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The Effect of World War I And World War II on Physical Education in the United States of America

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1. Introduction

American physical education, originally patterned from practices in Europe, has developed its own characteristic of variety in content, methods and standards. Today, Europe as well as most of the rest of the world learns from America.

The literature is filled with reports of various influences on the development of physical education as we know it today. Several major influences have been values, political situations, nationalism, economics, religion, and ecology. (Zeigler 2, 1979: 31~110) Throughout American history, physical education has been affected by major wars, with a sudden upsurge in attention being paid to physical education just prior to the outbreak of World War I.

This study reviews the literature of the development of American physical education, especially as it has been influenced by military training before and after the World Wars.

Physical education is an applied discipline based on the sciences and humnities concerned with the effects of human physical performance on man and society. (Flath, 1976:8) Physical Education as we know it today has evolved steadily over the past hundred years.

In the nineteenth century, the influence of nationalism in education both in Europe and in the United States was very strong. This helped to bring about government controlled and goverment supported public school systems. It was inevitable that in any national school system physical training, designed to maintain and improve the fitness of the populace, would find an important place. As with most educational developments, attention was first focused on boys and men but extended to girls and women in due course. (Zeiger 2, 1979:172) These trends were part of the growing "natural" movement in physical education with increased interest in play and recreation as well as in competitive athletics. There is no question, also, of the tremendous influence that Dewey's philosophy of education

had on the natural movement of this era. (Zeigler, 1979:174)

In the twentieth century, there have been a number of strong attacks made against the traditional approaches. Even prior to World War I, the idealism that had emanated from Kant had lost some of the prestige it enjoyed in the late 1800's. The defense of scientific investigation by Spencer and Darwin was a tremendously powerful influence. Pragmatism, under the influence of a number of early English and European scientists and philosophers —and, of course, the American triumvirate of Peirce, James and Dewey—gathered much strength from naturalism and from the continued rise of scientific inquiry. Great emphasis was placed on the desirability of testing hypotheses through experience in order to gain "true" knowledge.

In fact, it was stated that we could not even know the meaning of an idea before it was put into practice. In educational philosophy in general, and particularly in physical education, the pragmatic approach became known as experimentalism, or pragmatic naturalism. (Zeigler 2, 1979:53)

The period from 1930 to 1970 is of particular interest but it is so close to the present that it is almost impossible to gain the perspective need to assess these influential years accurately. In the early part of this period, many factors such as the depression of the 1930's, World War II and its aftermath, the Korean Conflict, the developing "Cold War" in general, and then the struggle in Vietnam, have been such strong social influences that all of the aims and objectives in physical education and sport were either dominated by then, or at the very least dicectly influence by their presence. (Zeigler 2, 1979:131)

During the past two decades, the "athletics—physical education problem" has assumed a prominent position in education. In fact, numerous colleges and Universities, already in financial difficulty, must bear an ever increasing burden because of the pervasiveness of sport in contempory American society, the growing visibility and popularity of professional sports and the harsh criticisms of recruiting practices carried on by some institutions. (Harper, 1977:250)

II. Military Training and Physical Education

Throughout the history, every human society seems to have developed some measure of formal control such as states and nations. This political organization is one phase of social structure; but the organization of exercise is another powerful influence on many other

aspects.

Governmental form usually plays an important role in education with the kind and amount of education offered to young people reflecting the type political states.

In democratic societies, part of the ethic of the society is to be considered the worth of human personalities and to give each individual the opportunity to develop his potential to the fullest. In such societies, it is imperative that the general level of education be raised to the highest degree possible. (Zeigler 1, 1979:258) Because of its importance in individual development, physical education has been considered to be an integral experience in the school curriculum.

Political changes, such as the outbreak of war, cause dramatic changes in the objective of physical education. According to Drew, (Drew, 1975:89) there have been numerous congressional discussions of military traing in the schools. For the period from 1898 through 1917, eighteen bills and resolutions were revealed in the official records which were directed toward the improvement of fitness of youth.

President Theodore Roosvelt lent his support to the movement through sending direct statements to Congress favoring the promotion of the teaching of military training in the schools of the United States.

