

A HISTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN
THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF MANITOBA

An Abstract of a Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research
The University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
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Winnipeg, Manitoba
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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In this paper, the writer has attempted to trace the growth of physical education in the public schools of Manitoba. In meeting the immediate objective, the writer found it desirable to determine what influences had been significant in the establishment of a physical education program in Manitoba and the nature of the present philosophy of physical education in the province.

METHOD

Although there was a dependence on legislation, government reports and publications for the necessary information, considerable use was made of the minutes of a number of professional and sports organizations. These sources were supplemented by personal interviews with those who had been or still are active in the field of physical education.

FINDINGS

During the early development of physical education in Manitoba, there were several influences which directed the limited program into formal gymnastics and drill. Briefly, these factors were: the Swedish and German systems, the British system of the early twentieth century, and the Strathcona Trust.

Investigations indicated that, although facilities were in-

adequate, and direction was often lacking, it was the leadership of the enthusiastic teacher which determined the nature of the particular school program. This fact has pointed up the importance of teacher training and the need for improvement.

An additional factor which might be explored even further in a separate study is the influence of agencies outside the Department of Education, in determining the nature of the physical education program. Several professional organizations and sports bodies were considered and it was the opinion of the writer that although these groups have not appreciably influenced the nature of the official program of physical education, they have had considerable influence on the effectiveness of the actual program. Many of the programs could not have been carried out without assistance from some of these groups. With a very few exceptions, it was felt that these groups have made a real and positive contribution to the development of a physical education program.

In the area of teacher training, attention has been drawn to the value of in-service training at various levels and the problem of limited instructional time available at the Faculty of Education and Teachers College.

In considering facilities, the writer has been reminded frequently that they have been; most inadequate. The lack of

planning, resulting in unsatisfactory facilities, has been apparent, also in many of the new schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings the writer has made several suggestions which he considers would improve the level of instruction in physical education. Some of these are:

1. That until more adequate teacher training can be established, a more detailed program of studies should be set out with a large number of options to provide for the different abilities of the teachers.
2. That at least a diploma course in physical education should be offered at the University of Manitoba.
3. That an evaluation be made of the approaches to physical education taken at the Manitoba Teachers College and ^{at} the Faculty of Education, with a view to establishing co-operatively, a satisfactory and uniform method.
4. That plans for new schools be required to meet minimum standards in facilities for physical education and that such standards be established and checked for by the Director of Physical Education for Manitoba.
5. That the Government of Manitoba give early and sympathetic consideration to the report of the Study Committee on Physical Education and Recreation in Manitoba.

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PREFACE

This study had its origin in a course paper which outgrew its limits and had to be reduced in scope to "A History of Physical Education at the University of Manitoba." The preliminary investigations stimulated the writer's interest and when Dr. F. W. Kennedy expressed a need for certain historical material for the survey on the state of physical education and recreation in Manitoba, the decision was reached to proceed with the full study.

The writer wishes to express his sincere gratitude to all members of his advisory committee, particularly to Dr. J. M. Brown, Chairman of the Committee, whose unlimited patience, extensive suggestions and personal concern were a continual source of encouragement. Special thanks are conveyed to Dr. Eleanor Boyce who offered valuable advice on all phases of the work. Extra acknowledgement also is made to Dr. F. W. Kennedy whose detailed knowledge of the topic was readily shared and whose candid comments on all aspects of the subject were welcomed. Appreciation is extended to those who have given advice, and made available personal files, booklets, pamphlets, and letters.

Most deeply, the writer is indebted to his wife, whose advice, encouragement, and typing of the finished copy were a vital contribution to the work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PURPOSE

This study has been undertaken to present a history of physical education in the public schools of Manitoba.

The completed work, showing the trends in physical education and many of the factors responsible for the direction of development, will provide a guide for students, teachers, and directors of physical education in their efforts to plan and implement a more effective program of physical education for the schools of Manitoba.

II. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

Since the area of physical education extends into a wide field of community activity, the study has been confined to the public schools system of Manitoba. The University is part of the provincial educational system, but the growth of physical education there has been summarized in another paper by the writer¹ and, therefore, has not been included in this study.

