

# **Pedagogical considerations regarding the structure of high school lower cycle syllabuses, for the “Theoretical Sports Training” school subject (Note I)**

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## **Abstract**

The syllabuses for “Theoretical Sports Training”, lower cycle of high school, propose the design of learning contents from the perspectives that are focused on sports specific competences. The examination of these curriculum documents has led to the conclusion that it is necessary to (re)set the competences and contents on more accurate settings that would eliminate the ambiguity and hazards from the teaching process. The dysfunctions revealed in this study reflect on the fact that the goals wanted to be achieved via these general competences do not always find their reification in the current syllabuses of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. Thus, we consider that the resolutions provided to remedy the specific lacks and inaccuracies which have been demonstrated are able to place on the same line the “Theoretical Sports Training” subject of a modern and efficient education, which would, on the one hand, develop the teachers’ skills, and on the other hand, strengthen the skills set and the practical experience of all subjects that are within the top performance sports domain.

**Keywords:** high school lower cycle syllabuses, “Theoretical Sports Training” school subject, general and specific competences, teaching contents

## **Introduction**

For the Sports Program High Schools, vocational education, the differentiated curriculum for the lower secondary school cycle, the educational framework provides the school subject “Theoretical Sports Training” (TST) for all specializations. The teaching activity engages the whole class of students and the assessment is realized by using the well-known classical evaluation forms which are established by the educational system: periodically, at the end of each semester, within the Theoretical Sports Training National Olympiad (1), as well as by acquiring the coaching license which gives the right to train under certain conditions (2).

Between 1992 (the start-up year of vocational sports high schools) and 2006 (the year when the first written curriculum appeared), there were no analytical programs or other curricular documents to sustain the teaching and assessing process, for the TST school subject. However, in 2000, the National Curriculum Council designed “a paper”, generically called “Theoretical Sports Training. Methodological Guide to apply the school curriculum”,

which fulfilled both physically (as it was edited) and methodologically (as a curriculum document) a triple role: curriculum, textbook and guide for all 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades, in sports program high schools (\*\*\*, 2000). This curriculum paper accompanies the teacher’s activity in every teaching section (planning, designing, applying and evaluating), promotes contemporary values and contributes to the shaping of students’ personality and their social embedding, reflecting in an obvious way the scientific and socio-psycho-pedagogical criteria that constitute the basis of elaborating and modernizing the educational and teaching content (Cristea, 2005; Fuller, 2014; Richmond & Tatto, 2016; Păun, 2017; Popovici-Borzea, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The analytical programs for the TST school subject, applied to the high school lower secondary – 9<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> grades (3), propose contents that would allow to build up some cognitive skills of superior rank, and could generate the rational and motivational states of mind that every subject needs in order to validate their creative capacities according to the specific requirements of the sports domain, with their interests and intellectual aspirations (Popkewitz,

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2010; Minder, 2011; Alfieri et al., 2013; Azevedo, 2013; Vandenbroucke et al., 2018).

School curricula are structured on specific competences for each year of study (9th grade and 10th grade), derived from the six general competences, numbered from 1 to 6. Each specific competence has the serial number which corresponds to the general competence from which it derives (1.1., 2.3., 3.4., 4.2., 5.1., 6.1., etc.). For example, from the first general competence, "1. The scientific interpretation of the issue of performance sports activity", in the 9th grade, two specific skills derive: "1.1. Identifying the objective factors that generated the emergence of sport in social life" and "1.2. Justification of the functions and objectives of sport in social life". In the 10th grade, there are also two specific competences in the school curriculum that derive from the first general competence: "1.1. Justification of the role of the Olympic Games in the development of the sports phenomenon" and "1.2. Characterizing Olympism as a complex social movement".

The number of specific competences deriving from a general competence may be the same for both levels of schooling (9th grade / 10th grade) or different, depending on the complexity of the contents of the school curricula. Thus, in the 9th grade, from the 4th general competence ("4. Correlation of the acquisitions acquired within the theoretical sports training with those specific to the practiced sports discipline"), three specific competences (4.1., 4.2., 4.3.) derive, and in the 10th grade, four specific competences (4.1., 4.2., 4.3., 4.4.) derive.

Considering the students' experience, their level of intellectual development and their knowledge, the contents must be structured, simplified and exposed in such a manner as to stimulate interest and facilitate comprehension (Kleickmann et al., 2012; Goldman & Pellegrino, 2015; Mih, 2018; Priestley & Philippou, 2019; Cumming et al., 2020).

## **Material and methods**

The goal of the research is to analyze the school curricula for the TST school subject, for the lower high school cycle, sports profile, vocational education.

The objectives established in the research aimed:

- to analyze and identify possible dysfunctions in the structure of the current syllabuses;
- to submit resolutions to rectify the structural coherence of the syllabuses in regard with the final products pursued at the level of each year of practice/training.

The methods used for the research were: the bibliographical study method and the analysis of the teaching process documents.

