

# THE SUGGESTIVE METHOD IN SPORT EDUCATION – THEORETICAL BASICS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

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**Abstract.** *This article expands on the possibilities for application of the suggestion as a method for psychological influence in sports education. A theoretical reasoning for its specific applications is made, due to the special features of the sports activity. The necessity of a purposeful and precise approach by the sport pedagogue is indicated, with a view for achieving the proper development of the students and an individual positive effect.*

**Keyword.** *Suggestions, Suggestive method, Sport education, Sport pedagogue, Psychological influence.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reformation and the complete renovation of education in schools are a socially conditioned and continuous process, which covers all spheres of educative work, including sport activity. This objective need for innovation is prompted by the dynamic changes in present day life. The introduction and the popularization of new, unorthodox approaches and technologies in education are becoming a world trend. The boom of technology is in all spheres of human activity. That inevitably has a huge reflection on young people's attitude toward the educational work. This is the reason why today, more than ever, it is necessary to use such recourses, methods and forms of education, which should not only ensure effective and high-grade education, but should also motivate young people to acquire knowledge and practical skills.

During the last years, there has been an increased interest in applying different methods of psychological influence in the sport education. They are oriented toward the formation of certain positive emotional state, which determines the overall psychological activity for a certain period of time. In this sense, the theoretical reasoning of different ideas and

their practical application is one of the most important problems of practical psychology.

Attention is drawn to the suggestion, because it is thought to be one of the ways in which the sport pedagogue can effectively influence the students to the aim of better results in sports and in building-up character.

**The purpose** of this scientific work is to theoretically give proof of the application of suggestion as a method in sport education in rising generations by revealing its nature, peculiarities and significance in its use in the education system.

## 2. PRESENTATION

The concept of suggestion comes from the Latin (suggestio – suggestion) and has been first introduced by the English physician J. Braid in 1853 ([Rechnik na chuzhdite dumi v balgarskiya ezik, 1993](#); [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Braid\\_\(surgeon\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Braid_(surgeon))). With-it, he designates the oral influence in an exact moment of hypnosis as a healing sleep. As time progresses the definition of the concept is enriched and somewhat changed. Generally, suggestion is defined as a “way by which one person guide the thoughts, feelings, or behaviour of another or oneself, which the latter is unconsciously receptive of the suggestion” (<http://talkoven.onlinerechnik.com>). Suggestion is largely viewed as a purposeful influence over the human consciousness, with the intention of enforcing a certain view or behaviour. Interesting to point out on this subject is the statement of B. M. Behterev, who notes that unlike the persuasion, which uses the front door, suggestion gets to the inner rooms through the back door. According to G. Lozanov, “suggestion is a communication factor, which is expressed in offering the person to choose both rationally and intuitively with accordance to its structure and disposition among a wide spectre of complex

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stimuli, which is intricately associated, compressed, coded and multiplied. The choice is made due to an outward orchestration of symbols with a correspondence of the psychophysical regularities of the person (Lozanov, G., 2005). Basing his work on this theory from the mid-60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, professor doctor Lozanov begins to experiment, develop and apply a pedagogue system called suggestopedia, which is acknowledged world-wide as a considerable contribution to pedagogy. Its foundation is the idea of suggestion, but the scientist has emphatically distanced from the notion of suggestion as a type of hypnosis, in which the consciousness is in a passive, half-lucid state.

In the education system two approaches of suggestion are utilized:

*Verbal* -only speech is used as a way to influence and in this was an oral (verbal) suggestion is achieved *Combined*—alongside with speech an array of non-verbal means for influence, most notable being the expressive body movements, face mimics, the human voice, the surrounding environment and so on. This approach is pivotal in the non-verbal (paraverbal) suggestion, which exhibits better results because its influence on the person is more complex.

**Verbal suggestion** has a relatively limited and short-term effect. Used by the sport pedagogue, it has the purpose to formulate certain mental states, which are used to build-up certain qualities and skills. Most often short and expressive suggestive formulas are used. Such a role is fulfilled by personal ratiocinations, emblematic remarks and quotations, proverbs and sayings. Their influence is connected with the fact that a lot of practical experience is synthesized in them, so they are worldly wisdoms and are accepted as axioms, without the need of proof. A main question during the verbal influence in the process of sport activity is the creation of verbal formulas, techniques, methods and their arrangement in a purposeful algorithm as a methodology (Kaikov, D., P. Lazarova 2009). Some preliminary research and a creative approach are needed in the creation of a complete technology of verbal suggestion. Also, to achieve the desired effect, a precise judgment is needed for the momentary mental state of the selected subject (the individual personality, class, a group of training people and so on).