Using the schools for the purpose of pre-military training was looked upon favorably by Congress. To this end, a number of bills were passed in this period. The initial proposal to provide for the physical fitness of youth through a program of physical training in schools was contained in a Senate Bill in 1902. This bill proposed an executive Department of Physical Culture. In 1910, bills introduced in both the Senate and the House sought to improve the physical efficiency of youth by originating division for that purpose in the United States Bureau of Education. In 1917, a fourteen—page bill sought to promote physical culture through a plan of cooperation with the individual states. Funds for the payment of teachers' salaries were requested and a plan for the training of teachers of physical culture on a state—matching, dollar-to-dollar arrangement was advocated. The bill carried provisions for awards and prizes.

Although no consideration was given to any bill during this period was specially set up to aid in the physical fitness of youth through a program of physical traing, fifteen of the eighteen bills introduced into Congress between 1898 and 1917 were aimed toward the improvement of physical fitness youth through a program of military training.

III. Physical Education during World War I

Stark social influences, such as war and depression, have influenced sport and physical recreational development appreciably. World War I, for example, brought about almost universal physical education legislation in the United States making possible the introduction of sports skill programs into what had been formerly a "physical training" period.

The widely publicized draft statistics revealed that the youth of the United States were not physically fit when their services were demanded in the First World War. The United States was a nation unprepared to meet the physical reponsibilities placed upon her. The state laws which did exist had no provisions for enforcement, and many provisions of physical education placed no particular emphasis on conditioning.

In response to public interest, the United States Commissioner of Education organized a working Committee for the purpose of sponsoring a federal bill directed at improving the situation. The Playground and Receation Association of America, through its national organization, acted as the central agent for the work. In 1920 the Fess—Caper Physical Education House bill and companion Senate bill were introduced, using the names of the sponsors. These bills were afforded committee hearings and were the only bills entered on behalf of physical education to receive even this amount of consideration.

According to Drew, (1975:91) as indicated in his study summarized above, in the period from 1918 to 1941, twenty—six bills with physical education or military training provisions were introduced. Six were directed toward military training; five were entered on behalf of general education but included physical education provisions; and fifteen were designed specially to aid physical education.

World War I started in 1914, and the entry of the United States in 1918 had a critical impact on the nation, its education policies including physical education programs. The Selective Service Act of 1917 called to service all men between the ages of 18 and 25 years. All men were required to have a comprehensive physical examination Health statistics gleaned from these Selective Service examinations aroused considerable interest in the health of these young men. The nation's apprehension over the revealing statistics that one—third of the men examined for military service in the First World War were physical unfit for duty and another third had pathological impairments proved a strong argument for school health and physical education programs. Discussions were held on the

most feasible manner for achieving top physical condition for the youth of America in general and for young men of military service age in particular. (Zeigler 1, 1979:210)

During World War I, many physical educators provided leadership for physical conditioning programs for armed forces and also for the people on the home front.

Such persons as Dudley Sargent, Uther Gulick, Thomas Storey and R. Tait McKenzie contributed their services to the armed forces. (Bucher, 1975:124) Two former athletes and college athletic advisor, Joseph Ray Croft, of Princeton, and Walther Gamp, of Yale, headed the Army and Navy athletic programs. By Armistice Day, one and half years later, about 5,000,000 servicemen had been trained at military camps which had fitness programs that included for the first time an emphasis on sport. (Lucas, 1978: 305)

IV. Physical Education during World War II

The United States gradually shifted from its old idea of "rugged individualism" to a newer concern for the equality of opportunity and a concern for the group (society). It was a difficult time for physical education in the schools: the money shortage led to the belief that many physical education programs were expensive "frills" and that they represented money better spent elsewhere.

