

# PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF TETOVO COMPARED TO EUROPEAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The research was conducted mainly in the Municipality of Tetovo (MT) based on the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of North Macedonia, the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) in the MT, and the leading staff of all primary schools belonging to the MT.

**Method of work:** The questionnaire was compiled in collaboration with people competent for primary education issues as well as with experts on psychological and social issues.

**Conclusion and recommendations:** in the subject of Physical Education and Health (PEH) in the primary schools of RNM, some topics are like European schools. Meanwhile, we have some topics that are not realized at all in the subject of PEH. From topics like European countries, the teaching units are also approximately similar. In the conditions of the realization of the course PEH between RNM and European countries, we can prove that there is a big difference. Compared to European countries, RNM doesn't have much difference in the number of weekly hours, since with most countries the number of weekly hours there is no difference with RNM. Luxembourg is the country which has the highest annual base payment for teachers, namely: 72437 Euros per year! Unfortunately, according to Eurydice data, our country, respectively the RNM, ranks third for the lowest payment among the above-mentioned countries. Therefore, my recommendation is that the MES, together with the BDE and the Faculty of Physical Education, form a strategy which would bring changes and reforms in the physical aspect of the implementation of the process as well as in the curricula which would be welcomed by the PEH teachers. One of the recommendations which should be given priority in my opinion is the increase of teachers' salaries.

*Keywords:* Physical Education, Primary School, European Primary Schools, Comparison!

## 1. Introduction

Sports and physical activities represent an important segment of daily life. As a result, exercises satisfy the need for movement. The primary goals of physical and health education are to influence the development of functional and psychomotor skills, as well as to instill in students the importance of daily exercise and sports activities. In this way, it affects the protection of health and the harmonious development of the whole body. Physical and health education are compulsory subjects in the nine-year primary school curriculum (grades I-IX), with 3 hours per week and 108 hours per year, respectively.

The program for physical and health education in the educational process is carried out with certain contents, exercises, and games that physically activate the locomotor apparatus and directly affect the symmetrical and upright growth, improving their physical ability and health, and promoting a healthy way of living. Also included are activities through which students have access to basic movements and techniques of certain sports games.

Physical and health education programs are conceived in such a way that students can master the elements previously learned and get acquainted with new specific exercises and movements, as well as skills from sports like athletics, rhythmic gymnastics, as well as the elementary techniques of football, basketball, volleyball, handball, and table tennis. The supplementary part is also presented by the educational topics, which are organized in agreement with the teacher and the parents. These activities include swimming, skiing,

rollerblading, picnics, school sports, mountain sports, cycling, mini tennis, badminton, and figure skating. Students who are physically active and healthy can more easily meet their daily obligations.

The nine-year school programs are supported by the Ministry of Education and Science, and as such, they are accepted by the primary schools as well as by the teachers of Physical Education. But we are interested in how effective they are both in terms of practical implementation and in terms of functional impact on school-age students who are growing and developing throughout the nine-year school period, with a special emphasis on the puberty period that begins in females. In boys, between the ages of 11–12 years, and in men, between the ages of 13–14 years.

In order to have a more realistic picture of the above-mentioned issues, it is necessary to compare the current situation of the nine-year schools in North Macedonia with the schools in other countries. Therefore, in this research, we decided to make that comparison with the European nine-year schools in more economically and politically developed countries, and especially countries with a healthier and more efficient of educational system.

We hope that this research will highlight the real state of the educational process in nine-year schools and comparisons made with other countries (in this case, European countries) will serve as a guide for critical analysis of the nine-year education system, which should preserve the positive values it possesses. But at the same time, measures should be taken for existing problems and their replacement with those of developed countries.

I think that only in this way can we influence the school curricula to modernize and adapt them based on the demands of the market and contemporary education.

The questionnaire was created in collaboration with people knowledgeable about primary education as well as experts in psychology and social issues. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions.

The questions in the questionnaires were mainly related to the issue of education in the municipality of Tetovo. The questionnaire was conducted in every primary school belonging to the Municipality of Tetovo and was delivered to each physical and health education teacher. The questionnaire was conducted in the respective language of the teachers in question.

## 2. Purpose of the research

The primary purpose of this research is to verify the factual condition of the facilities where the physical and health education class is held and the execution of plans and programs that are used by the professors of the subject, while the secondary purpose is the comparison of the subject of physical and health education in the municipality of Tetova with European schools.

## 3. Primary school curriculum

In a tabular format, we will present the topics used in Physical and Health Education subject in grades 6 to 9 in the Republic of North Macedonia.