**Non-verbal suggestions** reflected in the fact that the suggestion is made not only with speech, but also body language and the influence of the environment. It is well known

that communication is achieved not only with words. A person often tells others many things without words, just with gestures, countenance, the tone of voice, accessories, etc. That often has a importance in the conveyance of the relevant message. The most distinctive for the paraverbal influence is that the effect of the influence is direct and very quick. It is proved that the biggest influence over the mind is the expression of the upper part of the body – facial movements, eyes, mouth, and the position of hands. Mental influence achieved through the body's expressiveness is explained with the theoretical reasoning that expressive movement is an outer (physical) movement, which reflects the inner (mental) state of a person in certain situations, which is comprised of mutually determinate cognitive, emotional and resolute experiences (Kaikov, D., P. Lazarova, 2009). Expressive movements provide suggestive influence predominantly on the subconscious mind. In this way the method of paraverbal suggestion can be applied along with other methods for psychic regulation and mental influence.

**In actual practice, both types of suggestion (verbal and non-verbal) are used in unity for a fuller and more complex influence upon people's mentality**, which applies to sport education in school and out of it. According to different analyses it is determined that the correlation between means of communication is divided in the following way: 7% verbal part (only words), 38% vocal part (tone of voice, intonation, modulations) and 55% non-verbal part, including mimics, gestures, poses, expressive body movements, clothing, accessories, etc. (Mehrabian, Bar-duistal, Fast, quoting Pease, 2000)

The application of the suggestive method in sport education is in accordance with the **general objective regularities** in this field and they can come to the conclusion that:

- *The suggestive method differs from persuasion as an educational method.* In the suggestive method, applied influence from the educator is directly acquired by the students without a preliminary analysis or rationalization by them. The incoming information is already included arranged and processed and its authenticity is not logically tested by the students. That does not mean that the individual student, upon accepting this information, would not view it in his own way and according to his own convictions. The different personalities of the students are the precise reason for the different degrees of susceptibility to influence. The degree of suggestion is highly

individualized and depends on the student's mental qualities. Supporting this, is the fact that the results of mental influence via suggestion are very weak if the side being trained is suspicious, mistrustful and does not suffer the imposing of somebody else's opinion.

- *The successful application of this method is highly dependent on the personal experience and the competency of the teacher.* During communication, suggestion can be effective as a means of influence, but it sometimes fails to yield the expected results. If the pedagogue himself is unsure of its efficacy, it can get the opposite effect. In practice it has been established that students with very good intellectual development are harder to be influenced, and those who show appositional spirit and want their self-dependence, are even harder to succumb to suggestion. It is important to note that the suggestions for students, especially in early schooling age, are connected to their initial expectations and begin even before the first meeting with the teacher. It becomes clear that the establishment of mutual trust and emotional support between students and teacher is a fundamental premise for achieving the primary goal of suggestion – positive change in educational stereotypes and motivation for systematic sport activity.

- *The technique for suggestive influence is in accordance with some concrete directions, some of which are:*

- With the intention to grab and focus the attention of the students upon the presented information, all irritating factors need to be removed if possible and a positive emotions in the educational process must be created

- It should take place under consideration that suggestion has a bigger effect if the student is de-motivated, hesitant and perplexed. It is also especially helpful if short-term failure in school is present. If a complete and consistent failure is present, suggestion has almost no effect.

- Suggestion should be utilized only when necessary. The frequent use of this method can lead to a so-called "suggestive block", in which the student's mind becomes inadequate for the technique. A sporadic application is also contra productive, because it clashes with the consistency maxim.

- *During school years, imitations suggestion plays a big role.* From its base is the understating that the inclination to imitate is innate to every person and it's an important factor in the social integration of the person. Even since childhood children begin to imitate some of their parent's actions. Imitations

suggestion during this early period of the child's life is impulsive and subconscious. This suggestion gives the child's intellect a chance to develop as it awakens the child's thoughts and imagination. As time passes, the imitations suggestion becomes more selective, but it does not lose its importance, though with the growth of the student's independence the need to imitate becomes significantly lower. Personal example has the main role in imitations-suggestions. That is why there should never be a wrong execution of physical exercises or unacceptable actions, because they can be copied by the students during their activities. The main purpose in sport pedagogy should be focused on the proper and rational formation of motor activity habits and an adequate behaviour in all kinds of situations (Popov, N., 2002).

- Suggestion cannot be used to eliminate innate conflicts of personality, but it can successfully be used to correct some characteristics that are important to education

- Suggestion is advisable only if its influence is beneficial and positive for the mental state and if it lowers the stress in a school environment.

**The specifics of the application of suggestion as a method in sport education are determined by the nature and aspects of activities and also the school environment in which they are applied.** We will analyse some of the more particular moments that have to do with the role of non-verbal communication in suggestion and we note that to use it correctly, we should not interpret just one sigh as isolated from other accompanying gestures or out of the context of the particular circumstances (Pease A., A. Garner, 2000).

- Non-verbal signs and signals have always been a part of the sport pedagogue, but their usage has been mostly intuitive and subconscious. In the last years, there has been an increase of their study, as well as rising in the interest of the realization and the mastery of non-verbal means of pedagogical communication and influence (Ivanov, S., M. Ivanov, 1991). That is important because the teacher has to possess self-assurance and confidence that he will be able to convey precise messages in his association with students. They would accept him with more friendliness and favourably, he would provoke honesty and kindness, and in other words will make them "see eye to eye" with more ease.