Certain material concerning agencies outside the public schools system has been dealt with in order to indicate the influence

¹D. A. Downie, "A History of Physical Education at the University of Manitoba," (unpublished course paper, the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1957).

which these groups have had upon physical education in the public schools. No attempt has been made to give an exhaustive treatment of the development of these other organizations as they are not part of the school system and have become involved in the study only to the extent that they have caused changes to take place in program, have provided additional activities, or have assisted in the execution of the prescribed program of studies.

III. SOURCES AND TREATMENT OF DATA

Many histories of education in Manitoba have been written, covering very specific periods, but only one of these has included information regarding physical education.² A few studies have been made on such related topics as school cadets,³ the Strathcona Trust,⁴ and teacher training,⁵ but no attempt has been made to cover the full scope of the subject.

Newspaper files offered one obvious source of information and the first viewing of a micro-film record revealed the following

²W. G. Pearce, "Winnipeg School Days, 1871-1950," Winnipeg, 1952. (unpublished document).

³Richard C. Green, "The History of School Cadets in the City of Winnipeg." (unpublished Master's thesis, the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1950).

⁴John A. MacDiarmid, "A History and Analysis of the Influence of the Strathcona Trust on Physical Education in the Public Schools of Manitoba." (unpublished Master's thesis, the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1957).

⁵Frank W. Kennedy, "Health, Physical Education and Recreation in Canada: A History of Professional Preparation." (unpublished Doctor's thesis, Columbia University, New York, 1955).

item: "A number of English gentlemen with evil designs on buffaloes are in town."⁶

Although this does not demonstrate any particular point in public school physical education, it does indicate that physical activity was undertaken by early Manitoba residents and visitors.

This and other sports stories, although interesting in themselves, provided little information concerning the physical education program in the schools. However, the files of the daily newspapers did provide corroboration of information which otherwise would have had little more than hearsay status.

Many of the most likely sources of material proved to be disappointing. Of all the extensive files belonging to the Director of Physical Fitness and Recreation for Manitoba, only one small box of correspondence remained. Many of the minutes, upon examination, failed to reveal a record of the discussion leading up to decisions. This meant that in several instances it was necessary to search more extensively to ascertain reasons for the various changes in curriculum. Such investigations resulted in a considerable loss of time and, even more important, an increased possibility of error in the interpretation of events. In a number of cases, committees submitted reports which had not been attached to minutes nor included as appendices. The absence of such reports made it necessary to make general comments on the contents of such documents

⁶Daily Free Press, Winnipeg, July 6, 1874.

instead of supplying specific references supported by quotations from the report itself.

Although the search for records was discouraging and often fruitless, the writer found stimulation in the enthusiasm with which a large number of educationalists responded to requests for interviews, and the continued interest which they displayed in the prolonged study.

As the search for information proceeded, it became apparent that most of the material would have to come from statutes, official publications, and the minutes of professional organizations and sports bodies. Statutes and reports of government departments were taken as primary sources. Original, signed minutes also were taken as primary sources, but those which had been duplicated were considered to be of secondary nature. Interviews with individuals who had been active in the field were used to suggest new aspects of the topic and these were checked through the source areas indicated. Where verification of this nature was impossible, the information either was omitted entirely, or included with some reservation indicated.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

A philosophy of physical education must be a considered and articulated statement of the fundamental principles and objectives of physical education. To be adequate, such a statement would need to be accompanied by a considerable body of material supporting the position taken. Since such an undertaking would be a major item of research in itself, the purpose of this chapter will be to indicate some of the forces influencing the growth of a philosophy of physical education in Manitoba and to state what appears to the writer to be a philosophy most generally accepted in the province.

The present philosophy of physical education in Manitoba undoubtedly has been influenced in its growth by a great many factors: periods of war have stimulated an interest in fitness; economic depressions have encouraged those in authority to become concerned about the recreational aspects of physical education; philosophical concepts such as the "complete man" have prompted the growth of a physical education program to develop one aspect of man's nature.

These influences may be traced through the general history of education. Other more subtle influences include the contributions of many physical educators active within the province and the pressure of social acceptance of physical fitness as a desirable quality. (The establishment and support of "physical culture"

business ventures may be one indication of the beginnings of such an acceptance.)

I. ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INFLUENCES

Gymnastics originated in Sparta about the eighth century B. C. as part of the rigorous training given to young Spartan boys. In gymnastics, as well as in other activities, military efficiency and prowess were the only objectives and much emphasis was placed on physical fitness and training to endure hardship. Thus our inheritance from this part of Greece has not been so much in the relationship of gymnastics to the total program as in the very existence of the activity.

A considerable change in emphasis took place when the Athenians copied the formal gymnastic program of the Spartans. Here physical education occupied, in relation to general education, a place which was much closer to that supported by our present society. In Athens, the severity of the program was modified by the concept that the mind, body, and spirit are interdependent and therefore all must be developed in order to produce the truly educated individual. Plato's estimate of the place of physical education is clearly summarized in the following:

Neither are the two arts of music and gymnastics really designed, as is often supposed, the one for the training of the soul, the other for the training of the body. What, then, is the real object of them? I believe, I said, that the teachers of both have in view chiefly the improvement of the soul. How can that be?

he asked. Did you never observe, I said, the effect on the mind itself of exclusive devotion to gymnastics, or the opposite effect of an exclusive devotion to music? In what way shown? he said. The one producing a temper of hardness and ferocity, the other of softness and effeminacy, I replied. Yes, he said, I am quite aware that your mere athlete becomes too much of a savage, and that the mere musician is melted and softened beyond what is good for him. Yet surely, I said, this ferocity only comes from spirit, which if educated rightly would give courage, but, if too much intensified and exaggerated, is liable to become hard and brutal.¹

According to Xenophon, Socrates had similar views on the value of physical education and expressed them to a young friend:

The body is useful in all pursuits which men engage in, and in all matters in which the body is useful it is of great importance to have it in the best possible condition. And even in those things in which you may think the body is least useful, namely, in intellectual pursuits, who does not know that even in these many men fall into great aberrations through not possessing good bodily health? Nay, weakness of memory, low spirits, ill-temper, and even insanity, often penetrate the minds of many persons so deeply, through their bad physical condition, as to cast out and dispossess knowledge itself. There is a great security, on the other hand, for those whose bodies are in good condition, they run no risk of suffering any such evils through a low physical condition. Rather, it is natural that good bodily health conduces to the very contrary of those evils which arise from bad health. What is there that any reasonable man would not undergo for the sake of securing the opposite of those evils which I have spoken of?²

To meet their objectives, the Athenians provided the younger boys with graded exercises to suit the varying capacities of the

¹Plato, Republic 410, cited by Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, The History and Philosophy of Education Ancient and Medieval (New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1940), p. 242.

²Joseph Payne, translation from Xenophon's Memorabilia, Lectures on the History of Education, (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1892), II, 275, cited by Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, op. cit., p. 243.

students and with games such as tug-of-war. As the youth reached sixteen he was provided with instruction and competition in the events of the Pentathlon which comprised the five activities of running, throwing the discus, throwing the javelin, jumping, and wrestling.

Throughout all these elements of the work in physical education, a vital concern for moral development was maintained. That such an objective was consciously sought after and not left to chance may be seen in the following:

Training was adapted to individual capacities. Care was taken in pairing the boys to bring together only those who were well matched. The weaker and more diffident were matched with those whom they could overcome with good effort. Confidence was developed through self-exertion and the encouragement of the trainers. The overconfident and conceited were paired with boys who were able to defeat them readily. In this way proper self-esteem was fostered.

Furthermore, the Greeks required the boys to enter into the contests with spirit and a strong desire to win. They were masters in stimulating and directing the instinct of rivalry. They provoked the contestants to white heat, but insisted rigorously that passion must not overstep the strict rules of the game. As the iron is tempered only when heated, so self-control and sportsmanship can best be developed when the contestant is passionately intent on winning. The Greeks strove by these means to produce modest winners, and good losers; spirited antagonists, who at the point of greatest temptation played fair and used no underhanded means. In this manner they trained the youth in courage, self-control, endurance, spirited action, and true sportsmanship. No better training of the will of the individual in interaction with others could be conceived.³

About 440 B.C. there began a major change in the position

³Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, op. cit., p. 246.

held by gymnastics in the general framework of education. In explaining this change, Eby and Arrowood have stated:

An enormous change took place in Athenian gymnastics beginning about 440 B. C., strangely coincident with the death of the poet Pindar, who had done more than any other man to celebrate gymnastic prowess. First of all, a distinction arose between gymnastics and athletics. The one pertained to the schools and physical education of boys and youth, the other had to do with training youth and men for winning in the great games. The one aimed at the development of will-power, self-control, and all-sidedness. The other aimed only at muscle and brawn trained along some special line such as running, boxing, or wrestling. The testimony of contemporaries agrees that gymnastics suffered a great decline and that athletics were in the ascendency.

