



Working together  
www.rcis.ro

## **Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala**

ISSN: 1583-3410 (print), ISSN: 1584-5397 (electronic)

---

### **CURRICULUM CHANGES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT SUBJECT IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

*Cristian Mihail RUS, Laurentiu-Gabriel TALAGHIR,  
Teodora-Mihaela ICONOMESCU, Renato Gabriel PETREA*

---

Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială, 2019, vol. 66, pp. 342-363

<https://doi.org/10.33788/rcis.66.20>

Published by:  
Expert Projects Publishing House



On behalf of:  
„Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University,  
Department of Sociology and Social Work  
and  
HoltIS Association

REVISTA DE CERCETARE SI INTERVENTIE SOCIALA  
is indexed by Clarivate Analytics (Web of Science) -  
Social Sciences Citation Index  
(Sociology and Social Work Domains)

# Curriculum Changes in Secondary School Physical Education and Sport Subject in the Romanian Education System

Cristian Mihail RUS<sup>1</sup>, Laurentiu-Gabriel TALAGHIR<sup>2</sup>,  
Teodora-Mihaela ICONOMESCU<sup>3</sup>, Renato Gabriel PETREA<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

In the present paper we aimed at presenting the new secondary school curriculum for Physical Education and Sport in Romanian education and the changes proposed by it in relation to the previous curriculum. The new curriculum was developed in 2017 while the previous document regulated PE practical activities since 2009. For this we performed the conceptual comparative analysis of the content elements and of the assessment system. From a conceptual point of view, the general competencies formulated in the new curriculum still focus on using physical exercise as a means of maintaining health. The content elements are mostly represented by specific skills in sports disciplines. The content elements do not have a different connection to conceptual objectives. Content requirements are fully taken from the previous curriculum. The new curriculum proposes a new assessment system. It is based on the testing of general competence and is in line with the conceptual objectives. The new assessment system relies on the previous performance-based assessment system, although performance scales have not been developed. This makes it difficult to apply the new assessment system. The new curriculum proposes as a total novelty element the use of the PE textbook as a support for the theoretical notions that can be found in the practical activity.

*Keywords:* physical education, curriculum, secondary school education, assessment system, general competencies, health.

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, ROMANIA; E-mail: cristian.rus@uaic.ro

<sup>2</sup> Dunarea de Jos University, Galati, ROMANIA; South Ural State University, Chelyabinsk, RUSSIAN FEDERATION; E-mail: gtagalghir@gmail.com (corresponding author)

<sup>3</sup> Dunarea de Jos University, Galati, ROMANIA; E-mail: ticonomescu@ugal.ro

<sup>4</sup> Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, ROMANIA; E-mail: renato.petrea@uaic.ro

## Introduction

Every social system is permanently concerned with the way of educating and training the younger generation. This phenomenon of education is one of anticipating the evolution of society as a whole and of the future needs in order to ensure the adaptation to various variables such as the environment, technology or legal conditions. In Romania, there have been numerous attempts to bring the education system in line with the changing realities of our society, but also to harmonize its content with the European benchmarks which Romania also wants to implement. As a result of the emergence of new documents, aimed at regulating the education system (Law of National Education, 2011) and based on the desire of those who were in the government or in ministries, new curricula for most school disciplines were developed. This is because “the curriculum is primarily a system of learning experiences offered to educators and assimilated by them” (Mocanu, 2015). The curriculum development of a school subject is conditioned by the realities encountered in the educational process, by the legislative system, by social order, by the learning needs or by the cultural and geographical context in which this process takes place (Radu, Popovici, & Puni, 2015, Talaghir & Icomonescu, 2017). Chis (2005: 96-99), considers that “the curriculum and its theoretical and practical dimensions, well-configured at a theoretical and conceptual level, but also at the level of concrete experiences, gain the power to globally, totally re-design and plan educational activity”. In pre-university education, “Physical Education and Sport” is included as a curricular activity as well as an extra-curricular activity (Government of Romania, 2000). The law governing the physical education and sport activity in Romania states that “physical education and sport are state-supported activities of national interest” (Law no.69 / 2000). As a result of this general importance fact, “Physical education and sport in pre-university education is included in the common core curriculum” (Law no 1/2011). Researches regarding the influence of curricular changes have been the concern of specialists from all around the world. This research seeks to emphasize either the need for curricular changes in accordance with social contexts or the way of applying or implementing the new curriculum documents (Clemente *et al*, 2016; Betti, 2015; Abd-El-Kader, Kottb, & Hafez, 2015; Sahin, 2013; You, 2011). Other specialists strongly believe that curricular changes are necessary in order to make room for less valuable aspects of physical exercise practice such as behavioural, attitude, or social integration issues (Griggs, 2012; Currie, 2013; Rus, 2013; Badau, 2016).

The traditional school is built on a one-size-fits-all model. At present and in the future, school naturally completes the process, curriculum and learning experience standards with skills learning and assessment standards. The process of skills and competence formation is part of a range of pedagogical alternatives, but competence assessment implies common criteria, (national) performance standards, as well as personalized progress assessment criteria. The learning processes and products

synchronize with the situations experienced, with the particularities of man's existence throughout his life. The learning products are pragmatically organized in the diverse curriculum offer, in flexible and efficient school structures: core curriculum, local curriculum and optional curriculum, learner-adapted learning structures and community needs, interactive learning and teaching (Badau, 2016). Thus, the curriculum develops as an all-encompassing concept in relation to various dimensions of the educational process: objectives, contents, strategies, means etc. In addition, structural theories in the field emphasize the tendency towards curricular integration, both at the procedural level and in terms of learning outcomes. As a process, the main challenge of the curriculum is to translate the learning subjects into learning experiences and learning acquisitions; also, the learning outcomes should cover the student's areas of competence in a balanced way: thematic and interdisciplinary knowledge; vocational skills; practical skills; personal and interpersonal abilities.