**Table 1.**

Compulsory topics		Elective topics	
1.	Exercises and games for proper physical development and preparation	1.	Swimming with water activities and learning the basics
2.	Athletics	2.	Skiing with learning the basics
3.	Gymnastics and rhythmic sports	3.	Table tennis
4.	Dances	4.	Walking (walking, cycling)

5.	Games (Football, Basketball, Handball and Volleyball)	5.	School sports
6.	Table tennis	6.	Climbing
7.		7.	Badminton
8.		8.	Rollers
9.		9.	Cycling

In the following, we will bring a table to clarify even more which of the topics are used most in European countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013).

**Table 2.**

Compulsory topics		Number of countries	Elective topics		Number of countries
1.	Games	23	1.	Swimming	7
2.	Sports gymnastics	19	2.	Games	5
3.	Athletics	18	3.	Certain topics from the school	5
4.	Dances	18	4.	Winter sports	5
5.	Swimming	15	5.	Outdoors and adventures	5
6.	Fitness	14	6.	Dances	4
7.	Outdoors and adventures	11	7.	Athletics	4
8.	Others	7	8.	Sports gymnastics	4
9.	Winter sports	5	9.	Fitness	3
10.	Free activities	1	10.	Others	3
11.			11.	Free activities	2

The Municipality of Tetova has 12 central primary schools and 8 peripheral schools. But, only 3 out of 20 primary schools in the municipality of Tetova have a gym, 2 schools have an "old" gym, and a total of 15 schools do not have a gym at all!

The biggest misfortune is that schools such as the primary school "Naim Frashëri", primary school "Istikball", primary school "Bratstvo-Migjeni", and primary school "Kirili dhe Metodij", which are schools with the largest number of students in the municipality of Tetovo, but none of these primary schools has a sports hall. So, the political aspect in the municipality of Tetova is more than evident in the construction of new sports halls, which for political reasons were built first in rural areas, instead of giving priority to primary schools, which have the largest number of students.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, physical education in primary schools is taught 3 classes per week, or 108 classes per school year!

In the following, in a tabular way, we will present the number of physical and health education classes per week in European countries (JOINT ACTION ON NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – JANPA).

**Table 3.**

Nr.	Country	grades 1-5	grades 6-9
1.	Bulgaria	3	3
2.	France	4	3
3.	Germany	4	4
4.	Greece	4	2
5.	Ireland	1	2
6.	Italy	2	2
7.	Latvia	2	2

8.	Luxembourg	3	2
9.	Malta	2	2
10.	Poland	4	4
11.	Romania	3	2
12.	Slovakia	8	10
13.	Slovenia	2	2

North Macedonia: According to Eurydice data, in our country, teachers have an annual salary of 5750 euros per year, which is approximately 479 euros per month. After 10 years of work experience, this payment increases to 6044 euros per year; after 15 years, it becomes 6179 euros, and the maximum that a teacher can achieve is 8577 euros per year!

Annual payments of teachers in schools of European countries (2017/2018) - Eurydice - Facts and Figures.

**Table 4.**

Highest paid schools in Europe			Lowest paid schools in Europe		
1.	Luxembourg	72437 Euros per year	1.	Albania	4063 Euros per year
2.	Liechtenstein	66939 Euros per year	2.	Bulgaria	4663 Euros per year
3.	Switzerland	64747 Euros per year	3.	North Macedonia	5750 Euros per year

#### 4. Results and discussion

In the table below, we will present the results obtained from the questionnaire, which we conducted in the primary schools of the municipality of Tetova. The questions are listed on the left side of the table, and the options on the right. Each answer is converted to a percentage and is listed among the options.

**Table 5.**

1.	Your gender?	Male 87.5%			Female 12.5%			
2.	How old are you?	Under 25 2%	25-29 16.6%	30-39 37.5%	40-49 31.2%	50-59 8.3%	60+ 4.1%	
3.	What is your level of education?	High school 0%	3-year (180 ETC) 2%	4-year (240 ETC) 83.3%	Master's degree 14.5%	Ph.D. 0%	Other 0%	
4.	How long have you been working as a Physical and Health Education teacher?	This is my first year 8.3%	1-2 years 20.8%	3-5 years 14.5%	6-10 years 20.8%	11-15 years 16.6%	16-20 years 6.2%	More than 20 years 12.5%
5.	Does your school have a gym?	Yes 37.5%			No 62.5%			
6.	Under what conditions do you complete the Physical Health Education class?	Insufficient 25%		Enough 35.4%	Good 31.2%	Very good 8.3%		