.....

The most important reason for the lack of interest in gymnastics was that the enthusiasm of Athenian youth had found a new object of devotion. The heroes who attracted the greatest adulation at the end of the fifth century B. C., and for years to come, were the Sophists and teachers of rhetoric. No one can read the story of Protagoras in Athens without discovering that a new era was opening. While the interest in intellectual culture was not universal among the youth, its appeal to the best of them was all-powerful.⁴

In spite of the decline of gymnastics in Athenian education, there continued to be a growth of this system of education in either its earlier or later form, as the Greek influence spread into parts of Europe and Asia.

Following the complete fall of Greece to the Roman Empire in 146 B. C., the influence of Greece did not cease, for much of Roman culture was founded upon Greek literature and the Greek system of

⁴Ibid., pp. 306-308.

education. It would be logical to assume, considering the military strength of Rome, that the Romans would have restored the Spartan emphasis on rigorous training and gymnastics to fit every male citizen for his responsibility to the state. However, the Roman concept of citizenship was quite different from that of the Spartans, and education in the Roman Empire followed more closely the Greek pattern established under the influence of the Sophists. Military training, as such, was kept quite separate from the area of general education.

Two evaluations of the state of physical education at approximately the fourth century A.D. particularly are appropriate. Eby and Arrowood state:

What was the fate of gymnastic training during the Roman era? This was set forth by Philostratus in his work, Concerning Gymnastics. After giving a historical sketch of the origin of the various exercises, he discussed the trends in his own times, which was the beginning of the fourth Christian century. The youth were no longer trained for all-round action; health, military fitness, sportsmanship, and virtue were no longer the ends sought. Professionalism had become the order of the day. A youth was selected for one or another exercise according to his special physical fitness. The regimen of training made them gluttonous eaters.

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The last traces of physical education in Sparta are found early in the third century of our Christian era. In spite of strenuous efforts at revival, athleticism finally crushed gymnastics even in Sparta. Interest in the welfare of the body was dying throughout all the Greek world. After enduring for over a thousand years the Olympian games were abolished in 394 A.D. Thus one more of the main branches of Hellenic humanism finally ceased.⁵

⁵Ibid., pp. 503-504.

A summary written by Dr. Thomas Woody is significant, too, to this study. He writes:

Hero worship of the successful athlete, the increase of athletic festivals to engage the time of idle spectators, the increasing weight of the purse awarded, nicety of the requirements of training--ten months of training, one month in Olympia was required--the luxurious habits of an age of decadence, the centering of the athlete's attention upon himself rather than on any useful social end and the competition of cities for successful athletes all combined to produce a contempt for earlier standards of sportsmanship and morality.⁶

A moment's reflection will reveal the fact that the comments just quoted could very easily have been written about our present society. The same criticism has been directed against present-day society and the place of physical education in the plan of general education. Leaders in all areas, as well as physical educators, have emphasized repeatedly during the past decade the desperate need for an awareness of physical fitness and its importance to the individual and to the nation.

Current trends, which will be considered later in the chapter, lead the writer to believe that the phase of concern upon the part of a few is drawing to a close and that the period of action to correct the deficiencies has begun.

However, in the course of history, the revival of concern for gymnastics or physical education of any kind was to wait many centuries before it became discernible.

⁶ Thomas Woody, "Professionalism and the Decay of Greek Athletics," School and Society, Vol. 47, p. 524, cited by Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, op. cit., p. 504.