The desire to adapt and update the PE school curriculum for secondary education is part of a wider process of modernizing Romanian education in this direction. We could assert that we are trying to achieve a unitary vision regarding the importance of this discipline in the process of growth and development of the younger generation. This is because *Physical Education* is present within the educational process from a very young age (6 years), within the preparatory grade, until university studies when the individual has already become an adult ( $\geq 20$  years). As a result, this very long period of time in which "Physical Education" accompanies the process of a child's transformation into an adult, speaks for itself about the beneficial effects gained by the body through its practice (Talaghir, 2015).

We may also consider that physical exercise plays a truly important, and even dominant, role in the healthy growth of a child and may be regarded as a factor of development not only in the physical sense but also in the psychological sense of the word, as a factor which integrates practical skills in the everyday concerns of the population. In this regard, curriculum changes have already been made for this subject at the primary school level. Thus, the previous curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2003; 2004; 2005) has been replaced by the new curriculum documents (Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, 2013, Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, 2014), which have been applied since school year 2015-2016. We chose to study secondary school curriculum developments as this document is completely new and its application began from school year 2017-2018. As a result, it is of an utmost importance to know what are the similarities, differences and novelties of this curriculum, developed in order to harmonize the teaching process with the national and the European one. We considered that the social impact of changes can have significant meanings for the methodical orientation of the learning content and its practice in the coming years. The present paper represents the equal contribution of all authors.

## Considerations regarding the conceptual changes of the new curriculum

Our study, which focuses on the novelty elements of the new curriculum (Ministry of National Education, 2017) for the secondary school PE subject, began with the comparative conceptual analysis of the two curricular documents. By means of these concepts the objectives of the teaching process are specified. These objectives are described in the new curriculum as general competencies. They are designed to establish a graduate profile at the end of the study cycle. In the previous curriculum, the objectives of the training process were also outlined in terms of competencies (Ministry of National Education, Research and Innovation, 2009). Competencies are structured sets of knowledge, skills and attitudes, acquired through learning, that allow to solve domain-specific problems or general problems in various contexts (Ministry of National Education, 2017). Competencies have cognitive / intellectual, affective-attitudinal and psychomotor components (Pirau, 2010). A competence-oriented curriculum is in line with the opinion of specialists in this field and with the current requirements of social life, professional training and of the labour market, by guiding the teaching process towards practical acquisitions (MacLean *et al.*, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2013; Jess, Carse, & Keay, 2016). In order to easily compare the two conceptual approaches of the studied curriculum documents, we drew up *Table 1*, in which the PE educational objectives are presented.

From the *Table 1*, a first general observation can be made, namely that in the new curriculum the general competencies are 3 while in the previous curriculum there were 5. From the perspective of the previous curriculum, the first competence of the educational objectives was oriented towards the formation, but above all, the use of a specialized language in communication. This involves acquiring a volume of theoretical knowledge that students can understand in order to be able to use them at the right times to make the communication process more accessible. This objective generated the idea of the importance of a theoretical content in preparing for PE. The knowledge and use of a specialized language referred to a theoretical component that also stimulated the student from an intellectual point of view.

Table 1: Conceptual elements of the analysed curricula

<b>Curriculum 2009 (Ministry of National Education, Research and Innovation)</b>	<b>Curriculum 2017 (Ministry of National Education)</b>
<b>GENERAL COMPETENCIES</b>	<b>GENERAL COMPETENCIES</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using specialized language in communication</li> <li>2. Using information, methods and means specific to physical education and sport in order to optimize health and to obtain a harmonious physical development</li> <li>3. Using knowledge, methods and means specific to physical education and sport to develop motor skills</li> <li>4. Applying the system of rules specific to the organization and practice of physical education and sport activities and adopting an appropriate behaviour in interpersonal and group relationships</li> <li>5. Exploiting body language for expressing and understanding ideas, emotional states and aesthetics</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using the favourable effects of physical education and sport in the constant practice of physical exercise in order to optimize health</li> <li>2. Using Physical Education and Sport acquisitions for their own harmonious physical development and for the development of motor skills</li> <li>3. Demonstrating an appropriate behaviour, by obeying specific rules during the organisation, practice and participation as a spectator in the physical education and sport activities</li> </ol>

The knowledge and use of a specialized language referred to a theoretical component that also stimulated the student from an intellectual point of view. The second component of the previous curriculum referred to the use of exercise as a means of maintaining health. A harmonious development represented a prerequisite for the formation of social skills in young people. Also, optimizing health led to the idea that physical exercise is favourable, and those with various mild or temporary illnesses realised that physical exercise could facilitate the healing or recovery process. This health-oriented component attempted to shift the focus from the competitive and performance-based activities to physical exercise performed in order to preserve health. The third component of the previous curriculum refers to practising physical exercises in order to increase the general motor skills of students. The term general motor skills is very wide and vague at the same time. General motor skills involved practical activities that contributed to the development of basic motor skills (walking, running, jumping, catching and throwing). On the other hand, also with regard to the development of general motor skills, a wide variety of activities, specific to the sport disciplines could be included in the practical activity. As a result, we believe that this objective offered the dominant orientation of the practical activity towards practising performance-centred physical exercise, in which the special qualities of only some students could be exploited.

