime activities, (b) the opportunity to develop relevant physical skills and personal fitness, (c) a positive learning environment that includes being with friends and protection from harassment, (d) an emphasis on enjoyment of physical activity, and (e) active involvement of students in course development. This diversity may be reflected in teachers’ goals for student learning and expectations and differences among nations, cultural groups, student gender, class grade, units and lessons plans [6, 7, 16, 20 & 27]. The aims of this study were to investigate the part of Iranians Junior and high school students’ goals for participation in PE classes and comparisons with international aim of physical education curriculum.

Method.

Subjects. The target population was all high schools’ students in Rasht (the North of Iran), and 455 students (191 girls & 264 boys) selected randomly of eight Junior high schools (n=220) and eight senior high schools (n=235) in four different regions (north, south, west and east of city). Age range of girls (M=14.62, SD=1.1) and boys (M=14.72, SD=2.01) in this study were 11-13 (35.3%), 14-16 (38.4%) and 17-19 years (26.3%), respectively.

Instrument. Steinhard M.A et al. in 1988 developed “The Purposes for Engaging in Physical Activity Scale” (PEPAS). This instrument has been designed to assess reasons for participating in physical activity (PA) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5). The scale is intendment for such populations as student, participants, parents, classroom teachers, and school administrators, whose attitudes toward physical activity participation may be of interest. The “PEPAS” translated by the department of English language in Guilan University. A panel of experts (n=10), including the members of physical education, psychology, and educational management departments completed the survey and provided feedback on additions/deletions of the items and comments on content validity of the instrument. In order to gain a better understanding of the items, the phrase “‘my goal” was added to the beginning of the 22-items. In addition, a number of the items were worded negative to minimize bias. The final stage, 55 students took part in the pilot study. The scales’ test-retest (after six weeks) reliability, a mean Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of 0.78 and .082 was computed for junior and senior high school students, respectively. Two sub goals were utilized in the study of each purpose as follows, individual development (a) physiological efficiency (3- items) and (b) psychic equilibrium (4- items). Environmental coping (a) Spatial orientation (3-items) and Object manipulation (3-items); and social interaction (a) group interaction 6-items) and (b) cultural involvement (3-items).

Procedure. After pilot study was completed, the two-part questionnaire was constructed to seek information about personal demographic (6-items) and the PEPAS (22-items). Initial contact was made by a formal letter from PE and sport science faculty to manager of PE and sport department in the Education Ministry of Guilan state. Having been granted permission, the questionnaires and answer sheet were direct distributed among students. Physical Educators were provided with adequate information’s for efficient cooperation. All questionnaires were completed by students under the supervision of the teachers in classroom conditions. Teachers, who were already familiar with testing procedures, checked the questionnaires to make sure that they had been properly completed when they were handed in. In this way, no data were missed. Administration of the procedure took approximately 20-25 minutes.

Statistical Analyses. Descriptive statistics were completed first to present a profile of students’ physical activity. Single-factor multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by Tukeys’ post hoc test were used at level of p<0. 05.
Results and Discussion.

A total of 96% (n=348) and 46% (n=270) of students were active physically in PE classes and out of schools, respectively. From 129 students (28%) that participated on schools’ competitive programs, 87 students (67%) were active on team sports. Also, from 145 students (32%) that had been more active on sports’ clubs and extracurricular programs in summer and holidays, 72 students (50%) participated on team sports. The results indicated that students purposes for engaging in PE classes were individual development (M=4.13, SD=0.73), social interaction (M=3.77, SD=0.69) and environmental coping (M=3.36, SD=0.97), respectively. The comparison between sub goals of goal participation of student demonstrated that physiological efficiency (M=4.12, SD=0.95), psychic equilibrium (M=3.99, SD=0.77), and cultural involvement (M=3.97, SD=0.91) was rated highest goal of engaging in physical activity, followed by group interaction (M=3.66, SD=0.78), spatial orientation (M=3.46, SD=1.11), and object manipulation (M=3.08, SD=1.22) (See figure 1).