With the decline of the Greek and Roman civilizations and the ascendancy of the barbarians, came the Dark Ages and the decline of learning. During this long period of intellectual stagnation, the Church was the one agency which kept alive the light of knowledge. Here, however, the chief concern was for the liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. There may have been exceptions where certain forms of exercise were undertaken. At the Catechetical school of Alexandria, for instance, Clement advocated activities such as wrestling, ball-playing, and walking. "Health now show, is the object to be attained."⁷

The revival of learning, born out of the Renaissance and spread throughout Europe by the Humanists, provided little in the way of growth in physical education. However, provision was made for it in the curriculum at La Giocosa, a school conducted by Vittorino Rambaldini for the Marquis of Mantua. With respect to physical education at the school, Eby and Arrowood write:

Vittorino for his part harmonized the classical form of physical culture with the knightly arts. He held the opinion that not only was the alternation of study with games and exercises needful for real intellectual quickness, but that the teacher must provide ample variation in the subjects of instruction themselves. It was a common slogan of humanist writers on education that the mind needs variety of food not less than the body. This would seem the more necessary, since school lessons lasted seven or eight hours daily. Spontaneous play and occasional excursions to the mountains broke the monotony of instruction at La Giocosa.

⁷ Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, op. cit., p. 612.

Vittorino gave serious attention to the health of his pupils. To this end, life out of doors was carefully organized, and daily exercises in some form were compulsory regardless of the weather. As methods of physical instruction Vittorino used riding, running, games of ball, leaping, and fencing. These activities laid the foundation of health and habituated the boy to regular exercise. Care was taken to increase the strain by slow degrees. After the age of ten, regular training was required, then archery, fencing, the use of the sling, and military exercises. These had in view not only military skill but also gracefulness and good deportment. Physical exercise had as its aims: preparation for military life and the prevention of self-indulgence. As a humanist Vittorino believed that skill as a sportsman was no less praiseworthy than literary ability and scholarship.⁸

Since La Giocosa became a model for other such schools throughout Italy, it is possible that some of them also included elements of physical education in their curricula.

It has been seen, then, that although the contribution of the ancient and medieval period was a vital and fundamental one, it was nonetheless simple in nature. It was, in fact, the origin of gymnastics and the development of competitive games. Both of these contributions were made by the Greeks and neglected by later cultures until the Renaissance. In the interval, there occurred a number of developments which discouraged any growth of the beginnings made by the early Greeks.

The fall of Greece itself was the first change which deterred any expansion of the early program.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the growth of scholast-

⁸Ibid. , p. 880.

icism did much to establish the philosophy that matters of the mind and of the body were in opposition to each other. Therefore, anyone concerned with intellectual pursuits must, by the very nature of things, ignore the physical.⁹ Such a view, although archaic, still is widely held, and for many years has been one of the stumbling blocks to an effective physical education program.

Since the preservation of learning during the Middle Ages was achieved by the Church through its monasteries, it is apparent that gymnastics and physical education would not be developed or even maintained. While it is true that a Church school such as that at Alexandria¹⁰ would be more likely to consider physical education in its program, from this period there appears to be no further example where such was the case. It should be pointed out that the Alexandria School was under strong Greek influence and this may explain why there was at least some concern for physical activity as part of the program.

As shown in this one given example of a Renaissance school, this age marked the return, on a limited scale, to the acceptance of physical education as a necessary part of the school program.

⁹Eugene W. Nixon and Frederick W. Cozens, An Introduction to Physical Education (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1952), p. 25.

¹⁰See Page 11.

As the more important schools of this period were under the direction of Humanists, it is essential to be aware of the attitude of the Humanists to physical education. Eby and Arrowood have given a careful analysis of this:

In summing up the discussion on physical education, little needs to be said as to the aims and kinds of physical education. These men discerned the fact of the interdependence of mind and body as it had not been discerned since the days of the ancient Greeks. They believed in the hardening process in accordance with Stoic ideals. Health, grace, and good deportment were also major interests. Care was exercised to see that the growing child was not subjected to strain. As to the forms of physical exercise, they advocated the practices of the Greeks and the Romans and added also the plays and games and military exercises that had grown up with the knightly age. All heartily asserted the value of free play as a means of recreation.¹¹

II. MODERN INFLUENCES

In this section, attention will be focused on the contributions made through the German gymnastic activities, the Swedish Ling system of gymnastics and the British interest in team games and sports.

The rise of the German gymnastic system was largely the work of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, who opened his First Turnplatz (playground) in 1811. This led to the establishment of the Turner movement throughout Prussia and received further impetus from Jahn's book, German Gymnastics, published in 1816.

¹¹Frederick Eby and Charles Flinn Arrowood, op. cit., p. 901.