The fourth objective stated in the previous curriculum (Ministry of National Education, Research and Innovation, 2009) refers to the behavioural and attitudinal

aspects. We believe that this component is very important in today's social context. Aspects related to the knowledge of some rules, the need to obey them as a factor of social coexistence increase the importance of Physical Education and Sport as a factor of general education. Finally, the student, as a product of the school, will have a job where the need to know the behavioural rules and their application will lead to a faster to the integration of the person into groups and working teams.

The last objective of the previous curriculum refers to the "exploitation of body language" from both communication perspectives and students' understanding perspectives. We consider this objective to be very subtle and sensitive. This implies a high level of knowledge, on the one hand, from the part of the teacher and, on the other hand, from the part of the students, whose assimilation abilities differ. This component is concerned with the non-verbal communication and understanding, a very important factor in communication and group integration. This objective should probably develop empathy in students, along with mutual support and understanding abilities in everyday activities. This concern goes beyond the physical activity practised during PE classes. The possibility of achieving it has been permanently diminished by the emphasis laid on the sporting, competitive and performance content from practical PE classes.

From the perspective of the current curriculum (Ministry of National Education, 2017), we notice that the number of competencies necessary for this subject has been reduced. The health-oriented aspects and the optimization options have been maintained. In other words, practising physical exercise as a means of maintaining health, a harmonious physical development has been maintained as in the previous curriculum. We believe that this perspective is a favourable one for school physical education. We also believe that this perspective is in line with those in Europe that devote the use of physical exercise to maintaining health and not to obtaining performance in sport. The accessibility of practical physical activities will lead to a higher degree of pupil participation in them.

The second objective of school physical education represents, in fact, a fusion of the second and third objectives of the previous curriculum. Thus, harmonious physical development and increased motor skills are taken into consideration, which lead to the idea of using exercise in a bivalent way, i.e. on the one hand, as a means of preserving health and, on the other hand, as a means of achieving performance. Increasing motor skills is probably a direct reference to basic motor skills, but we believe that they are mainly concerned with special experiments in sport disciplines. It is assumed that the development of these skills at a higher level will have a beneficial effect on the pupils on many levels.

We note that the idea of using specialized language in communication is no longer a priority for PE. In other words, it does not seem so important in the training process to master theoretical knowledge and the possibility of using it in different contexts at suitable times. The cognitive aspect regarding school physical education no longer seems important. In the new curriculum, it seems that

the dominant emphasis is placed only on the practical part of practising specific skills in sport branches that are hardly ever found in everyday activities. This is somewhat interesting in the context in which the new curriculum proposed by the Ministry of Education emerged simultaneously with a new concept for Physical Education and Sport as a school subject, namely that of the specialized textbook. To reinforce this idea, three versions of the textbook, agreed by the Ministry, were proposed.

As a result, we ask ourselves the question “*What is the sustainability of a theoretical component for this subject if conceptually the idea of using a specialized language no longer has an educational objective for it?*” The last educational objective in the new curriculum addresses the issues of student behaviour and the possibility of educating them by means of group activities. Its wording, however, isolates it and diminishes its sphere of influence as compared to the wording from the previous curriculum. As a consequence, student behaviour must be in accordance with specific rules “during the organisation, practice and participation as a spectator in the physical education and sport activities”. We can understand from this wording that only in the case of certain physical education and sport activities there are sets of rules that must be followed and obeyed, fact which seems to us a huge error for the education process. Perhaps this reference is more about behaviour as a competitor, as a person who practises sport activities, where rules and regulations must be known and obeyed. From the point of view of general education, in order to shape an appropriate behaviour for society, it must aim at social integration, at belonging to a social or professional group, and not only the knowledge of rules for practising different sports occasionally. Shaping an appropriate behaviour for use in interpersonal and group relationships can be achieved especially through practical activities carried out during physical education classes, where pupils interact directly, more than during other classes in the school education process.

In view of the above, we consider that the new curriculum does not bring conceptual novelties as compared to the previous one. The aspects of practising effective physical exercise as a means of preserving health and of social integration are maintained. The possibility of practising physical exercise at a competitive level, focusing on performance, is suggested. Aspects related to behavioural and attitude components are limited. Cognitive aspects and their influences on pupils’ training are totally removed, although paradoxically, it is recommended to use some school textbooks for this school subject.



## **The comparative analysis of the curricular content elements**

The content elements are very important, because they are supposed to achieve the above-mentioned objectives of the educational process. In the new curriculum, content elements have been grouped into several areas (6) such as: the organisation of motor activities, harmonious physical development, motor skills, sports games, hygiene and individual protection, behaviours and attitudes. In the methodological suggestions of the new curriculum (Ministry of National Education, 2017) it is stated that the first two areas (the organisation of motor activities and harmonious physical development) can be the subject of PE classes only in the first 3-4 weeks of the school year. The last two areas (hygiene and individual protection, behaviours and attitudes) cannot be dealt with independently during practical activities. The methodological suggestion section states that these will be addressed during the school year in all lessons. From the above-presented facts, we could state that most of the content elements with which PE teachers will operate during the whole school year will be from the domain of motor skills and sports games.

The multitude of content elements from sports games lead us to the idea that physical exercise will be used to learn and consolidate some of the skills specific to these sports games. Thus, the main goal of physical exercise will be performance-related rather than health-related, as it is stated in the general competencies of PE. This approach to the content of practical lessons seems to be supported by the statement that “competition is the main form of organization, adapted to the psychological abilities and motor skills of students” (Ministry of National Education, 2017). Perhaps competitions are the ones that highlight the level of performance achieved. We can't help wondering whether, by the term “competition,” those who developed the new curriculum referred to competitions by means of which basic motor skills are learned, consolidated or exploited? Or whether from the statement above we can understand the idea that we could use activities such as relays, applicative physical exercises, circuits, or movement games? We believe that the idea of sports games, as content elements of practical activities, places the term “competition” in the field of sporting activities, a superior level of motor skills and abilities become manifest.