## **Results**

The analysis of the syllabuses specific to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade indicated a series of aspects which are susceptible to create difficulties in the subsequent planning and designing of contents.

The contents of the "2.1. competence: the use in oral and written communication of the basic structures in sports" and "2.2. competence: to seize upon particular aspects of specific terminology of the practiced sport specialization" points out in the school syllabus, without any teaching

logic, the acquisition of certain terms that are specific to the terminology of physical education and sports, most of which are found and reflected in the class programs:

- 10<sup>th</sup>: "olympism", "physical training", "technical training", "tactical training", "technical-tactical behavior", "theoretical training";
- 11<sup>th</sup>: "selection in sport", "stages of training" (4);
- 12<sup>th</sup>: "coaching in sport", "sports form", "training period", "standardized testing", "assessment", "test" (5).

Therefore, considering these coordinates, it can be observed that in the annual syllabus, the teacher is unable to accurately establish the time references concerning the teaching and assessing of these learning units, which embody the forms of some well specified units in the following years of training.

The "3.3. competence: Measuring the characteristics of effort", by the associated contents from the syllabus, does not integrate, on the one hand, within the effort in relation to weariness and the recovery period of time, and on the other hand, the syllabus does not require the approach of some terms such as fatigue, pause, the relation between return-recover-reset.

The "4.3. competence: identifying the causes of the most frequent traumas and specific protection measures" has as a correspondent in the curriculum contents "frequent traumas" encountered in sports activity and not the causes that lead to them.

In the case of the "5.1. competence: the measurement, in terms of evaluating, of the movement speed level of development", two inaccurate aspects draw attention:

- this competence refers to only one of the forms of speed (velocity); speed reaction and speed execution are not included in the syllabus;
- although the text of this competence states the requirement to assess the speed of movement, the contents points out methods and techniques of the speed evaluation in general, which means that all forms of this movement quality must be determined in order to assess its level of development.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, we observe a series of inaccuracies or much too vast generalizations regarding the design of specific competences and associated contents.

When looking at the "5.1. competence: the measurement, in regard to the evaluation, of the maximum force and the explosive force levels of development", two inaccurate aspects draw attention:

- the competence refers to only two of the forms embodied by force (maximum force and explosive force), the force in terms of resistance being omitted or ignored;
- although the competence aims to assess the maximum and the explosive forces, the contents points out methods and techniques of force assessment in general, which means that all forms of this movement quality must be determined in order to evaluate its level of improvement.

Specific competence "6.1. The distinction between attributions and the types of relations of the local and central organizational structures" presents contents which does not correspond logically; the organizational units of sports schools, local level, are found in the 9th grade school syllabus, with the same sequence number, "6.1".

## Discussions

As a follow-up of the syllabus analysis, the proposals to remedy the pointed out dysfunctions aim to create a coherence between the specific competences and the associated contents, in the 9th grade as well as in the 10th grade.

9<sup>th</sup> grade

a) The specific competence 3.3:

- elaborating a specific competence that would replace that existing in the current syllabus: 3.3. Measuring the effort - weariness - recovery relationship in the practiced sport discipline;

- designing contents and learning units specific to the newly stated competence:

- weariness: the steps that lead to weariness, types of weariness, causes of weariness;

- pausing;

- the return-recover-reset relationship.

b) The specific competence 4.3:

- to complete the syllabus with learning units, such as “the causes that lead to traumas in sport activity” and “specific protection measures” that together with “frequent traumas” would complete the entire picture of contents regarding “individual protection”.

c) The specific competence 5.1:

- to design a more complex specific competence that would replace the existing one, as follows: “5.1. the measurement, from the assessing point of view, of speed improving level in the practiced sports discipline”;

- to complete the syllabus with learning units that would completely reflect the newly designed specific competence, such as speed – conditioning factors, forms of speed, the methodology of speed development.

10<sup>th</sup> grade

a) The specific competence 5.1:

- to design a specific competence that would substitute the present one in the syllabus, such as: “5.1. the measurement, in regard to the evaluation, of force developing level during the training sports discipline”;

- to complete the present syllabus with learning units that would completely reflect the newly designed competence, such as force – types of force, influencing factors of force, the methodology of force development.

b) The specific competence 6.1.: to correct or replace the mistakenly written competence with a new one, for example: 6.1. Identifying the organizational structures of school sport, at national level.

## Conclusions

1. The most relevant conclusion to be drawn from this research is the lack of coherence between specific competences and their associated contents, in the lower secondary cycle 9<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> grades syllabus.

2. Inaccuracies and lack of transparency of the relationship between the curriculum structural elements are demanding for teachers, as they have to constantly intertwine the requirement of learning relevant information and the limits of cognitive abilities of the subjects.

3. Eliminating or diminishing the conflicting nature in connection with the syllabuses requires corrections and/

or improvements, and the solution to the problems raised can only be one: “(re)adjustment” of all the elements that constitute the structural framework on which the syllabuses for the lower cycle of high school are based.

## Conflicts of interests

There are no conflicts of interests in this study.

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