The trend toward social and recreational goals in physical education programs continued through the depression, but began to slow down in the years just prior to World War II. The new programs in many European nations, which showed their aims to be fitness for war and the development of a stronger sense of nationalism, resulted in a gradual shift of the United States programs back to emphasis on physical fitness. (Freeman, 1977: 78-79)

The need for a national program of physical fitness seemed evident as a result of Selective Service examinations, which rejected nearly half of those examined. This was interpreted to inidcate that young people were not in good physical shape. Physical education received an impetus as physical training programs were established under Gene Tunney, in the Navy, Hand Greenburg, in the Air Force, and various sports leaders in other branches of the Armed Forces. (Bucher, 1675:126)

As mentioned before, the results of the Selective Service examinations shocked the Americans. By December 1941, approximately two million registerants between the age

of 21 and 25 years had been examined under the National Service Act of 1940, of whom 900,000 were rejected because of mental and physical defects, and 100,000 for educational deficienies.

A cursory examination of World War II medical statistics would suggest a general deterioration in the health and physical status of the American males and females in this age group. However, a closer study of the data shows that the principal reasons for rejections included dental defects, visual defects, cardiovascular conditions, musculoskeletal deficiencies, and defects of the feet. The last two items accounted for 10.8% of all causes for rejection. Among women, approximately one—third of the applicants were rejected because of psychiatric and neurological, gynecological and genitourinary, cardiovascular, and visual causes, and less frequently overweight, ear, nose and throat conditions, tuberculosis and dental defects. (Hackensmith, 1966:466-467)

This close examination of the data made it apparent the most of the causes for rejection cannot be blamed directly upon substandard physical education programs in the nation's schools but rather upon differentials in standards of living and the inability or lack of desire to apply available knowledge and information made accessible by the school health and public health education programs.

As the war went on, medical examiners became less discriminatory of those defects which were amenable to immediate correction and which would not handicap men or women in active service. Regardless of the interpretation of the mental examiners' statistics, the American public was made aware of the health and physical fitness implications fo the health and physical fitness implications of the large percentage of rejections through the press, radio and lay periodicals.

During the World War II, the government formed a series of organizations to work towards the improvement of the health and fitness level of the American citizens. The physical education programs in the United States basically become programs of physical fitness, oriented toward the military need of the nations. Sports were pushed as a phase of fitness and morale and many prominent physical educators became involved not only in developing programs of physical training for the Armed Forces, but also in developing intramural sports programs for the military as well. The tendency for the school programs to adopt the physical trainining programs of the military and thus change from programs of physical education to physical training was the greatest problem created for physical education during World War II.

Governmental statements reflected the attitude towards physical education at that time. One example is a statement published by the Educational Policies Commission.

"The health, safty, and physical education program in the elementary and secondary schools and in higher institutions should be given a high order of priority among competing educational interests. Physical fitness has a direct relationship to national defence. Good programs of health, physical education and recreation yield important results related to physical fitness and hence to national defence whether the individual is to serve at the war front, in industry, or at home.

'Physical fitness' in a broad sense is health. It involves the prevention of disease, the correction of remedial defects, good nutrition, muscular strength, endurance, basic motor skills, mental health, and morale." (U.S. office of Educotibn Wartime Commission, 1942:454)

However broad and general these governmental statements were on paper. Those physical educators who strongly believed in them faced quite a struggle to keep from being forced to the military needs alone. This tendency towards limitation of the objectives of physical education to fitness for military needs was an fortunate side effect that took the Americans a long time to deal with.

The objectives of postwar physical education definitely reflected the effects of changes brought about by the World Wars. This was evident in the position concerning the relationship of physical education and personal life.

First is the emphasis on personal and mental health, which included objectives to develop understanding of the need for personal health and for proper mental health.

Secondly was the recognition of the need for self—assurance. Specific objectives included restoring pride in physical development, developing an interest in school dances and mixers and a desire to voluntarily attend them, developing a sense of responsibilty through leadership, giving the student an opprtunity to gain a sense of achievnment, providing an escape from problems which—at the present time—are too difficult, developing an understanding of rules of games, providing growth in constructive criticism, and finally all of the above should contribute to the child's emotional development.

A third objective recognized the need for a broad range of personal interests by providing for individual differences in all students, arousing student interest by experience through participation, contributing growth to student's personality, providing for individual expression, and finally providing experiences which include new elements and enlarge the child's present interests and capacities.