The competitive nature of these content elements will result in the removal from practical lessons of those who cannot properly achieve specific technical skills. Thus, the objective of using exercise as a means of health, of harmonious physical development, of forming a healthy and active lifestyle can no longer be achieved. We also believe that, using a large number of skills specific to sports games does not represent an absolute necessity for the content of practical activities. This is because these skills are not found in students' or adults' everyday activities. We believe that the use of movement games in which students must accomplish certain tasks would be more effective. These activities would attract the student groups into the practice of physical exercise and do not imply a certain level of training. We also do not understand why physical development activities are excluded

from being addressed as lesson topics to support the proposal of new activities other than learning technical elements from sports games. This is because simple activities, such as aerobic exercises, can always be proposed as lesson topics. The exercises proposed through this type of program are addressed to all pupils and do not imply a prior level of training. These exercises use basic motor skills that are found in everyday activities. The influences that they have on the body at a functional level focus on the circulatory and the respiratory functions, so they have a real influence on the maintenance of health.

Students can be monitored while performing the exercises, and effort intensity can gradually increase depending on the level of training that they acquire. Through these exercise programs, it is possible to increase the motor quality manifestation indices, which would be in line with the conceptual objectives outlined in the new curriculum. Exercises performed on music increase the attractiveness of the lesson, and its multilateral influences on the body correspond to the formation of general competencies. As a result of the above, we consider that limiting the use of these exercises only in certain parts of the lesson is not welcome and is contrary to the concept of practising physical exercise as a means of maintaining health.

Another aspect that we would like to highlight relates to practical activities in the areas of hygiene, individual protection, behaviours and attitudes. How will we be able to influence the above-mentioned concept by practising some technical structures? Can we consider that, by the execution of some elements of gymnastics, the teacher can develop socially useful behaviours in students? The permanent desire to defeat the opponent will not generate empathy, mutual support, or other types of behaviours. In terms of attitudes, the human being tends to avoid everything that generates a state of physical and mental discomfort. As a result, those who will not feel comfortable during the PE lesson will avoid attending them by means of a medical discharge.

In order to comparatively highlight the content elements structured by secondary school grades, we drew up *Table 2*.

Table 2: Content elements of the 2009/2017 curricula

Content elements (Ministry of National Education, 2017)	Content elements (Ministry of National Education, Research and Innovation, 2009)
<p><b>for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- three different athletics trials</li> <li>- static and dynamic acrobatic elements from acrobatic gymnastics, stipulated in the curriculum; the vault jump, stipulated in the curriculum</li> <li>- a sports game</li> </ul> <p><b>for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- three athletics trials from those taught in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>- static and dynamic acrobatic elements from acrobatic gymnastics, stipulated in the curriculum; the vault jump, stipulated in the curriculum</li> <li>- two sports games, one of which taught in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade</li> </ul> <p><b>for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- two or three athletics trials, of those taught in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>- static and dynamic acrobatic elements from acrobatic gymnastics, stipulated in the curriculum; the vault jump, stipulated in the curriculum</li> <li>- a sports game (one with which the students are familiar with from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade)</li> </ul> <p><b>for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one or two athletics trials at the students' choice, taught in the previous years</li> <li>- static and dynamic acrobatic elements from acrobatic gymnastics; one of the vault jumps at the students' choice</li> <li>- an optional sports game, from the ones taught in the previous years.</li> </ul>	<p><b>for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- three different athletics trials</li> <li>- Gymnastics: an entire exercise with static and dynamic acrobatic elements and combinations; one vault jump</li> <li>- Sports games: a sports game</li> </ul> <p><b>for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Athletics: three different athletics trials (the ones taught in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade)</li> <li>- Gymnastics: an entire exercise with static and dynamic acrobatic elements and combinations; one vault jump</li> <li>- Sports games: two sports games, one of which taught in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade</li> </ul> <p><b>for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Athletics: three different athletics trials (two trials taught in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade; a new athletics trial) - Gymnastics: an entire exercise with static and dynamic acrobatic elements and combinations; vault jumps, from the curriculum, at their own choice</li> <li>- Sports games: a sport game (one the students are familiar with from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade)</li> </ul> <p><b>for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Athletics: two athletics trials, at the students' choice, from the ones taught in the previous years - Gymnastics: an entire exercise with static and dynamic acrobatic elements and combinations; vault jumps, from the curriculum, at their own choice</li> <li>- Sports games: an optional sports game, from the ones taught in the previous years.</li> </ul>

From this table, we can easily notice that the new curriculum does not bring any new content as compared to the previous one. The central points that the teaching process should focus on include only sports activities such as athletics, gymnastics and sports games. This sporting and performance-centred content has been entirely taken from the previous curriculum without attempting to harmonize it with the conceptual structure that we should consider. To exemplify the issue concerning the increase in the number of specific skills in sports games, we will refer to "Gymnastics". Thus, in the previous curriculum, for the 5th grade, the previous curriculum required the learning of 5 acrobatic elements. In the current curriculum, 11 acrobatic elements are required for the same age range. This represents an increase of more than 100% in the number of skills included in the teaching process, i.e. a doubling. Given that the learning units will fall within the same timeframe as before, the teaching process will not be more efficient; on the contrary, it will be more difficult. The time for acquiring these skills will be shorter, fact that will not result in a qualitative increase in the acquisition of the respective acrobatic elements.

In the case of athletic skills, too, maintaining some aspects regarding the execution technique, such as the sprint technique or technical aspects regarding the long jump with one and a half step in the air, are taken from the previous curriculum, without relevance to the practical activity. This is because, in the opinion of all the participants in the teaching process (teacher, student), for the sprint trial, it is important to obtain a minimum time, according to the National Assessment System (Ministry of National Education, 1999).