7.	Do you think the Physical and Health Education curriculum is well designed or needs to be changed?	Yes – well compiled 85.4%			No 14.5%	
8.	At what percentage do you think you carry out the topics throughout the school year?	Athletics  63.4%	Sport gymnastic  39.7%	Rhythmic gymnastic  37.1%	Dances  42.6%	Football  76.2%
8	At what percentage do you think you carry out the topics throughout the school year?	Basketball  74.1%	Volleyball  71.7%	Handball  56.4%	Table tennis  30.2%	Exercises and games for preparation 73.1%
8.	At what percentage do you think you carry out the topics throughout the school year?	Skiing  28.7%	Swimming  16.6%	Mountain march 26.1%	Camping 16.1%	Other 47.1%
9.	If you think that the curriculum in the subject of Physical and Health Education is not realized, then what do you think are the reasons?	Plan is not adequate  10.4%	Work conditions  81.2%	Students  0%	Others  8.3%	
10.	Do you think there is enough training for teacher development?	Yes 16.6%			No 83.3%	
11.	Do you think that there should be collaborations with educational institutions of the same level for the subject of Physical Education and Health both at home and abroad?	Yes 79.1%			No 20.8%	
12.	Do you think the monthly salary is enough for teachers?	Yes 14.5%			No 85.4%	
13.	What do you think was the impact of shortened curriculum for the subject of Physical and Health Education issued by the Bureau for Development of Education during the Covid 19?	Very good  10.4%	Good  50%	Useless  39.5%		
14.	Do you think that the curriculum of Physical and Health Education was affected by Covid 19?	Yes 33.3%			No 66.6%	
15.	Out of 4 topics (in the curriculum for the subject of Physical and Health Education proposed by the Bureau for Development of	Exercises for games and proper physical development and preparation	General skills development exercises	Dances	Corrective gymnastics	

	Education), which do you think has been the most successful?	53.8%	30.7%	5.7%	9.6%	
16.	How punctual were the students in distance learning (online) in the subject of Physical Education and Health during the Covid19?	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
		0%	4.1%	20.8%	56.2%	18.7%
17.	How successful has been Physical Education and health during Covid19?	Insufficient	Enough	Good	Very good	Excellent
		10.4%	18.7%	47.9%	22.9%	0%
18.	Do you think that there were other ways for the carrying out the Physical and Health Education class during the Covid19?	Yes			No	
		29.1%			70.9%	
19.	What were the students' reactions to the Physical Education and Health class during Covid19?	Not interested	In some way	Average	Interested	Very interested
		12.5%	20.8%	22.9%	22.9%	20.8%
20.	What were the parents' reactions to the Physical Education and Health class during Covid19?	Not interested	In some way	Average	Interested	Very interested
		20.8%	16.6%	39.5%	18.7%	4.1%

Based on the above-mentioned analysis, we can see that in the subject of physical education and health in the primary schools of the Republic of North Macedonia, there are some topics similar to those in European schools. Meanwhile, we have some topics that are not held at all (or rather, not at all in the curriculum issued by the Bureau for Development of Education) in the subject of Physical and Health Education. From topics similar to those in European countries, the teaching units are also approximately similar (with a few small exceptions). In the conditions of the realization of the course in physical and health education between the Republic of North Macedonia and European countries, we can prove that there is a big difference. Compared to European countries, our country, the Republic of North Macedonia, does not have much of a difference in the number of classes per week, since, as with most countries, the number of classes per week does not differ at all from the Republic of North Macedonia. As can be clearly seen in the table, Luxembourg is the country that has the highest annual base payment for teachers, namely, 72437 Euros a year! Unfortunately, according to Eurydice data, Republic of North Macedonia ranks third with the lowest payment among the abovementioned countries. In this case, the only countries that have lower payment than the Republic of North Macedonia are Albania and Bulgaria, which are in fact our neighbors.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

Fortunately, in the Republic of North Macedonia, since the academic year 2019/2020, in the primary schools, in the first grade, the so-called tandem-teacher process has started to be implemented, which means the subject of Physical Education and health will be taught by the class teacher together with the professional sports teacher. But is this a fruitful strategy? - Typically, yes, but this should be just the beginning of the many changes that are needed in the subject of Physical and Health Education. Therefore, my recommendation is that the Ministry of Education and Science, together with the Bureau for Development of Education and the Faculty of Physical Education, form a strategy that would bring changes and reforms in the physical aspect of the implementation of the process as well as in the curricula that would be welcomed by the Physical Education teachers.

One of the recommendations, which should be primary in my opinion, is the change of teachers' salaries. According to data released by the government of the Republic of North Macedonia, a family of four members needs approximately 550 euros per month for the food basket and monthly expenses. How come teachers with a salary of 400 euros per month can meet their monthly expenses for the basic things of life?! Therefore, my recommendation (based on the answers given by teachers, of which 85.4% believed this salary is not enough) is that this salary should be gradually increased, starting as soon as possible.

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