A fourth objective addressed the needs for aesthetic satisfaction, which included an appreciation of human beauty, an appreciation of form and technicque, valuing a good

performance, taking pride in conducting a social affair, and finally appreciating "fineness", effect, and efficiency in performance.

In addition to physical education's interaction with personal life, these post—war objectives addressed the importance of the interaction between physical education and personal social relationships. Specifically, attention was given to making social adaptations, understanding the need for proper leisure time activities, respecting the rights of others, developing friendships, and finally learning to follow as well as to lead.

The post—war objectives concluded with emphasis on the role of physical education in wider social relationship. Components included learning to conform to acceptable standards of living, participating in social activity programs, and finally being recognized socially. (Schaefer, 1945:446-447)

In concluding this section on World War II, three specific physical programs employed during the War will be dicussed; The Schools at Var Program, the Army Physical Conditioning Program, and the Physical Fitness Program of the Air Force.

Schools At War Program. To enroll in the Schools At war Program, each school had to organize its students and faculty so that every individual participated wholeheartedly in the national fight for freedom. This meant that classroom and extracurricular activities would be adapted to the new demand of education for victory.

The School At War Program named three civilian commands for every citizen: SAVE, SERVE, and CONSERVE. Everyone had to obey these in order to help the servicemen fighting "in the scorching sand of the desert or in the bitter cold of the polar seas." (Lasalle, 1942:475)

The program set three objectives for the development of high school pupils. First was an emphasis on strength, endurance and stamina. Second was mastery of the pupil of the skill of value in pursuit of the war. Third was development of an attitude and viewpoint that would cause pupils to support wholeheartedly the war effort.

The Army Physical Conditioning Program. War placed a great premium upon the strength, stamina, coordination and agility of the soldier because victory and his life are so often dependent upon them.

For men in the Army, physical fitness consist of five basic factors: freedom from disease, strength, muscular endurance, cardio—respiratory endurance, and finally speed, agility, cordination and flexibility.

The Army program was comprised of various exercises, drills, and simulated war situ-

ations both on land in the water. It specifically included marching, calisthenics, guerrilla exercise, grass drills, combative events, running exercises and swimming and water safety. (Bank, 1943:195)

The Physical Fitness Program of The Air forces. Like the Army program, the Air Force combined various exercises to produce fit military personnel. The Air Force program emphasized calisthenic exercises, guerrilla exercises, grass drills, and military aquatics and functional swimming.

The position of Air Force educator was that the implications of physical fitness for school situations are practically the same during the war as they were prior to its outbreak. The first implication was that superior physical condition and organic development are essential. Second was that proper body mechanics and essential athletic skill be mastered.

The third focused on fitness in water with military aquatics and functional swimming skills. Also it was thought to be essential that interest in maintaining, and the desire to continue in superior physical condition be instilled in all. Finally, habits and practices conducive to healthful living should be followed by all. (Stansbury, 1943:463-465)

V. Women's Physical Education Activity during World War

As late as the outbreak of World War II, there still was a widespread and ungrou nded belief that vigorous competitive athletics would have a damaging effect upon a woman's childbearing function. Appearing in *Scientific American* a few years before the war was the statement that "feminine muscular development interfere with motherhood." (Lucas, 1978:364-364)

More common was the misguided assumption that there should be cessation of all physical activity during menstration.

Although World War II was an important precipitator in the Women's movement, the revolt in women's athletics, with a thought toward highly competitive contests, awaited the period following the war and made the most rapid progress on the heel of the Women's Movement of the 1960's.

During the war, various approaches were tried to include some type of physical improvement for women. Fortunately, neither the girls nor their teachers were impressed by "Good posture for Victory" or "Beauty for Defence."

Gradually these slogans changed to better advice such as "Become strong and fit for

your war work." (Schuck, 1943:301-345)

The thinking at that time was the American girl, in her latter teens, should be trained for doing physical work for the war effort should it be needed. That task implied two suggestions for school administrators. First, the girls had a right to know that their physical work for the war effort, if necessary for the country, was as deserving and socially distinguished as the boys serving in the armed forces. Second, the girls should know that after temporary physical war work, they would find organized assistance for resuming their interupted studies.