As a result, the speed technique is never assessed and the curriculum does not specify how this assessment is possible. In the case of jumping skills, this is not addressed in the teaching process due to the lack of a suitable material basis in which they can be practised. We also believe that this skill is not relevant to everyday life, and we never find it in the adult's motor skill manifestation. Natural jumps from one leg to the other or from one leg to both legs should probably be the content elements of the teaching process. Also, jumping over or from various obstacles would be a factor contributing to an increase in general motor skills if practised for a sufficient number of times. The rugby-tag was introduced as a sports game. We believe this is not a standalone sports game. The elements of the rugby game have been simplified and adapted to school activity. We believe that the introduction of this activity in the specialized curriculum can generate a beneficial effect because its application does not imply special basic equipment as in other sports games. Also, the activity requires the involvement of the team in the game through the use of basic motor skills, which is useful for the transfer of these skills to everyday life. The concern of students to work in a team increases the level of attention required by the game and exerts positive influences regarding attitude and behavioural aspects.

Another important component of content elements, irrespective of the domain to which it belongs, is represented by the very large volume of theoretical information. Thus, students have to acquire hygiene, locomotion and personal protection notions, the rules used in sports games, athletics or gymnastics. Also, students must have a sufficient amount of information about all sports games or about high performance athletes from Romania or abroad. Students also need to acquire information regarding the correct behaviour in sporting events as participants or spectators. We can observe that this volume of theoretical information is very large and that this information probably will constitute the general knowledge the pupil will have in his life. However, the current curriculum makes no reference to how the transfer of this information will be made to the pupil. The curriculum does not specify which information could be considered relevant to each age group.

From this perspective, the curriculum has brought an absolute novelty in the history of Romanian education, namely the idea of a theoretical component to support the practical component. The student must first learn, understand the content and then try to implement it. As a result of this approach, in the school year 2017 - 2018 a PE textbook appeared for the fifth grade. We believe that the implementation of the theoretical component can completely remove the medical discharge for physical education and sport. By using this component, the educational role of the teacher will be more important. The theoretical component will transform the learner into a participant in his / her own learning process because he / she will better understand the effects of the practical physical activity (Talaghir & Iconomescu, 2018). The way in which the textbook should be used or the number of hours allotted to this theoretical content was not specified. Also, the assessment criteria have not been quantified so that they could represent a real support in the work of the PE teacher. All the above-described aspects of content elements found in the current curriculum lead us to the idea that it brings a small number of novelty elements. The content is predominantly oriented towards exercise as a means of achieving performance in physical education and sport. Technical items have recorded a significant increase in PE. There is no agreement between these forms of exercise with sporting content and the aims of education that focus on physical exercise as a means of maintaining health and on group integration.

## **The assessment in the new school curriculum for Physical Education and Sport**

The assessment is an important aspect of the educational process. It indicates to the specialists the level of content element acquisition during the practical activities. The assessment also provides information on how practical lessons led to the achievement of the expected educational objectives for the respective subject in accordance with the age level for which they were applied. A change in the assessment system for Physical Education and Sport was highly awaited in the secondary education system in Romania. The previously existing National Assessment System was developed 18 years ago and, since its entry into force, it has never been revised. This while during this long period of time the specialized curriculum was changed in 2009.

The change in assessment was necessary in order to create a direct link between the practical activity and the educational objectives of the new curriculum. Also, the performance-oriented objectives were no longer relevant to the assessment. This is because, together with the curricular development, the practice of physical exercise has become a health-oriented component rather than a performance-oriented one. Another aspect regarding the necessity to change the assessment system and replace it with a more flexible, competence-centred one, in accordance with the social evolution of the subject and with its objectives, is that the performance aspects represented a psychological limit for the students who could not achieve them. The new curriculum (Ministry of National Education, 2017) is accompanied by a new assessment system for Physical Education and Sport. This is probably the most important and significant novelty element of the current curriculum. The proposed changes create a flexible assessment that matches the educational objectives from the conceptual part at the level of general competencies. The new assessment system is fully presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3: The assessment system for secondary school education (Ministry of National Education, 2017)

No.	DOMAIN	MEANS	5 <sup>th</sup> GRADE	6 <sup>th</sup> GRADE	7 <sup>th</sup> GRADE	8 <sup>th</sup> GRADE
1.	Harmonious physical development	Complex of harmonious physical development	5 exercises 4 x 8 reps	6 exercises 4 x 8 reps	7 exercises 4 x 8 reps	8 exercises 4 x 8 reps
2.	Speed	Relays 10 x 5 m	X	X	X	X
		50-m sprint, on flat ground, starting from a standing position	X	X	X	X
3.	Strength	Exercises used to develop the main muscle groups	1 exercise/ 3 muscle groups	2 exercises/ 2 muscle groups	2 exercises/ 3 muscle groups	2 exercises/ 4 muscle groups
4.	Endurance	Endurance/long-distance running	4 min.	4 min.	4 min.	4 min.
5.	Athletics	Athletics trial of the students choice (taken from the school curriculum)	X	X	X	X
6.	Gymnastics	Floor exercise with imposed elements	5 elements	6 elements	7 elements	8 elements
		Vault jump (according to the curriculum)	X	X	X	X
7.	Sport game	A technical structure/element	X	X (from a sport game studied during the 1 <sup>st</sup> year of study)	-	-
		Bilateral game	X	X	X (game 2 from the 6 <sup>th</sup> grade)	X