The priority of the physiological efficiency and psychic equilibrium goals in this study is the same with the priority of cardio-respiratory efficiency and joy of movement in Speckman’s cross-cultural research [22]. In addition, the priority of challenge and teamwork in Speckman’s study is the same with the psychic equilibrium (Individual development), and group interaction (social interaction) dimensions on “PEPAS”. Thus, focus on physical fitness (Malina, 1986 & Stratton, 1996) or focus on fun (Stork & Sander, 2000); and focus on fitness & fun by Canadian & British physical educators (Vertinsky & Guthbert, 1983) is same to extent with this findings [12, 24, 25 & 26]. On the other hand, some findings showed the priority of general health and fitness (Burnett & Tondar, 1990), having fun and keeping in good health and physical condition (Avery & Lumpkin, 1987), and fun, enjoyment, and socializing (Blitzer, 1994) that revealed the individual development and social interaction as be the most important goal of students in physical activity [1, 2 & 4]. Therefore, we can ignore the role of cultural values (Ram, 1999), and focus on individual interests and students’ needs [13, 18].

The results of the multivariate and univariate ‘ANOVA’ with the students’ purposes as the dependent variables are presented in Table 1. The multivariate effect of gender was significant on the environmental coping, (F (28.710) = 4.95), and social interaction, (F (16.694) = 4.44). The univariate analyses showed that girls and boys had high score on the spatial orientation (M=3.59, SD=1.10) and group interaction (M=3.70, SD=0.70) purposes, respectively. The multivariate effect of age and the type of high school were significant only on the social interaction (F (15.977) = 2.96) and (F (18.00) = 6.02), respectively. Tukey’s post hoc test showed that students with 14-16 years had higher score on the spatial orientation (M=3.55, SD=1.08), and cultural involvement (M=4.01, SD=0.85) than students with 11-13 and 17-19 years. Also, results showed junior high schools’ students had high score on the social interaction (F (11.395) = 6.02) than the senior high schools’ students. The multivariate effect of PA in out of school, and summer & holidays was significant (F (29.457) = 6.34, and F (15.974) = 4.43) on the individual development and social interaction (F (14.659) = 7.52 and F (9.210) = 3.90). Those students that were more physically active had high score on physiological efficiency, psychic equilibrium, group interaction, and cultural involvement. In addition, the effect of school teams’ membership was significant on the environmental coping (F (9.197) = 3.37) and Social interaction (F (9.205) = 2.98). Neither the multivariate nor the subsequent univariate analyses showed that gender, age, and high school type had any significant effects on Individual development. Those students that were active on team sports had high scores on the social interaction (M=4.24, SD=0.62) than they...
did participate in individual sports and non-competitive activities.

The purposes of these students for engaging in physical education activity are likely same with those of Japanese, English and American teachers [22]. The fact that students and teachers in all these countries regard Individual development and social interaction as the most important purposes suggests that cultural differences are likely not to be significant in student purposes. However some researchers and teachers consider different goals for participation in PE classes. It is clear that individual development includes two important purpose was found to be accord with researchers and teachers view of points. Although environmental coping was rated the lowest rank, this finding doesn’t reduce the importance of these activities in schools, because probably the student at this have less needs of manipulation skills age, or already passed these skills at younger age. Our finding might suggest that physical activities in out of schools or in holidays and summer has more important role on individual development and especially on social interaction than physical activities in PE classes or routine physical education programs in schools. On the other hand, it seems young students more need to cooperative/associative activities for social interaction.

As indicated previously, physical education curriculum should include the activities to attain and to fulfill these purposes. Hellison (1991) reported that teachers rarely grant adequate importance to social and cultural objectives of PE. Therefore, the physical educator can use motor activities to create a wide range of opportunities for the students by considering the priority of students’ purpose or by balancing between teacher objectives, physical education goals, and student’ purposes [9]. The recognition of students’ purpose in PE classes still requires further investigation. Future research is recommended on how students’ needs and preferences related to developing positive attitudes toward physical activity. Although the
reliability of the purposes for engaging in physical activity scale (PEPAS) had been fulfilled for fourth & sixth grades, this instrument used in the research for junior and senior high school students, and it seems that the various dimensions of physical activities of this period necessitate a revision of the question with particular attention to such purposes as sport skills development, competitiveness, physical fitness and so on. In terms of the priority of the Iranian students’ purposes for engaging in PE classes, it seems that individual development as is an international aim of physical education. Therefore beyond cultural differences PE teachers must be more focused on student needs. However it is necessary the goal of participation in PE classes more studied by researchers.

References:

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