For the girl's department of physical education, the task was divided into two parts. The healthy girls that is, the great majority, received a strenuous and intensive physical training as potential reserves for physical war work. On the other hand, weak students and those with health deficiencies received an easier compensation training in view of their perspective duties as white-collar works for the war effort.

Various military organizations, including the Women's Army Corps (WACS), Women's Marine Corps, Women's Reserve, Women's Reserve of the Naval Reserve (WAVES), Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard (SPARS), Women's Air Force Service Pilots and Women's Auxilary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS)—which were later combined into a unit designated as WASP—all provided directors of physical training and athletics. (Hackensmith 1966:471) However, as mentioned earlier, the real improvement in women's physical education did not occur until the Women's Movement of the 1960's.

In concluding this section on the effect of the World Wars on Women's physical education, the specific example of the Navy's program for women (WAVES) will be used to illustrate the programs initiated during this period.

The WAVERS program had three general aims. The first was to promote and maintain physical fitness of women in the Navy. The second was to increase endurance and strength in order to enable women in the Navy to have a reserve of energy after hard and prolonged activity. The final aim was to provide women in the Navy with the techniques of relaxation to enable them to utilize their energy to best advantage. (Turnbull, 1943:470-472)

To meet these three aims, ten objectives were specified. First was the establishment of a feeling for the necessity of regular exercise for all women in the Navy. Five objectives dealt with methodology. They were designed to teach methods of relaxation, to improve posture, to increase strength, to increase endurance, and to increase flexibility. Two further

objectives covered development of a sense of rhythm and an awareness of spatial relationships with other people and object. Water skills were not overlooked. An objective to develop swimming and water safety skills for use during possible bearing was added to cover the overall outlook of the Navy women during these years. (Turnbull, 1943:470-472)

VI. Summary

Physical education as we know it today is an applied discipline based on the sciences and humanities concerned with the effects of human physical performance on man and society. This integration of the sciences of physiology and physics with philosophy, sociology and psychology has resulted from steady evolution over the past hundred years. The early philosophies of instrumentalism and progressivism contributed significantly. Educational thought grew from education of the physical, with emphasis on the body, fitness and health, to education through the physical with a broader application to personality and consequently all of life. These phases were affected by abrupt changes which occurred during the World Wars, as discussed in this paper. Post-war objectives focused more on individual development for life than physical development for victory. The role of women's physical education was not clearly defined as early as for men, and there were many misconceptions initially. The Women's Movement in the 1960's was much more influencial on the improvement in women's physical education in America than were the World Wars.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that physical education is a dynamic applied science. Today's practices reflect the thoughts of today's scientists and educators to best equip people for today's world. Tomorrow's requirements may be quite different.

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<국문초록>

세계1·2차 세계대전이 미국 체육에 미친영향

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오늘날의 체육은 인문학, 사회과학, 그리고 자연과학 분야의 종합된 지식을 필요로 하며 유능한 사회인을 육성하는 역할을 수행하고 있다.

역사적으로 시대의 요구에 따라 체육의 목표도 변천되어 왔다. 즉 실재주의 철학의 영향으로 신체의 교육(Educational of the physical)이 중시되기도 하였고, 이상주의 철학의 입장에서 신체의 교육은 물론 신체활동을 통한 교육(Education through the physical)이 체육의 목표로 해야 한다는 주장도 있었다. 미국 사회에서는 세계 1.2차 세계 대전을 수행하는 동안 학교체육에서도 군사력 증강을 위해 체력단련이 체육 프로그램의 가장 중시한 목표였으며 군사교육 가운데에도 체육 프로그램이 필수적으로 설정되었었다.

동시에 여성의 건강에 해롭다고 금지되었던 격심한 신체활동도 시대의 요청에 의해 허용된 결과 여성에게도 체육활동이 유익하다는 새로운 인식을 갖게된 것도 매우 중요한 사실이다.

종전후 진보주의 사조에 따라 체육의 목표도 변화를 가져와 승리만을 위한 신체적 발달보다 원만한 사회생활을 영위할 수 있는 개인을 기르는 데에(Individual development for life) 두고 있다.