One may notice from the above table that the assessment for all secondary school grades is divided into 7 criteria covering the content elements, on the one hand and, and the educational objectives, on the other hand. Among these criteria of the assessment process, we can see that the first 4 are in line with the established objectives set by the general competencies of the new curriculum. The harmonious physical development is a concern for a healthy and active lifestyle. As a result, the knowledge of a number of exercises that can be performed together, with influences for all muscle groups, was introduced into the current assessment system. The number of exercises that must be known increases progressively until the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

The following three assessment criteria focus on the testing of motor skills. These skills are important both for the pupil's daily activity and for the future adult. The testing methods of these skills are significantly different from the ones presented in the previous assessment system (Ministry of National Education, 1999). Thus, the performance-related character of trials is replaced by their utilitarian character. We think it is a completely new concept that has not been present in the school assessment system before. In the speed or endurance tests the importance is laid on performing the test, on finishing it and not on the time obtained in the respective trial.

We believe that this aspect is also important in everyday life. If we have to run in order to quickly reach a place, catch a bus or a person, it is important to do this and not the time it takes to perform this action. If we were able to catch a bus or a colleague, this means that the purpose of the action was achieved. No one is concerned about the time it took for the action to be performed. The same reasoning is maintained in the case of endurance running. It is important for the individual to run as long as possible. The period of time may be variable and may be higher as the level of motor skill increases. Endurance, as well as motor skills, are tested by means of endurance running. We believe there is a terminological confusion between endurance running and long-distance running. Endurance running required, in the previous system, a pre-set distance (800m girls / 1,000m boys) (Ministry of National Education, 1999) that should be covered in a short time. Long-distance running means that the performer maintains a constant running pace for a period of time. The distance covered during this time period is not a significant issue for this type of running. Maintaining the pace of running for the proposed time period leads the student to achieve success, thus generating satisfaction. As far as strength capabilities are concerned, the assessment is varied and differs from one grade to another. The number of exercises increases progressively, as well as the number of muscle groups involved.

The last three assessment criteria directly refer to the sporting content of the new curriculum. By association with the fact that the practice of sports is a factor of motor skill increase, we consider that these elements from the assessment system can be associated with it. They are not relevant to everyday life because they are not found in the daily routine. They can be found as recreational activities, where



it is not important to achieve performance but to participate, integrate into different groups, socialize, spend time in nature. This is an objective of the educational process for this subject, which does not refer to performance but to the use of physical exercise as a means of maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle.

In view of the above, we consider that, on the one hand, the new assessment system supports the student and, on the other hand, it is in line with the objectives mentioned within the general competencies. The new assessment system is simple to apply and contributes to better student achievement in PE by removing the performance from the assessment system. After the brief presentation of the assessment criteria and the distribution of trials by grade, in the table, systemic version, the assessment system introduced by the new curriculum is completed by the description of the assessment trials. If the system presented in *Table 3* is clear and the novelty elements of the assessment system seem explicit and simplified, in the case of the assessment trial description, the specialists who have to implement this new system are brought back into the performance - centred one. The application of the system no longer seems to be simply oriented towards motor skills as a means of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. By describing them, they get a performance-centred character that makes it difficult for the teacher to apply it. This is because, although the description of the assessment trials does not focus on the performance issue, it is not accompanied by performance scales that could make it applicable.

We will further exemplify the defective mode in which the assessment trials are described, which appears to have been taken over from the previous assessment system but for which no performance scales have been developed. For the “50-m sprint, on flat ground, starting from a standing position “, the required materials are tape and stopwatch. Procedure: The students stay at the start line in a standing position and run on the set distance. Note: The teacher takes into account the time required for a student to run on the required distance, from the time of the rear leg movement from the start position until the finish line (Ministry of National Education, 2017). *How should we understand this description?* How should the teacher apply this assessment to the students from his/her class? Should the new assessment system be used and should the teacher focus on the completion of the trial or should the teacher focus on the previous assessment system, which was performance-centred? It is obvious that the new curriculum does not specify the performance system by means of which pupils should be assessed. As a result, the descriptive part of this trial leads us to the idea that the new system can only be applied in the sense of completing the test, without focusing on the performance component. We believe that it is important to focus on developing speed by taking into account the conceptual objectives of the new curriculum. The performance part, which is not regulated in the new assessment system anyway, is just an aspect of the competitive part of some special sporting activities in which only few selected students with a higher level of motor skills participate in.

Here, we can make an analogy with other subjects from the secondary school curriculum, such as Mathematics. The skill that should be developed in a student is solving problems and exercises. If the student solves the exercises and the problems, it can be said that the teaching process has achieved its goal. The speed with which the student solves the exercises or problems is not relevant. The one who finishes solving the exercise first is not rated better, with a higher mark. Developing the skill represents the main teaching goal of Maths classes. Therefore, the other students, who will solve the exercises proposed for assessment, will be ranked at the same level as those who solve them faster because the goal is to solve the problem, to accomplish the task and not the speed with which the exercise or the problem were solved. In the same way, for PE, the objective is the development of a skill, in this case “speed”. The time spent to achieve this goal is a secondary issue. From a qualitative point of view, it can be considered important only for participation in competitions with different levels. Participating in extracurricular activities, where students make use of the personal skills acquired in different subjects, is an attribute of their own performance. These cannot be a dominant criterion for the assessment system that aims at achieving educational objectives for most students, as they are described at a conceptual level by means of general competencies for each school subject.