- The content of sports education is an association of mental and practical actions, and motor activity has a predominant role. It

is with increased dynamics and frequently the participants in the activity are at a greater distance from one another. The physical taxing is high not only for the students, but also for the teacher. In his case, there is also added mental load which complicates the process of interaction with students. This requires his gestures to be expressive, precise and exact, to reveal a good condition, energy, to suggest confidence. Tiredness at the end of the work day or insufficient endurance due to advancement in years should not be reasons for unintentional gestures, which have another meaning and carry unfitting message. Communication with students with the teacher must “open up” for interaction and avoid unsuitable poses of the body. The pose with crossed hands and legs exhibits closing in one’s territory and carelessness. The poses of “admonishing arms on one’s hips and “shaking the index finger” are meant to suggest fear and respect, but can cause aggression and open displeasure (Pease A, A. Garner, 2000).

- A part of the exercise included in sports education required the presence and help from the teacher (especially those who are carried out on gymnastic apparatus). To ensure the safe realization in this case, the teacher must change the universally acceptable zones of elongation in business communication – the public and social zones. Entering in the students’ personal space, he needs to be very careful, especially with older students, so there are no erroneous thoughts on their side. The established distance must only create a mood of cooperation and responsibility, to inspire a feeling of safety and courage in the students. Each touch of hand should inspire trust, emotional freedom, to encourage and constructively support the student’s actions.

- Sport education is often held in the open, where weather conditions cannot be isolated and have some influence. For example in cold weather the gesture of hugging one’s body and angling one’s chin towards the chest for a short time is not a defensive or dissatisfied pose, but an attempt to preserve some heat. The teacher is also under an obligation to be facing the sun. These numerous activities can be wrongly interpreted, because squinted eyes are known to be a sign of arrogance, disregard, and disdain. Using dark sunglasses to safeguard the eyes can be a sensitive moment. Because they hide the gaze and the eyes are well known for carry the most significant, exact and precise signals for a person’s mental condition. *When the teacher is talking, he must look openly.* In this way, he is signalling

that he is sure about what he is saying. The sharp gaze of the teacher may have a negative effect on children and has no place in a strategy for a pedagogical collaboration. That is a gaze, which may alienate and remind them of the commanding parent, who puts the child in the position of a subordinate.

It is very important in the context of suggestive mental influence to observe the student’s eyes. If he is watching carefully while listening, his message is “I agree and this interests me”. The experienced pedagogue can also distinguish the nuance, when the student is looking focused, but actually is not listening carefully and not acquiring information. This means that the influence has not reached him and something must change in the technique (Mar, T., 2012).

- *The teacher’s voice is a very important me an in non-verbal communication.* Through it to a specific sense can be attributed to every word or even to speech as a whole. During sport activities it is normal for the noise while playing to be above the permissible levels and it is logical to use highly specialized gestures, so the game is not disturbed. The characteristics of the voice associated with height, strength, speed of talking, intonation, pauses, and expressiveness inevitably change. It becomes clear the sport pedagogue must skilfully control the strength of his speech and his voice, so he can adequately express himself in every situation and to achieve maximum effect in trying to achieve his goal with suggestive influence.

- *The well-groomed appearance of the teacher can have an enormous suggestive influence it the formation of the student as an individual.* Personal example is indirectly transferred to the students, especially the younger ones, who are more susceptible and sensitive. In a peculiar way, even intuitively they assess the sport pedagogue very carefully. So they can admire his compact and athletic frame, or not take seriously the heavy-set, flabby, cigar-smelling and rather unsightly teacher, who is a walking anti-advertisement for the healthy effect of sports activity.

The possibilities for mental influence due to clothes are extremely limited during school work, because the pedagogue is required to wear a sports suit. In that case, a suggestion about the symbolism of colours can be made. Also, the chosen model and trade-brand can tell a lot about the nature of the person and present him as an enthusiast, innovator, etc.

- *The environment in the gymnasium and the state of sports equipment can also*

have a large influence through their complete appearance, colour implementation and ergonomic parameters. Creating a pleasing educational environment with the appropriate conveniences for a normal educational experience provokes positive emotions. Bright colours, quality materials and modern design of the premises, equipment and apparatus bring a more positive message, stimulate and motivate students for an active and systematic sports activity.

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### 3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion of the theoretical analyses, we will indicate that the inclusion of suggestions as a method of mental influence in sports education has a specific manifestation, originating from its content and nature. Suggestion can be effective only when a precise measure for its use has been found. A recipe for a universal application of non-verbal communication does not exist. Each and every sports pedagogue have his/hers idiosyncrasies in relation to expressive gestures. They, along with his intellectual potential, moral system and psycho-physical willingness form his/her style of pedagogical communication. In the context of beneficial suggestion that style in all cases should inspire competency, trust, and friendship, affection for children and willingness for collaboration. The purposeful and precise use of suggestion by the sports pedagogue can contribute to a personal positive effect in the development of the growing students.

### Conflict of interests

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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