Another example is the “endurance running” test. The endurance running is carried out on flat ground, individually or in groups, each student adopting the personal tempo so that they run continuously without stopping for four minutes. The teacher will measure and record the distance covered by each student in the four minutes of continuous running. Assessment criteria: continuous running for four minutes - 50% of the final grade; the distance covered in the four minutes - 25% of the final grade; Progress towards the initial assessment - 25% of the final mark (Ministry of National Education, 2017). In this situation, reference is made to the teacher’s measurement of the distance covered by each student. This seems somewhat impossible to achieve by the teacher. On the other hand, this activity is not justified because the new assessment system is not accompanied by a scale that transforms the distance covered by pupils into marks. In the case of this trial, the pupil will obtain 50% of the final mark for completing the trial (a 4 minute-run). But which is the final mark? Perhaps it should have been stated that 50% of the maximum mark is granted. The other marking criteria cannot be applied because, for the former, there is no marking scale and, for the second, the progress, which is considered significant for awarding a certain mark, is not specified. Considering these, we may assert that the pupil who runs for 4 minutes and finishes the trial should be scored with a maximum mark of 5. These errors in description and the lack of vision regarding the assessment system lead to the impossibility of applying the performance-centred assessment system.

A final situation presented as an example refers to the “Athletics Trial of the Student’s Choice” (from the ones mentioned in the curriculum). The following are assessed: the correctness of the technical execution - 50% of the final mark;

performance - 25% of the final mark; the progress compared to the initial testing - 25% of the final mark (Ministry of National Education, 2017). In the description of this trial the correctness of its execution should be described. This is very interesting because the technical issues are more difficult and, most often than not, subjectively assessed. Because there is no scale of performance transformation in a mark, performance measurement is useless. Also, not in all cases, we can speak about progress in terms of performance. As a result, we can assume that in the case of a correct execution the pupil could obtain a maximum mark of 5 or less in this trial. Taking into account the above-mentioned examples, we consider that the proposed assessment system has new, valid elements, which are in line with the objectives outlined by general competencies. The description of the assessment trials should be reviewed in order to establish unequivocally whether the assessment process is centred on practical skills or will remain centred on performance.

Another great novelty of the new curriculum for Physical Education and Sport also refers to other forms of assessment, other than those centred on practice. From this perspective, the assessment process will combine traditional and alternative methods (project, portfolio, self-assessment, pair assessment, systematic observation of student activity and behaviour) (Ministry of National Education, 2017). This clarification certainly brings new elements in the assessment process for Physical Education and Sport in secondary school education. The clarification is made in the context of the publication of the specialized textbook for this subject. The innovative theoretical component will make quantifiable the theoretical notions, regulations, sport notions or hygiene and behavioural rules. The emergence of a theoretical assessment opens new perspectives that will reinforce the practical notions learned during the physical education lessons. The inclusion of theoretical aspects in the teaching process will bring the cognitive component alongside the practical component (Talaghir & Iconomescu, 2018).

Forms of assessment such as the portfolio or the project will direct the pupil's activity towards his/her preferences, his/her field of interest and will ensure the transfer of some specialised notions to the general knowledge fund, necessary for the adult throughout life. Self-assessment is a process that can be accomplished especially towards the end of secondary school education (in the 7<sup>th</sup> and in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade), since the pupil is more aware of his own self, fact which repositions him/her within the teaching process in accordance with the interests and opportunities he/she builds for himself/herself. All alternative assessment forms of pupils' activity proposed by the new assessment system must, in the future, be accompanied by ways of application that will turn them into useful tools in this process. We consider that these forms of assessment will contribute to the enhancement of the objective character of the assessment and will lead to significant success for this subject.

## Conclusion

Curricular development is a phenomenon specific to the teaching process for all levels of school education. The curriculum constantly seeks to adapt and harmonize the three elements of the educational process, namely the educational objectives, the content elements and the assessment forms. For Physical Education and Sport, the emergence of a new curriculum was expected because the activities performed during the practical lessons need a new approach in which physical exercise plays an important role not only from a motor point of view but also from a social, behavioural, attitudinal or cognitive point of view.

After analysing the new curriculum and comparing it with the previous one on the three fundamental components, we may draw more conclusions. From a conceptual point of view, the new curriculum continues the trend of emphasising the use of physical exercise as a means of maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle, as an effective means of harmonious physical development. This conceptual trend is integrated into the practice of physical education in Europe. Also, this conceptual framework regarding the maintenance and optimization of the health status at the primary school level is continued at the level of the educational objectives specified in the curriculum for secondary school education. The maintenance of this general direction of education is integrated into the concentric character of the educational process. Giving up the use of the domain-specific language used in the previous curriculum seems uninspired. This is all the more so since the new curriculum is accompanied, for the first time, by a specialized textbook for this subject. Also, abandoning the issues that aimed at developing a proper behaviour for social integration seems to be a fact that is limiting the educational values of practising physical exercise. Components regarding discipline, civilised behaviour, integration into group or interpersonal relationships are issues that need to be shaped throughout the schooling period and by means of all school subjects. We strongly believe that the limitation to the shaping of behaviours in relation to the participation in sports activities as a practitioner or a spectator is a conceptual minus of the new school curriculum.

From the point of view of content elements, the new curriculum does not bring major, modern, game-based novelty elements or fun and recreational activities. The content elements proposed by the new curriculum abound in skills specific to sports disciplines, the same as the previous curriculum. The content proposed for practical activities is not in direct agreement with the conceptual objectives expressed by the general competencies. We do not believe that maintaining health, optimizing it, correcting age-specific, deficient attitudes can be achieved through football, basketball, handball, athletics or gymnastics. As we have already asserted, the use in the practical activities of special skills from sport disciplines brings the content of the activity closer to the performance aspect of practising exercise and not to using it as a means of health. The publication of the Physical Education and Sport textbook is the biggest conceptual novelty from the new curriculum. The

addition of the theoretical component to the practical one opens new perspectives from all points of view. The cognitive, theoretical aspects will need to be better implemented in the future, and we believe that this will lead to changes in the structure of the lesson and in the way in which the lesson plan is drawn up.

The specialized textbook opens the possibility of using new, varied theoretical notion assessment forms in order to better and more objectively complement the school assessment process. The use of theoretical notions in the teaching process will result in the elimination of the medical discharge for PE or the appearance of more classes that will specifically focus on the theoretical component. From the point of view of the assessment process, the new curriculum brings another new, high-impact element, namely a new assessment system, whose main goal is to significantly replace the previous performance-centred assessment system with a new, competence-centred one. We believe that this replacement is achieved and that, through it, the link between the assessment process and the conceptual objectives of the new curriculum is better. We also believe that clarifications are needed to supplement the assessment system by eliminating contradictory contexts or by eliminating the interpretative possibilities for those who need to put them into practice.

Currently, the new assessment system is made up of two parts. The first part focuses on the development of general competencies as a conceptual part of the educational objectives. The second part focuses on the description of the trials, the connection with the previous assessment system, the performance-centred one, is maintained, without specifying the performance scales for each trial. This leads to the impossibility of applying it to the practical activity. The proposal of new alternative forms of assessment represents an opportunity for the future development of the school assessment system in innovative directions, which could significantly contribute to its improvement and objectivity.

### References

- Abd-El-Kader, N., Kottb, E.A., & Hafez, R.A. (2015). A design of physical education textbook for pupils in the third grade of primary through modules. *Science, Movement and Health*, 15(2), 474-481.
- Badau, D. (2016). The Educational Impact of Implementing the Education through Adventure Subject in the Physical Education and Sports Academic Curriculum. *Physical Education of Students*, 21(3), 108-115.
- Betti M., Knijnik J., Venancio L., Neto L.S. (2015). In search of the autonomous and critical individual: a philosophical and pedagogical analysis of the physical education curriculum of Sao Paulo (Brazil). *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 20(4), 427-441.
- Chis V. (2005). *Contemporary pedagogy, the pedagogy based on competencies*, new facsimile edition, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cartii de Stiinta.
- Clemente J.A.J., Abarca-Sos A., Zaragoza J., Solana A.A. (2016). Critical analysis of the basic LOMCE Physical Education curriculum. Consequent actions in the Aragon

- region and future proposals. *Retos Nuevas Tendencias en Educacion Fisica Deporte y Recreacion*, 29, 173-181.
- Currie, J.L. (2013). *Teaching Physical Education in Primary School - An integrated health perspective*, San Jose: ACER Press.
- Government of Romania. (2000). *The Law of Physical Education and Sport no. 69*.
- Government of Romania. (2011). *The Law of Physical Education and Sport*, no. 1.
- Griggs, G. (Ed.). (2012) *An Introduction to Primary Physical education*, London: Routledge.
- Jess, M., Carse, N., & Keay, J. (2016). The primary physical education curriculum process: more complex that you might think!!, *Education 3-13. International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, 44(5), 502-512.
- MacLean, J., Mulholland, R., Gray, S., Horrell, A. (2015). Enabling curriculum change in physical education: the interplay between policy constructors and practitioners. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 20(1), 79-96.
- Ministry of Education and Research. (2004). *School curriculum for physical education - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade*, București.
- Ministry of Education and Research. (2005). *School curriculum for physical education – 4th grade*, București,.
- Ministry of Education, Research, (2003). *OM no. 4686/05.08.2003*, Revised school curricula for physical education - 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, București.
- Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport. (2012). Order 3462 regarding the approval of *The methodology of organizing and conducting physical education and sports activities in pre-university education*, The Official Gazette of Romania.
- Ministry of National Education (2017). *School curricula for physical education - 5th and 8th grades*, București,
- Ministry of National Education, Research and Innovation. (2009). *Curriculum for Physical Education, 5th – 8th grade*, Bucuresti.
- Ministry of National Education. (2013) *Curriculum for Physical Education*, The preparatory grade, the first grade and the second grade, București.
- Mocanu, G.D. (2015) *The Didactics of Physical Education and Sport*. Galați: Dunărea de Jos University Foundation.
- O’Sullivan M. (2013). New directions, new questions: relationships between curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in physical education. *Sport Education and Society*, 18(1), 1-5.
- Pirau. M.T. (coord.) (2010). *The first teaching rank. A theoretical and practical guide*, Baia Mare: Universitatii de Nord.
- Radu, L.E., Popovici, I.M., & Puni, A.R. (2015) *Comparison of Anthropometric Characteristics Between Athletes and Non-athletes* Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 191, 495-499.
- Rus CM. (2013). Communication characteristics during teaching physical education and sport. *Sport Science*, 6(2), 82-84.
- Sahin S. (2013). Education supervisors’ views on the new curriculum and its implementation in primary schools. *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 53, 1-20.
- Talaghir, L.G. (2015). *School acrobatic gymnastics*, Galati: Zigotto Publishing House.

- Talaghir, L.G., Iconomescu, T.M. (2017). Study regarding the evolution of the primary school curriculum for Physical Education in Romania in accordance with the assessment system application. *INTED Proceeding*, 17, 2542-2551
- Talaghir, L.G., Iconomescu, T.M. (2018). Study regarding the implementation of the innovative theoretical component in the school curriculum for physical education within the Romanian school system. *Edulearn Proceedings*, 18, 6169-6177.
- The Ministry of National Education. (2014). *Curriculum for Physical Education*, The third grade and the fourth grade, București.
- You, J. (2011). A self-study of a national curriculum maker in physical education: challenges to curriculum change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(1), 87-108.